

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF SOCIAL, HUMAN AND MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

School of Education

**Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with Learning
Difficulties in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman**

by

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Thesis for the degree of

December 2017

DEDICATION

Dedicated to

My treasure in my life, my love Abdullah

My children Saif, Hilal and Maryam

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF SOCIAL, HUMAN AND MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

School of Education

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

RESOURCE ROOMS AS ONE OF THE ALTERNATIVES IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN FIRST CYCLE IN THE BASIC EDUCATION IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

Khawla Hilal Al Mamari

Leaders and educators in Oman recognize the importance of quality education, including for students with learning difficulties. As a result, several programmes and initiatives have been actioned to help children with learning difficulties reach their potential through resource rooms. The research problem will focus on the underdeveloped implementation of the support services to children with learning difficulties through the means of the resource room. The aims of this study are: (a) to explore the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the First Cycle of the Basic Education in Muscat for supporting children with learning difficulties and (b) to investigate the perceptions and experiences of children with learning difficulties, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource room programmes regarding the resource room initiative in Oman. Data are collected from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, which will be analysed thematically to generate themes needed to address the objectives of the study. The results will be presented with the aid of tables and figures to strengthen the themes that will be generated from the data. The implications of the findings will be discussed. The recommendations for practice and future research will be proposed based on the findings.

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Academic Thesis: Declaration Of Authorship

I, Khawla Hilal Al Mamari

declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with Learning Difficulties in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Either none of this work has been published before submission, or parts of this work have been published as: [please list references below]:

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Date: 14/12/2017

Acknowledgements

I am heartily thankful to my academic supervisors Prof. Fan and Dr. Charis for their support of me during my study journey. I also thank my academic adviser Mrs. Eiman Baldo in the Cultural Attach for her support of me during my PhD years. I am grateful to my mother, father in-law, mother in-law, sisters in-law, brothers in-law, sister, and brothers, especially my brother, Dr. Salim, for the support they have offered since the beginning of my studies. It is also a pleasure to thank my friends Dr Aisha Al-Harthi and Salema Al-Mekheni for their support. I would also thank Prof. Ali Kadhim for this support and help. Finally, I offer my regards to the Department of Special Education in the Ministry of Education in Oman. All participants in my project: the students with learning difficulties, teachers of learning difficulties, school inspectors (supervisors) of learning difficulties, headteachers of the First Basic Cycle schools in Muscat, and parents of students with learning difficulties.

Abbreviations

FCBE	The First Cycle of the Basic Education
GCC	The Gulf Cooperation Council
LD	Learning Difficulties
LDP	Learning Difficulties Programme (Resource Room)
LDT	Learning Difficulties Teachers
HT	Headteachers
MoE	The Ministry of Education
PD	Professional Development
SEN	Special Education Need

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The Ministry of Education (MoE) (MoE, 2014) in Oman gives free education to students of all ages, which includes access to general education, basic education, post-basic education, and special educational needs (SEN). The scope of special educational needs has become increasingly broad in recent years in Oman. In the academic year 1974 to 1975, the MoE in Oman developed a section in the Directorate of General Education related to special educational services, which was launched when it sent children with SEN to study abroad. The MoE in Oman established Al Amal School in 1980 for students with hearing impairments. Later, in the academic year of 2000, the MoE established an institute for students with visual impairments, known as the Omar bin Al-Khatib Centre. The MoE (2014) also implemented a policy of taking in children with SEN at the same level as students without SEN, at the basic educational level.

In this study, the term *learning difficulty* (LD) is used, instead of the more established term *learning disability*, to take into consideration the unique socio-cultural educational setting of Oman. In Oman, the term *learning difficulty* (LD) is more widely used and known. Westwood (2008) explains that the term LD is not directly linked to sensory, physical, or intellectual disability (ID); rather, LD are caused by external socio-cultural problems, along with restricted opportunities for learning, lack of support from family, and limited exposure to teaching in 'the early years. Lindsay (2003) states that children who have LD do not face any major problems regarding their general intelligence (IQ) and do not experience any major problems regarding emotional disorders or permanent ID. In addition, Bender (2008) asserts that students with LD benefit from interaction with their teachers.

Kugelmass (2004) suggests that students with LD face problems, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, and attention deficit disorders. In the view of Rose (2001), dyslexia is a challenge in learning, where an individual experiences difficulty with the ability to read and use words fluently, as well as being able to spell those words. The characteristics of dyslexia consist of difficulties in verbal memory, as well as difficulties with speed processing of words and phrases. Researchers report that approximately 10% of all children have dyslexia to some extent (LearningDifficulties 2014).

As Al-Ghafri (2009) highlights, in Oman, LD is the term used to refer to those students who face difficulties in accomplishing specific tasks, such as writing, reading, and mathematics, but the students are considered to have an average or above-average capacity to deal with the

overall curriculum if offered support and help. Al-Ghafri (2009) further specifies that the key purpose of LD programmes in Oman was to give support to those students who have difficulty coping with the usual requirements of school on their own, while providing early identification of this issue and intervening with those students. LD programmes in Oman are intended to raise awareness of the significance of helping students with LD in society; therefore, the concept of LD is utilised by the current study in the context of Oman.

1.2 The Research Problem

At the literature level, the research problem focuses on the mixed findings regarding the appropriateness of using resource rooms among children with LD. Based on the literature review, the appropriateness of using resource rooms among children with LD appears mixed. One perspective is that the resource room is an enhanced, effective, and convenient method of teaching students with LD (Craig 2006). However, another perspective shows that resource rooms restrict the social interaction of children with LD (Al-Ghafri 2009). Students with LD are more susceptible to emotional and social problems, compared to students without SEN (Bryan et al. 2004).

Children with LD receive support two or three times a week for 45 mins per session. The session might occur one-to-one with the teacher or in a small group facilitated by the teacher. The small group sessions provide opportunities for social interaction where, in the general education setting, students who do not have LD might be more confident and dominate the class discussion. The resource room might improve the confidence of a student who has LD to communicate. As the student's confidence to communicate builds, he or she can participate more in class discussion in the general education setting. Social restrictions for children with LD might be exacerbated by a teacher, whether in the general education setting or the resource room, if the student is not encouraged to participate in class discussion. This discouragement might affect the student's self-efficacy, thereby influencing his or her academic achievements.

At the local level, the research problem is that the placement of children with LD in resource rooms within the specific geographic context of Oman has been principally unexplored (Chappell 2000; Al-Ghafri 2009; Cook and Inglis 2012). The resource room programme was initially used in the West, and then applied to an Omani population. When the resource room programme was introduced to Oman, it was piloted in two schools; however, the resource room was not implemented in the same way as in the West by the MoE (2012b). For example, the resource room teachers did not (and still do not) undergo the same quality of training as those in the West, and so the Omani resource room teachers are less qualified. The result of this lack of training

means that Omani resource room pupils might be misdiagnosed, and thereby receive insufficient or incorrect support. The environment and facilities to teach children with LD were not to the standard of the Western resource room programme, which added to the poor quality of support provided to the children with LD. This current research seeks to explore the shortcomings of the resource room programme, as implemented in Oman. The proper and effective implementation of the support services to children with LD through using resource rooms has not yet been achieved in Oman (MoE 2014b). The results of the study might address the gap in the literature regarding the use of resource rooms in Oman.

There is a lack of research that focuses on the appropriateness of the placement of children with LD in resource rooms in Oman. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the use of the resource room and the ways in which it supports children with LD in the First Cycle of Basic Education (FCBE) in Muscat, based on the perceptions of key stakeholders, such as parents, children with LD, school inspectors, headteachers, and resource room teachers. Based on the assertions of Jankowicz (2005), researchers tend to outline certain questions in the research because they form the basis for the research problem to be defined. Research questions help the researcher to narrow down the best available evidence about the problem or issue that is resolved via the research study (Gray 2009; Walliman 2011).

All government state schools use the Arabic language to teach all subjects with the exception of the English language. If a child has difficulty in reading and writing, this issue can affect their learning in almost all taught subjects. For this reason, the researcher of this current project has focused on reading and writing. By investigating stakeholders' perceptions, the researcher could understand the barriers to and facilitators of supporting children with LD to develop reading and writing skills. Understanding the benefits and limitations of using the resource room might help to better the learning environment of children with LD.

In recent years, the Omani government has increased its investment in the resource room, which suggests that the current shortcomings of the resource room may be remedied (MoE 2012b). However, the issues of teaching staff remaining insufficiently trained (MoE 2012b) and of where to apply this investment so that the learning environment can be improved remains a challenge. The results of this current research might provide evidence through interviews (with pupils and resource room stakeholders) and classroom observations that could identify where resources need to be applied. Therefore, the researcher identified the following two research questions that guided this study:

1. What are the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the FCBE in Oman for supporting children with LD?

2. What are the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource room programmes regarding the resource room initiative in the FCBE in Oman?

Rugh (2012) conducted research in countries such as Egypt, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and finds that it is generally perceived that children with LD often experience challenges in reading and/or writing. This issue is the main reason that in these countries more support at school is given to children with LD, thereby providing them with the opportunity to gain a basic level of education. In the Omani government, policies favour SEN services for children with LD in all schools. However, little research was conducted on the education provision for students with LD in Oman. This issue is generally due to the government's focus on SEN services research. Further, the Omani government places specific focus on the FCBE, where children encounter difficulties in reading or writing. For this purpose, the government has also invested adequately in the resource room, where education for children with LD is provided (Subhi-Yamin 2009).

Although the situation looks positive in the light of the research completed by Al-Ghafri (2009) on special education services in Oman, a deeper understanding of stakeholders' views is required to understand the opportunities and challenges inherent in the resource room strategies. In the West, the term *resource room* is usually used to describe the room in which children with LD learn with provision for their LD (McNamara 1989; Bender 2008). In Oman, the term *resource room* is not used because the resource room means the computer room. Instead, the term *LD classroom* is used by the MoE (2012b). The term *resource room* is commonly used within the international community to describe a classroom in which children with LD receive additional support. Other terms are used, such as *pull-out programme* in Rea et al. (2002) and *mainstream class* in Hove (2015). For the purpose of this current research, the term *resource room* is used to describe the room where students with SEN receive education to support their specific educational needs, as this term is more commonly used within the international community.

In Oman, the resource room is used as part of the inclusive programme. However, this use may cause a misinterpretation of the function of the resource room. The resource room may be used as part of or in parallel to an inclusive programme, because in Oman the application of the resource room comes from the American guidelines for SEN (MoE 2012b). In the author's experience, in Oman, children with LD attend the resource room for 45-minute sessions twice a week (MoE 2012a; 2012b). Part of the shortcoming of the Omani resource room programme is that the amount of time and support provided to children with LD is not dependent on the type or

severity of their LD, which puts some children with LD at more of a disadvantage than other students.

1.3 The Rationale of the Study

The rationale for the study was that addressing the gap in understanding, regarding the role of resource rooms, could lead to a greater understanding of the appropriateness of the educational accommodation setting in Oman. According to Oslund (2015), the use of resource rooms, where children spend time in both mainstream classrooms and in specialized care during a school day, is a relatively new practice. More information is needed based on the perceptions of key stakeholders about the use of resource rooms as a strategy that could help students with LD, given that their participation is often crucial in the success of resource rooms (Al-Khateeb and Hadidi 2009; Somaily et al. 2012). The effectiveness of resource rooms can be influenced by attitudes, involvement, and the collaboration of parents, teachers, and school administrators, underscoring the need to explore their perceptions.

Inclusive education is effective for students with LD (Oslund 2015). Resource rooms have the potential to assist children with LD in Oman. The MoE provided sufficient resource room services for children with LD; however, the critical question was how the use of resource rooms could support children with LD based on the perceptions of key stakeholders. Omani researchers, such as Al-Said (2005) and Profanter (2009), have explored the general services currently provided to students with SEN,. However, this current study goes further and could provide the first empirical study data about the resource room from the Omani context. This focus might provide insights into factors that could inhibit the provision of the resource room service for children with LD.

At the local level, the rationale for the study was that limited research had been conducted about the placement of children with LD in resource rooms within the specific geographic context of Oman (Chappell 2000; Al-Ghafri 2009; Cook and Inglis 2012). In the Sultanate of Oman, there were only a few studies that explored the use of resource rooms for children with LD (Al-Ghafri 2009; Cook and Inglis 2012). Thus, there was a need to explore the perceptions of the key stakeholders of the use of resource rooms in Oman to improve the implementation of the educational setting strategy.

The personal motivation of a researcher that leads to the development of a study, where a topic is explored in detail, provides an understanding of the topic and its significance in a

practical scenario (Latham and Pinder 2005). For this research, the personal motivation of the researcher that relates to this is that the researcher underwent a similar experience in their personal life, with a close friend's son, who had a major LD. The parents of this child also experienced many challenges during his childhood, as his teachers were not cooperative in the first few years of his education, which resulted in his being unable to adjust to the mainstream primary school learning environment. This incident motivated the researcher to explore the significance of the resource room as an alternative to mainstream education, where children with LD, in the FCBE in Oman, are provided with sufficient support.

As a professional, the researcher is motivated to help children with LD, their parents, and educators through enhanced understanding of the appropriateness of using resource rooms both for academic and social development. Moreover, the researcher is encouraged to analyse the main issues of this study so that it might help to improve the educational facilities provided for students with LD in Oman. Therefore, by conducting this research, the researcher can fulfil the personal aim and intention of helping the families and educators of children with LD and children with LD themselves by investigating and observing the practices and outcomes of resource room activities in Oman.

1.4 Significance of the Research

The significance for the study is to contribute to the existing knowledge base on resource rooms by addressing the gap in understanding of the role of resource rooms as an educational environment that can support children with LD, based on the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors. The conceptual significance of the study is to expand the utility of the inclusion model and social theory within the specific context of education in Oman. By expanding the utility of the inclusion model in all school activities, children with LD might improve their social integration, and therefore their proficiency, academic achievements, and self-efficacy. The inclusion model, applied in Oman, could provide new information on how resource rooms, a typology of inclusion, could provide an opportunity for teachers to give specialized attention to students with LD without completely removing them from mainstream classrooms (Auclair et al., 2008; Konza 2008; Lamport, Graves, and Ward 2012; Pavey et al. 2013). Social theory provides insights into the role of the educational environment in the learning process of children with LD. Both theories provide insights into why the use of resource rooms could be beneficial to children with LD in Oman. Therefore, the theoretical significance of the study is the expanded utility of the inclusion model and social theory within the specific context of education in Oman.

The current research explores the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the FCBE in Muscat for supporting children with LD and investigates the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors, in both inclusion and resource room programmes, of the resource room initiative in Oman. The Gulf Co-operation Council countries (GCC), one of which is Oman, and Middle Eastern countries have realised the importance of education and have begun to dedicate themselves to good-quality education, as well as education for students with LD. In Omani schools, there are challenges faced by children with LD and their families to obtain sufficient support in a general educational setting. This current research demonstrates the lack of insight into the requirements of children with LD and the current lack of services provided to children with LD in the resource room.

The significance of this current study is that it might provide deeper understanding of the services and outcomes of the resource room, the overall need for correct diagnosis and support, and sufficient assistance from both educators and parents for children with LD. The results of this study might provide educators with an understanding of the multiplicity of resources required to teach children with LD, while informing the development of approaches for assessing children with LD. Finally, the results might be used to develop a systemic, universal, and integrated approach to the resource room services for children with LD based on the experiences and perceptions of key stakeholders (children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors).

In Oman, the problem of the resource room is not the lack of them, but the policies that surround them (i.e., the implementation of the services of the resource room). Services include the process of diagnosing students with LD, the provision of qualified LD teachers, and the provision of a resource room committee in which parents, teachers, and psychologists with a specialism in LD collaborate. The MoE in Oman does not review the resource room programme and therefore does not make improvements where required. This issue demonstrates a lack of support from the MoE in Oman. This lack of support means that few teachers are trained as resource room teachers, resulting in a lack of supply if a teacher is absent.

1.5 Implications of Research

After successful completion, the study under examination might provide benefit in numerous areas, specifically those associated with this research directly or indirectly (i.e., children with LD who use the resource room and their parents, teachers of the resource room, headteachers, and school inspectors) by means of exploring their views in order to develop

Chapter 1

theories that would improve the current educational system in Oman for children with LD. The results have implications regarding both theoretical and practical domains, expanding the literature on resource rooms and enhancing the educational inclusion of the children's achievements.

The theoretical usefulness of the research is in the collection and review of extensive literature on resource rooms and in comparing these with the practices of inclusion and mainstreaming for FCBE children with LD, in the areas of writing and reading (Ferrante 2012). The theoretical framework of the research is based on the important concepts and models of using resource room techniques in the primary level in a general educational sitting. Therefore, an understanding of these theoretical concepts and a review of the literature from previous research studies provides a comprehensive account of the research topic (Collins and Fauser 2005). The contribution to the theoretical framework is further discussed in Chapter 3. The results of the study could provide a theoretical foundation supporting the appropriateness of resource rooms in assisting children with LD in writing and reading.

The practical usefulness of this research is to gain an understanding of the application of the resource room from the perspective of children with LD who use the resource room, parents of children with LD, teachers of the resource room, headteachers and school inspectors. The views of these stakeholders on the practice of using the resource room is an important constituent of the qualitative data analysis. The perceptions of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors on inclusion can provide insights into their practices regarding the use of resource rooms to address the educational needs of children with LD. Furthermore, the analysis of the collected data will assist future research in devising problem statements, and the findings may be used as the base for future investigations into the implications of the use of resource rooms, and their success as an alternative to mainstream education. As far as future research is concerned, research is a dynamic process and the definitions and concepts of the resource room used in this research may be used in the future, according to the future needs of children with LD.

This research might also assist the MoE in Oman in adopting more clearly defined concepts of the application of the resource room programme for children with LD. Moreover, the management of schools in Oman could also identify areas where improvements to the resource room programme could be made. This research is also expected to be of interest to several domestic and foreign education agencies that work for the welfare and wellbeing of children with LD. In other words, they could become familiar with the practice of using the resource room and the implications for FCBE in Oman, which could also provide funds to help these schools to

perform better.

1.6 The Structure of the Study

This thesis consists of seven chapters. This outline is a brief summary of each chapter. Chapter 1 involves a brief introduction to the research and the background of the education system in Oman. The rationale of the research draws on arguments from the current literature of LD and the remedial techniques of resource rooms. The aims and objectives of the research are based on a detailed problem statement derived from the basic concepts of these remedial techniques. The rest of the chapter is concerned with the research questions, research beneficiaries, study limitations, and structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 contains a detailed account of previous contributions to research in the area of special education. Any literature regarding the problem addressed in the study is examined in this chapter. The research of different scholars into LD has also been critically discussed. The literature under consideration provides a critical discussion of the concepts of, the approaches to, and techniques of the teaching and the learning of children with LD in the resource room and the general education setting.

Chapter 3 involves the discussion of the theoretical framework of this thesis. The theoretical framework is based on the theories and research related to the resource room and mainstream education techniques used in schools for children with LD. The implementation of a resource room and its consequences are also part of this theoretical framework. The conceptual framework is developed by the research that is based on the success of using the resource room, the teaching strategies, the education environment/setting, and reading and/or writing instructions given to children with LD from the resource room teacher.

Chapter 4 presents the research methodology. A qualitative research methodology is used, with multiple sources of data, which is based on the case study research perspective. A purposive sampling technique is used to select seven schools for data collection, out of 39 in the FCBE in Muscat, Oman. The primary data collection methods used include interviews of school inspectors, headteachers, resource room teachers, children with LD, and parents of children with LD; observation sheets; and documentation reviews.

Chapters 5 and 6 present the research findings, depending on the trends identified in the collected data. and meeting the desired objectives of the research. In addition, the findings are discussed in light of the theoretical and conceptual framework. The application of the resource

Chapter 1

room technique is explored in view of the data analysis and literature review. This chapter provides answers to the objectives and the research questions of the study.

Chapter 7 discusses conclusions drawn from the research findings based on the research evidence, and describes the contribution to knowledge and theory. The implications of the research are addressed by answering the research questions laid out in Chapter 1.

Chapter 8 presents the conclusion. This chapter puts forward recommendations for the educational regulatory authorities and education stakeholders for schools in Oman to improve the use of resource room techniques and their applications for schools.

1.7 Summary of Chapter One

Quality education for students with LD is a priority in Oman (Subhi-Yamin 2009). As a result, several programmes and initiatives were developed to assist children with LD to reach their potential through resource rooms. At the literature level, the research problem focuses on the mixed findings regarding the appropriateness of using resource rooms among children with LD (Al-Zoubi and Abdel Rahman 2012; Craig 2006; Elbaum 2002). At the local level, the research problem focuses on the placement of children with LD in resource rooms in Oman (Chappell 2000; Al-Ghafri 2009; Cook and Inglis 2012).

Given this research problem, the aims of this study are (a) to explore the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the FCBE in Muscat for supporting children with LD and (b) to investigate the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource room programmes, regarding the resource room initiative in Oman. The theoretical significance of the study is an expanded literature and framework about the usefulness of resource rooms in addressing the needs of children with LD. The practical usefulness of this research is an enhanced understanding of the application of the resource room from the perspective of children with LD who use the resource room, parents of children with LD, teachers who use the resource room, headteachers, and school inspectors. The results might be instrumental in more effective policies and practices in resource room programmes in Oman.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

2.1 Introduction

The general problem encountered in the study is the mixed results in the literature on the appropriateness of using resource rooms among children with LD. The specific problem encountered is the lack of exploration of the placement of children with LD in resource rooms within the specific geographic context of Oman (Chappell 2000; Al-Ghafri 2009; Cook and Inglis 2012). The purpose of this study is to understand the use of the resource room and how it supports children with LD in the FCBE in Muscat, based on the perceptions of key stakeholders, such as parents, children with LD, school inspectors, headteachers, and resource room teachers. In alignment with this purpose, the focus of the literature review is to explore the existing literature on inclusion, resource rooms, learning disabilities, and learning difficulties (LD).

The review begins with a section on inclusion programmes, examining the concept and its relationship to resource rooms. This second section examines the concepts of learning disabilities and LD as a background from which to understand the concept and implications of resource rooms, which forms the central topic of discussion in the study. The third section focuses on the concept of the resource room, including its history and purpose. In alignment with the second research question, the next section provides a review of literature on the roles and attitudes of teachers, parents, and school administrators towards resource rooms. As the specific research question includes the local geographical context of Muscat, Oman, the next section will focus on the status of special education in Oman. The next section will highlight the research gap, and the review will end with a summary of the key findings of the review.

2.2 Definition of Learning Disabilities and Difficulties

The two central topics covered in the purpose of the study and the research questions are inclusion programmes and the resource room. Both these topics are centred on learning disabilities. The basic philosophy of inclusion is inspired by the rejection of the utilization of different classrooms and schools to differentiate students with disabilities from students without disabilities (Cologon 2013). Resource rooms, similarly, are learning spaces for students with disabilities through special educational needs teachers in a regular school (Al-Zoubi and Abdel Rahman 2016). Given the importance of the concept of learning disabilities and LD in both these topics, it is important to begin with a review of literature examining and clarifying these concepts.

It is essential to distinguish between the definitions of learning difficulties (LD) and learning disabilities because these are two different concepts. However, in Oman, there is no difference between the two, which might be a problem in relation to inclusion and consequently, resource rooms, given the lack of research on the topic in the context of Oman (Al-Mahrezi, Al-Futaisi, and Al-Mamari 2016). Certain researchers in the field fail to differentiate clearly between LD and learning disabilities (Bender and Larkin 2009). However, the terms do not have the same meaning; readers can, therefore, become confused about what the researcher is trying to convey. On the contrary, Padeliadu and Zigmond (1996) assert that the two terms were generic concepts and argue that they are interchangeable. Thus, it is important to clarify the difference and the approach taken in this study.

The term *learning disability* is more prevalent in the United States (U.S.), while *learning difficulties* (LD) is more commonly used in the United Kingdom (U.K.). Wong et al. (2011) further elaborate this concept:

Children with specific learning difficulties exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written languages; these may be manifested in disorders of listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling or arithmetic. (p. 8)

Section 193 A of the Learning Difficulty Assessments Statutory Guidance (2013) provided another definition of LD. LD is defined being experienced by those individuals who “have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age” (Department for Education and Department of Health 2014, para. 4). In the U.K., the term LD is used differently from learning disability. LD is an umbrella term for a broader category of students. In the U.K. literature, learning disability has also been defined. Emerson and Heslop (2010) provide a working definition of learning disability that a lot of scholars use:

Learning disability includes the presence of a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with; a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning); which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development. (Emerson and Heslop 2010, p.1)

Moreover, in the U.K., the term LD is used to refer to individuals with specific LD, such as dyslexia. It is also used to refer to individuals who do not have long-term or permanent physical impairment. In this context, “moderate learning difficulty, severe learning difficulty and profound multiple learning difficulty all refer to generalised learning difficulty of varying severity” (Lacey and Scull 2015, p. 242). This fact shows that learning disabilities are different from specific LD;

therefore, these terms are addressed in this research and treated as separate entities. According to Scanlon (2013), specific LD are issues or concerns in an individual's learning that cannot be easily explained by either lack of cognitive ability or deficient schooling. Specific LD are considered as an attempt to explain learning challenges (Lo and Yuen 2015; Scanlon 2013). Moreover, the term can also be used to provide a personalized approach to teaching and learning (Lo and Yuen 2015; Scanlon 2013). LD are specific because the individual only has a specific impaired cognitive function, such as reading or writing. Because of this specific impaired cognitive function, the overall learning experience of the individual is negatively affected (Cologon, 2013).

Learning disabilities are normally caused by gaps in literacy, inadequate teaching methods, excessive academic changes, or educational issues due to various deficiencies or psychosocial factors and neurological problems in children (Al-Zoubi and Bani Abdel Rahman 2016). However, LD are the result of functional problems in the central nervous system (CNS), resulting in failure of information processing related to reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. LD is not rare, and many teaching professionals encounter it during their career. The most critical question in the issue of LD is whether the teacher is capable of supporting and addressing the needs of the students in order to help in their education and development of the self (Commodari 2013). In Oman, teachers are the ones to address the needs of children with LD because some schools do not have special educational needs teachers or specialists (Al-Zoubi and Bani Abdel Rahman 2016).

In Oman, the concept of LD is highly attributed to the Western concept of LD and the education system (Emam and Kazem 2014). There is a concept of LD in Oman but only in identifying difficulties in students. There are no clear guidelines about how to address students with specific LD (MoE 2014). Although the term comes from a Western approach, regulation of the definitions of learning terms in Oman is essential. In Oman, there is currently no regulation of the definitions of learning terms, which can create confusion with the diagnosis of the disability, and therefore may affect the approach applied to supporting children with LD (MoE 2014a; 2014b). There are no clear guidelines between what is diagnosed as learning disabilities and LD.

Al-Ghafri (2009) also mentions that in Oman, the term LD is used in a similar way to how U.K. scholars and experts use the term. LD refers to students who have difficulties in particular tasks. For instance, a student finds it difficult to read, write, or do mathematics. However, these students have average or above-average capability. Moreover, these students can also cope with the general curriculum but they need adequate support. Al- Ghafri (2009) further asserted that:

The main aims of the LDs Programme in Oman are to provide support for students who cannot cope with normal school requirements; to provide early diagnosis and

intervention for students with LDs; and to raise awareness of the importance of helping students with LDs across the community. (Al-Ghafri 2009, p. 171)

Even though the Omani definition of LD shares the same definition in the U.K. and it has been established that, in some contexts, learning disabilities and LD are different, from the Omani perspective, learning disabilities and LD are used similarly, especially by basic education institutions (MoE 2014). The reason for this difference is because there are only a few studies that try to distinguish between learning disabilities and LD. In this study, the definition of LD in Oman and U.K. is used. Thus, in this thesis, the term LD is used to refer to those students who face difficulties in accomplishing specific tasks, such as writing, reading, and mathematics, but are considered to have an average or above-average capacity to deal with the overall curriculum if offered support and help (Al-Ghafri 2009).

LD includes problems such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, and attention deficit disorders, when those problems exist without any major concurrent emotional disorders or permanent ID (Kugelmass 2004; Lindsay 2003). The focus of this research is about the reading and writing LD of students in Oman. With the definition clarified, the next section includes a review of literature on inclusion programmes, another significant construct of the study purpose and research questions.

2.3 Successful Strategies for Teaching Primary School Students with LD

Besides problem recognition and difficulty identification, there are many practical strategies that must be applied by primary school teachers. The strategies discussed are those that are aimed at the development of reading and writing skills, since this research project addresses predominantly these areas of LD.

Williams et al. (2006) assert that provision of reading lists and learning materials to all students at the beginning of each term is important. This strategy will allow slow learners to find the curricular material in advance and prepare it with parents to make better progress in class. In addition, Whiteley and Smith (2001) propose that the recorded materials, such as audio books and computer programmes, should be provided to students who experience problems with reading and decoding printed text. As a result, students with LD can integrate their listening skills and reading skills.

In another study, Valdois et al (2004) discuss the frequent reviews and summaries of what was done during previous classes. The application of this strategy can activate students' memory and render it easier for them to perceive new material. Reading and writing activities can be supported by previous experience and knowledge. In this regard, advance explanation of complex

terminology and unknown words can provide a review of difficult terms ahead of the class. Reading and interpretation difficulties can be avoided if new words are introduced by primary school teachers (Stein and Talcott 1999). In order to support the understanding of a given text to students with LD, Smith-Spark and Fisk (2007) suggest highlighting the main ideas and content of each lesson on the board or in an interactive presentation.

Conversely, elimination of audio and visual distractions in the external environment of the classroom affects the level of distraction in the classroom. Learning information cannot be perceived and “digested” effectively when students are disturbed by a range of factors from the external environment (Valdois et al. 2004). For example, some students with poor attention and concentration are distracted when windows are open in the classroom (Bashir and Scavuzzo 1992). This idea seems to be less viable due to the isolation and detachment of the students from the environment. Though students might be distracted from the surroundings, the available visual aids in these surroundings can still be used in the classroom lectures to help students to understand elements in these surroundings, their names, and use in language.

Consequently, teachers who work with students with LD need to maintain a balance of oral and written practices. Otherwise, reading and writing skills will be isolated from each other, and students will lose connection between these interrelated activities (Gersten et al. 2005). Thomson (2003) and Townend and Turner (2000) argue that dyslexia and dysgraphia are not necessarily connected to each other; on the other hand, Graham and Herbert observe that success in writing enhances pupils’ reading skills because similar competences are transferred from one important area of learning to the other (Graham and Hebert 2010).

When students with LD have visual material and support, their reading and writing skills benefit from multi-channel communication and using technology. This strategy is consistent with Hasselbring and Glaser (2000). In this study, the authors observe that information is perceived and shared by students in the learning environment more easily with the support of visual aids. When more channels (e.g., visual, audio and tactile) are employed in learning strategies, students with SEN have a better chance of overcoming their LD (Al- Yaari 2013). Al-Yaari’s (2013) study of students between eight and 18 years in schools in Saudi Arabia partially supports the idea that “using audio-visual aids and computer assisted language instruction (CALI) with the students with LD is important in teaching language productive skills in general and speaking skills in particular” (p. 231). Similarly, the utilisation of visual and graphical means of data presentation can positively affect the comprehension of students with LD. Successful and effective primary school teachers are expected to use schemes, diagrams, and illustrations with

colour presentations to attract students' attention and stimulate their perceptual skills (Andersson 2010; Stein and Talcott, 1999).

The current study observes the teaching strategies in the resource room that are used to teach students with LD in the FCBE in Oman. There is no specific strategy that is more effective than others, based on the student's' needs or academic skills, or on the Individualized Education Programme (IEP) of a student with LD. The current study outlines strategies for teaching students with LD through the literature review. These include multiplicity-senses or the use of more than one strategy at a time.

This section of the literature review has already emphasised the importance of visual images and pictures for teaching students with LD. These findings are supported by Bender and Larkin (2009), who examine the role of picture-based learning. They argue, the following:

The use of pictures can result in enhancing the memory of students with learning difficulties, because different brain areas are involved; picture-based learning involves the visual cortex more than merely reading, and the spatial areas in the right hemisphere of the brain are more involved also. (Bender and Larkin 2009, p. 137)

Hocutt (1996) argues that the availability of placement programmes (educational setting) increased due to the growing popularity of personalised and individualised teaching. Teachers who are attentive to the personalities of pupils are thus able to recognise their LD at an early stage (Hocutt 1996). This timely identification of special learning needs allows teachers to spend more time and effort on particular students who have difficulties in reading and writing (Smith-Spark and Fisk 2007). Nevertheless, it can be critically remarked that the intuitive and self-motivated participation of teachers is not enough for the successful management of LD. For example, education authorities should provide primary schools with specialised equipment (e.g., visual learning, IT-based technology and specialised textbooks) in order to construct an effective educational setting for students with SEN (Cook 2004). Another practical recommendation is that electronic databases are of great use in cataloguing all students with LD and arranging specialised learning material for them. It is also valid to argue that teachers' creativity and commitment contributes to the creation of convenient and comfortable educational settings for students with LD (Smith-Spark and Fisk 2007).

These findings indicate that the overall success of primary school teachers is determined by the degree to which they employ different methods to induce learning and information sharing. Skilful teachers may deploy alternative and supportive channels in order to stimulate individual reading and writing skills (Smith-Spark and Fisk 2007). However, these presented

strategies of teaching children with reading and writing difficulties must be applied by experienced teachers according to the context of teaching. Some practices are compatible with learning in groups, when children with LD who are included in the classroom and can interact with other pupils in the course of learning (i.e., highlighting the main ideas, lesson summaries, and visual means of data presentation). By contrast, other teaching strategies can be used only when children with LD are taught separately (e.g., the provision of specialised reading lists, the provision of taped material in combination with reading tasks, and the elimination of visual distractions) because some students with LD have problems with short-term memory and perception (Whiteley and Smith 2001; Gersten et al. 2005; Bander 2008).

There are different effective strategies for teaching children with LD (Bender 2012; Gerber 2005; Glomb and Morgan 1991; Lerner and Johns 2008; Sencibaugh 2007); thus, in this study, the researcher, by interviewing teachers of students with LD, ascertains strategies currently applied in the resource room in Oman. Furthermore, the researcher explores how these teachers diagnose, evaluate, and assess children with LD in the resource room in Oman. Mainstream teachers have not been included in this study, as they do not teach in the resource room, and this study focuses specifically on the resource room.

2.4 Inclusion Programmes

The resource room is an inclusion typology where students spend some of the day in the mainstream classroom and some of the same day in an SEN classroom (Al-Zoubi and Abdel Rahman 2016). A resource room is one of the inclusion programmes being used in the Middle East and in Oman and is the focus of this study. Therefore, in order to gain a complete understanding of this topic covered in the purpose of the study and the research questions, it is important to begin with a review of literature on inclusion programmes and how they relate to the resource room.

Defining the concept of inclusion, Kugelmass (2004) noted, "Rather than focusing only on the education of children with disabilities and others with special educational needs, inclusive education is understood as a philosophy supporting and celebrating diversity in its broadest sense" (p. 3). In other words, inclusion implies that disabled children are not isolated in special groups from non-disabled students. This approach to education was approved by UNESCO because it reflects universal educational and human values, where it was declared that all students should be provided with equal educational opportunities (Bender 2008). Sebba and Ainscow (1996) defined inclusion as,

the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering its curricular organization and provision. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend and, in so doing, reduces the need to exclude pupils. (p. 9)

The concept of inclusion is highly consistent with the socio-cultural perspective that argues that all educational initiatives should be integrated in a rich social and cultural context (Kraker, 2000). Inclusion is associated with the highest degree of students' involvement in social processes and maximum time spent with peers (Conrad and Whitaker, 1997). Similarly, Antia et al. (2002) argue that inclusion signifies a student who is deaf/hard of hearing completely belonging to and having full participation in a regular class in a regular school and its community. They compare this with "integration" or "mainstreaming", both indicating that the student who is deaf/hard of hearing is treated similarly to a visitor with provisional admission to a regular classroom but with primary affiliation to an SEN classroom or resource room. Nevertheless, the definition, provided by Hick et al. (2009), illustrates a certain difference:

The placement of pupils with disabilities or special needs in mainstream schools; there were of course different degrees of integration, from full-time placement of a child with difficulties in a mainstream class in his/her local school, to the placement of a pupil in a special class or unit attached to a mainstream school. (p. 2)

Ainscow (1996) elaborates the concept of inclusive education as a process of responding to all students as individuals in schools, and the curriculum is designed and reviewed according to their individual needs. In another perspective, Thomas (1997) asserts that inclusive education considers giving normal school experiences to the children with SEN in the same classrooms with children having no special needs. This concept is different from integration, as it includes children with SEN in the mainstream with children who do not have SEN, rather than adopting special arrangements for these children in separate social settings. Ainscow (2000) emphasizes that in inclusion, all children need to participate in all school activities and events, irrespective of their individual and specific needs. In this respect, Ainscow's (1996) Index of Inclusion adopts the term *inclusion* instead of *integration*, opening new avenues furthered by several scholars following this change of terms. This index has been proven useful in many respects, including attempts to use the best available literature in school development areas, especially for the process of inclusive schools, to design and review effective school practices. Thus, inclusion is about all features of the school being anticipatory and proactive; it is about management practices, the ethos of the school, and teachers' attitudes, as much as it is about teaching practices.

Thomas and Loxley (2001) suggest that inclusion does not assign limits around specific assumed difficulty. This means that, regardless of the origin of the difficulty, a child can be valued equally, respected in the same manner as students without difficulty, in order to be given opportunities at school. Therefore, the authors believe that the use of *inclusion* might mean the elimination of *special education*, where the distinction between students by labelling or placing them into either *special education* or *general education* would no longer occur (Stainback and Stainback 1992).

Inclusive education was defined by Duka and Tati (2015) as “the most favourable mean that creates the equal opportunities in education for all the children, with or without disabled abilities” (p. 20). UNESCO approved the concept of inclusive education because it promotes human rights and equality among students. Furthermore, the United Nation (UN) endorsed the UNESCO (2013) Salamanca Statement, which has a commitment to students with LD. The UN encourages the international community to sanction the approach of inclusive schooling and to develop special education as an essential part of all educational platforms. This statement was also endorsed by UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, and the World Bank for the implementation of this commitment in member nations of UN (The UNESCO, 2013).

The concept of inclusion was best defined by Sebba and Ainscow (1996) as

the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering its curricular organization and provision. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend and, in so doing, reduces the need to exclude pupils. (p. 9)

The concept of inclusion is consistent with the social perspective that argues that all educational initiatives should be integrated in rich social and cultural context (Pantić and Florian, 2015). Inclusion is associated with the highest degree of student involvement in the social processes and maximum time spent with peers (Cappella, Kim, Neal, and Jackson 2013). Similarly, Phinias, Jeriphanos, and Kudakwashe (2013) argue that inclusion signifies a student with LD completely belonging to and having full participation of a regular class in a regular school and its community. Nevertheless, the definition provided by Kershner and Farrell (2009) illustrates a certain difference. Kershner and Farrell state that there are degrees of integration concerning inclusion. The range of degrees is from the full-time placement of the student with LD in the general education class in his or her school to the full-time placement of a student with LD in a special class or room in the school.

Inclusive education is a process in which all students are considered in making the curriculum and designing the lessons every day that cater for the individual learning needs of all the students (Zundans-Fraser and Lancaster 2012). From another perspective, inclusive education means providing a normal school experience to students with LD and learning disabilities, for them to learn together in the same classroom with students who do not have SEN (Alhassan 2014). The concept of inclusion differs from integration, as it incorporates the mainstreaming of children in the mainstream classroom, rather than adopting specific arrangements to accommodate children with LD in separate settings, such as in a special education classroom where students with SEN study full time (Rodriguez and Garro-Gil 2015). Rodriguez and Garro-Gil (2015) assert that in inclusion settings, all children need to be part of all school activities and events, regardless of their individual needs.

In this sense, inclusion is about all the features of the school being anticipatory and proactive; it is about management practices, the ethos of the school, and teachers' attitudes, as much as it is about teaching practices. Cologon (2013) recommends that inclusion is about not limiting the student because of his or her LD or learning disability. Regardless of whether a child has an LD or not, the child must be respected and valued. Moreover, the child has to be given equal opportunities. There are also supporters of the term *inclusion* in order to eliminate the term *special education*, where there is a distinction made between students being placed in special education or general education. In using the word *inclusion*, this distinction will no longer happen. As inclusion does not put a "label" on students with SEN, by applying this educational environment, the stigma of having SEN that may occur is removed (Cologon 2013). This occurrence will also have a positive effect on students with SEN who may have low self-esteem, thereby enhancing the learning potential of students with SEN.

Several researchers have examined the impact of inclusive classrooms on the students. These studies have included the effect of inclusive classrooms on students through various factors, including student literacy skills (Dessementet, Bless, and Morin 2012), student responding in the classroom (Clarke, Haydon, Bauer, and Epperly 2015), self-compassion (Aydan and Seher 2013), and acceptance by peers (Bossaert, Colpin, Pijl, and Petry 2013). Dessementet et al. (2012) compare the academic progress of students with ID who were included in an inclusive classroom. Dessementet et al. conclude that students with ID make slightly increased progress in literacy skills compared to students with ID who are not placed in an inclusive classroom. Similarly, Clarke et al. (2015) conclude that five students with ID who were included in a general classroom demonstrated an increase in student responding and on-task behaviour. Waitoller and Artiles (2013) review the professional development (PD) research for inclusive education from 2000 to 2009. PD research for inclusive education usually utilizes a unitary approach toward difference

and exclusion. In another study, Aydan and Seher (2013) explore the teacher candidates' attitudes toward inclusion education regarding some variables and self-compassion levels. They find that self-compassion scores affect the attitudes of the teachers to inclusion education. In a related study, Gupta and Buwade (2013) explore the attitudes of parents to the inclusion of their child with disability in general classrooms, using the Attitude Toward Inclusion/Mainstreaming scale. The children's ages and genders are the most important factors that influence the parents' views about inclusion. Moreover, parents are more concerned about how the peers of their children will accept their children with disabilities. In a similar study, Bossaert et al. (2013) reveal that parents of preschool and primary school children are more concerned about whether their children's peers will accept their children inside the inclusive classroom.

Inclusive education has faced criticism for its claims of being based on human rights and equality. Critics of inclusive education highlight its policy-based approach and assert that inclusive education should not merely be about placing children with LD in mainstream classes; schools should also provide an inclusive environment throughout the school (Tienda 2013). Kauffman and Badar (2014) argue that the focus should not be on inclusion but rather on instruction; special education services should focus on effective instruction to each student with SEN. Another argument, raised by Lipsky and Gartner (1996), is that a homogenous education system should be introduced to students regardless of individual differences among students. This introduction is to ensure quality education for all students. However, teachers should also cater for the individualized needs of students with SEN. Lipsky and Gartner also point out the limitation of UNESCO's Salamanca Statement, stating that it emphasizes the uniqueness of the learners, but it does not provide any criteria for ways in which the uniqueness of the learners should be addressed. There are also no clear definitions of important terms in the statement. There was no model presented to implement inclusion. Thus, each country can have its own model of inclusion.

In the Arab region, the drive toward inclusive programmes in schools is at an early stage (Khochen and Radford 2012). The initiative of the National Inclusion Project (NIP) in Lebanon also contributed to the awareness of schools and the government of inclusive practices. The NIP has the potential to ensure that individuals with disability will not feel exclusion in society. Khochen and Radford (2012) conducted a mixed-method study in which 40 teachers were interviewed. The researchers found that teachers and headteachers in Lebanon have positive attitudes toward inclusion of students in mainstream schools. However, there were some teachers who had reservations about including all of the students, especially students with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. Challenges were also identified regarding inclusion programmes, such as qualified specialist teachers and the high cost of inclusion programmes. Khochen and Radford

recommend further research about the implementation of inclusive education in the Middle East. Similarly, Crabtree and Williams (2013) recommend that there should be an in-depth exploration of the ethical and geopolitical dimensions, underpinning research initiatives about inclusion programmes in this region.

Since special education is a new term in the Middle East, only a few researchers have explored inclusive education. Ikhateeb, Hadidi, and Alkhateeb (2016) review and analyse inclusive studies in Arab countries; they only identify 42 empirical studies. These studies were also published from 2010 to 2016. More than two-thirds of the studies come from United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. These countries were the first ones to revise the education programme to cater for the needs of students with SEN. Alkhateeb et al.'s study shows that there is little inclusive education research conducted in Arab countries. Alkhateeb et al. recommend that more research is needed in order to test the generalizability of the previous studies. Moreover, Alkhateeb et al. note that further research is needed to investigate and analyse inclusive education practices and demonstrate strategies for the effective implementation of inclusive education in Arab countries. Moreover, researchers find that school attendance is very poor among students with disabilities (Alborz, Slee, and Miles 2012). Alborz et al. (2012) recommend implementation of policies that emphasize the rights of individuals with disabilities within education.

Recent studies investigate the perception of teachers and parents toward inclusion. Abu-Hamour and Muhaidat (2014) investigate what the parents ($n = 148$) believe to be the most important prerequisite of child-based skills for successful inclusion. They show that education levels and the degree of the autistic spectrum disorder of the student affect the attitudes of parents. Parents also discussed several important skills that would indicate that students with SEN are ready for inclusion in mainstream school, such as "independent skills, playing skills, behavioural skills, imitation skills, routine skills, social skills, paying attention skills, language skills, and pre-academic and academic skills in that order" (Abu-Hamour and Muhaidat 2014, p. 4). From the perspectives of the teachers, Hamiour (2013) wanted to determine whether demographic factors of teachers affect their attitudes toward inclusion. A total of 532 teachers submitted questionnaires. Teachers have a positive and acceptable view of inclusion in their schools. There are significant differences in the different teachers' evaluations of special education. For example, teachers with Master's degrees have more positive evaluations than teachers without Master's degrees.

Previous researchers conclude that positive attitudes of teachers toward students with LD are crucial to the improvement of these students (Beacham 2012; Bhatnagar and Das 2014). One

of the most important factors for students with specific LD to be successful is the teacher (Woodcock and Vialle 2016). Based on the findings from 205 pre-service teachers, Woodcock and Vialle (2016) find that mainstream teachers have mixed responses to the inclusion of students in the classroom. Their attitudes toward inclusion are influenced by their exposure to inclusion during their pre-service teacher training. Thus, pre-service teacher training programmes have to be improved to ensure that teachers have positive attitudes toward inclusion.

In Oman, one study was found that examines teachers' attitudes and beliefs about students with LD. Hassan (2012) investigated mathematics teachers' educational beliefs as a function of knowledge about the academic characteristics, importance and use of teaching strategies, professional development, and teaching experience of pupils with LD. Based on 106 Omani mathematics teachers from the Sultanate of Oman, the authors reveal that 88% of the changes occurring in mathematics teachers' educational beliefs are influenced by the knowledge of academic characteristics, importance, and use of teaching strategies and professional development. However, even in this study, Hassan uses learning disability and LD interchangeably.

Both the studies of Abu-Hamour and Muhaidat (2014) and Hamiour (2013) discover that some factors influence the perception and attitudes of teachers and parents toward inclusion. However, these two studies might not be representative of the population of the Middle East. Both researchers suggested that more studies about inclusion should be conducted to reveal a more generalizable finding about the perception and attitudes of teachers and parents toward inclusion.

In the Middle East, special education is a new term; therefore, it is not surprising that there were only a few studies found about inclusion in the Middle East, which was the geographical region examined in this research. Previous researchers note that there is a need for more studies about special education programmes and inclusion programmes, as perceptions about disability and inclusive education are already changing in Arab countries (Al-Mahrezi et al. 2016; Al-Zoubi and Bani Abdel Rahman 2016; Crabtree and Williams 2013; Emam and Kazem 2014). A study on an inclusive education programme and the resource room, particularly in the context of Oman, is a significant contribution toward establishing the effectiveness of inclusive education against this criticism. This unique contribution to existing literature is also relevant where the concept of inclusive education in the Middle East is relatively new. The selection of Oman has also resulted in further contributions, where there was little literature available on inclusive education in the context of the Middle East.

The MoE in Oman has the goal of creating inclusive schools. Previous studies show that the attitudes of major stakeholders, such as principals, teachers (Ahsan, Sharma, and Deppeler 2012; Haj Hussien and Al-Qaryouti 2014), parents, and students (Georgiadi, Kalyva, Kourkoutas, and Tsakiris 2012; Haj Hussien and Al-Qaryouti 2015; Morin, Crocker, Beaulieu-Bergeron, and Caron 2013; Papaioannou, Evaggelinou, and Block 2014; Patel and Rose 2014), have a significant role in developing and implementing inclusive education successfully. Teachers, parents, students, and school administrators play a crucial role in the creation of inclusive schools.

2.5 The Resource Room

One of the educational placements for students in special education is a resource room (Al-Zoubi and Abdel Rahman 2016). The resource room is a classroom that is connected to regular school and includes individualized programmes in education for students with learning disabilities (Mohammed and Ahmad 2013). The resource room is aimed as a solution when general educators and general curriculum are not capable of providing answers to problems among students with learning disabilities (Raymond 2012). In general, students with learning disabilities are enrolled in the resource room programme and spend anywhere from 21% to 60% of their times in resource room during their normal school day (Lerner and Johns 2012). The resource room is the central topic of this study, which focuses on contributing additional findings on the effectiveness of resource room programmes from the perspectives of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in the context of Oman.

2.5.1 The Resource Room Concept

The resource room has a long history since it was first defined by Weiner in 1969; however, the idea of specialized education existed before Weiner defined resource rooms (Kavale and Forness 2012). The resource room plays a pivotal role because it facilitates essential supplementary services for children with LD in mainstream schools. Even though resource rooms are supplementary to mainstream schooling and not separate (i.e., a special school or special classroom), they can be subject to controversy (de Apodaca, Gentling, Steinhaus, and Rosenberg 2015). The resource room should be a focus for teaching the essential skills to students and classifying a group of basic activities pertaining to the resource room (Deshpande 2013). These activities should include provision of diagnostic and evaluation scales to identify students who have LD, giving appropriate instructional methods and group teaching for students. The group teaching involves grouping students with LD into groups of the same or similar LD and individual abilities.

In this study, the resource room is defined as an independent teaching strategy, implemented to ensure that the teacher addresses the needs of children with different LD. Children with LD are taken out of the mainstream classrooms for individualized and personalized instruction. The main characteristic of the resource room that is emphasized is that it provides a personalized learning environment for students with LD.

2.5.2 Purposes of Using Resource Rooms for Students with Learning Difficulties

The focus of the current study is students with LD, specifically reading and writing difficulties. Thus, the purpose of using the resource room, as a learning environment for children with LD, is specifically reviewed. Resource rooms are implemented and supported by teachers for several reasons. Resource rooms provide individualized learning and personalized classes where students can improve their sound recognition skills, pronunciation, and construction of syllables from sounds (Winebrenner and Kiss 2014). This improvement is of particular interest to the current study, in which the researcher focuses on the perspectives of reading and writing interventions regarding the resource room and students with disabilities. Moreover, children can also ask questions if some topics or rules are unclear to them. In the same way, children with dysgraphia can experience positive effects if they are in the resource room, as teachers apply different teaching interventions and strategies for teaching children with LD based on their IEP, and the IEP is concentrated on the children with LDs' writing ability. Nevertheless, as explained in the previous section of this literature review, the impact of the resource room as a supportive and educational environment for children with LD depends on the type of LD and degree of LD. When primary schools have many children with LD, the resource room might be the best educational setting for these students to learn (Kobayashi and Kuboyama 2003; Ebersbach et al. 2013; Winebrenner and Kiss 2014).

Resource rooms are helpful in teaching students with SEN. However, there is a need to test whether resource rooms are helpful in teaching children with LD (Bashir and Scavuzzo 1992). Given the lack of research on the topic, especially in the context of Oman, this proves to be a significant research gap that needs further contribution. Although the study of Bashir and Scavuzzo (1992) was conducted more than a decade ago, similar statements are made by Burns et al. (2013). Burns et al. conduct a similar study to examine ways in which personalized learning influences might overcome reading difficulties. They find that a highly individualized learning environment helps students with reading difficulties to overcome their difficulty. Burns et al.'s study is of particular importance to the current research, as it analyses the effect of the resource room on students with reading difficulties, highlighting the need for further research, especially in different geographical contexts. There are four types of resource room:

1. *Categorical Resource Rooms*: The most common category of resource rooms, this is where the learners who have difficulties pertaining to learning, such as behaviour and emotional disorders, are allocated the same resource room (McNamara 1989; Bender 2008). It may be explained in greater detail that categorical resource rooms incorporate students with similar learning difficulties. For instance, a categorical resource room that includes students with dyslexia does not cater for both dyslexia and dysgraphia (Stone and Reid 1994). It is conceded that it is challenging for small- and medium-sized schools to form categorical resource rooms, as they are unlikely to have many students with the same LD (Marcon 1999). At the same time, teachers' efforts are focused and directed in categorical resource rooms, which cannot be achieved easily in a cross-categorical resource room (Stone and Reid 1994).
2. *Cross-Categorical Resource Rooms*: In this type of resource room, learners are divided according to multiple needs without much attention given to the traditional learning deficiency categories of dyslexia and dysgraphia. Though this categorization may not facilitate the teachers in creating appropriate education programmes, focus is given to pointing out learners that have needs pertaining to academia, and behaviour and physical needs (Bender 2008). The latter are for students with different types of LD and, as reported by McNamara (1989), are the more common in contemporary primary schools because of the difficulty of numbers already mentioned. McNamara (1989) suggests that resource rooms should be cross-categorical, as most children learn ways in which to compensate for their LD from other group members.
3. *Non-Categorical Resource Rooms*: Such a resource room needs exceedingly well-trained teachers as a greater proportion of the learners having LD are not ready for such special education and receive such teaching as a trial and an experiment (Bender 2007; Hallahan et al. 2005; McNamara 1989). Interestingly, non-categorical resource rooms do not attempt to categorise LD, but rather accept all students who experience difficulties in education. The distinction between different LD is less important (Wong 2008).
4. *Itinerant Resource Programmes*: This resource group does not require its members to attend every day, but encourages meetings only when there is an educational necessity (Kuboyama and Kobayashi 2003). This arrangement of isolated and individualized learning is highly suitable for small and rural primary schools with limited resources.

Resource room teachers have different approaches in order to ensure that their teaching process is effective and that each student in the resource room receives appropriate support and assistance. McNamara (1989) argues that training for resource room teachers should start with the decision-making process and criteria for the reasons why students are placed in a specific resource room. However, it is essential to determine the type of resource room that a student with LD should be taught in by addressing the individual needs of resource room students. There should be clear goals for each LD child. Resource rooms should also request feedback from students and principals to ensure that improvements are continuously made. Resource room teachers should also try to gain feedback from parents of the student with LD.

Moody and Vaughn (1990) provide a different perspective of the resource room and its effectiveness in improving reading skills of its students. Moody and Vaughn examine the different instructional strategies, grouping practices, and the consequences of learning in the resource room for students with LD. The educator observed the whole-class instruction. Some teachers also used small groups and individualized activities. Fifty percent of the special education teachers provided differentiated instruction, activities, and materials to match the learning levels of the students they taught. The research finds no significant gains in reading comprehension for students learning in the resource room. Moreover, there was also inadequate reading progress of students. Thus, Moody and Vaughn conclude that the structure of resource rooms observed was a failure.

The relevance to the current research is that Burns et al. (2013) address the importance of techniques such as the resource room, for support of students with LD, such as reading and writing difficulties. The relevance that Burns et al.'s (2013) research has to the current research is that they address the importance of educational techniques for students with LD, such as the resource room, to support LD. However, Burns et al. (2013) conducted empirical research that did not attempt to compare learning effects in resource rooms, inclusion groups, and mainstreaming. However, research has found resource rooms useful in supporting student with writing difficulties (Auclair et al. 2008). By drawing comparisons between the educational environments (i.e., resource rooms, inclusion, and mainstreaming), stakeholders can better identify the most effective learning environment for children with LD. By studying the experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource room programmes, especially in the context of Oman, this study contributes not only to the lack of research in the existing literature on resource rooms in general, but also provides a further contribution to the existing literature on resource rooms internationally.

During the review of the literature, only one study was discovered on the use of resource rooms in the Middle East. Al-Zoubi, Bani, and Rahman (2016) identify obstacles in the learning disabilities resource room. Forty-two teachers working in the learning disabilities resource room in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia participated in the study. The authors developed their own questionnaire and administered it to the 42 teachers. Results reveal that obstacles in the learning disabilities resource room are the following: issues about the learning disabilities teacher, collaboration of others, and facilities and equipment.

Currently, there is a lack of knowledge about the use of resource room in the Middle East. Additionally, there is a lack of knowledge about the use and effectiveness of the resource room in the Sultanate of Oman. This lack of knowledge shows a gap in the use of inclusive practices, such as resource rooms, in Oman. It is important to learn more about resource rooms in the Middle East, since this is one of the strategies to help students with SEN. Moreover, teachers, parents, and school administrators also have a crucial role in the use of resource rooms. By examining their perspectives, the study also makes a general contribution to the research on resource rooms, as all their opinions are essential for making inclusive education effective, given their specific role in inclusive education in general and resource rooms in particular. Thus, it is also important to understand their perceptions and attitudes toward the use of resource rooms.

In addition to contributing to a gap in the research, the study also makes a positive contribution for policymakers in Oman to the field of inclusive education. In Oman, there are no written policies about resource rooms, or about teaching students with SEN (Al-Ghafri 2009; Al-Mahrezi et al. 2016; Al Riyami et al. 2004). Identification of these policies is important, especially for students with SEN who use the resource room. There should be policies about equal opportunities so that all students can benefit from the education system. Even though the resource room is not about policies, there should be written guidelines on the effective practices and ways in which to implement the programme. One of the most important aspects of resource room policies refers to the maximum number of students accepted in one resource room. In Oman, there is a need for a written policy about ways in which resource rooms should be utilized in accordance with the context of the school (Al Riyami et al. 2004; Al-Ghafri 2009). As there is a lack of research on inclusive education and resource rooms in the context of Oman, this study initiates a contribution to the literature. It might also initiate further dialogue on the need for reforms in Oman regarding inclusive education, in general, and resource rooms, in particular.

2.6 Roles and Attitudes of Teachers, Parents, and School Administrators in relation to Resource Rooms

The majority of existing literature on resource rooms is older and focuses on only one single party involved in the process of inclusive education. However, this study includes an examination of the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in Oman. As such, this section focuses on providing an overview of existing literature on the various parties associated with the success of a resource room programme, including teachers, parents, and school inspectors.

2.6.1 The Role of Teachers in Resource Rooms

Teachers have one of the most important roles in resource rooms since they interact directly with students with LD (Deshpande 2013). The teacher is the first person to determine the needs of the students and is the primary provider for the students in resource rooms. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) conducted one of the few studies on resource room teachers. More than 400 resource room teachers, including pre-service teachers and in-service tutors, answered questionnaires. The authors note that teachers have a crucial role because the efficacy of the resource room teachers is a powerful predictor of different significant educational outcomes for the students with LD, such as job persistence, job satisfaction, job motivation, and achievement of goals. This predictor means that a teacher's meaningful educational outcome would reflect on their commitment to the teaching of their students, thereby affecting their students' motivations and the learning environment as a whole.

According to Al-Zoubi (2007), teachers in resource rooms have several duties, including the following:

1. Perform assessment and evaluation to categorize the students according to their difficulties and abilities
2. Design individualized education programmes for each student that will address the capabilities of each student based on the current level of the learner
3. Provide the students with LD with the necessary skills for them to learn
4. Collaborate with other general education teachers
5. Maintain open communication lines with parents and have regular meetings with parents to discuss their child's progress and required services.

2.6.2 Teachers' Attitudes Toward Resource Rooms

Teachers need to have early and constant exposure to children with SEN. Moreover, if teachers are exposed to children with learning disabilities and LD, they can come up with various instructional practices. If students with SEN are exposed to teachers who can teach students with different levels of ability, then they will feel more confident about themselves. Therefore, teachers' attitudes to resource rooms can have significant influence on the success or failure of the resource room programme in any school.

Teachers have an important role in resource rooms. Thus, their attitudes are of utmost significance. Research, conducted on the significance of teachers and their attitudes in special education, often comes to similar conclusions. Findings of research conducted on this subject, show that the significant positive effects of teachers' favourable attitudes and the conditions necessary for their effective participation are required. For instance, Curtis et al. (2012) mentions that teachers who have positive attitudes toward students with learning disabilities have positive effects on the students. Conversely, teachers who underestimate students with LD have a negative effect on the learning process of the students, as well as on the degree of the literacy of the child. Thus, the attitudes of teachers are important to the learning development of students with LD.

MacFarlane and Woolfson (2013) investigate attitudes and behaviours of teachers toward the inclusion of students with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties in mainstream schools located in U.K. Eleven primary teachers participated in the study. Results indicate that teachers who are already involved in the inclusion process, such as the special education teachers, have positive attitudes toward inclusive practices in their schools. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was employed to study the relationship between the children with behavioural, as well as social and emotional issues, and the teachers. A total of 111 respondents completed questionnaires. The subjects were all teachers in elementary schools (MacFarlane and Woolfson 2013). The evaluation of special education teachers' attitudes was further extended when MacFarlane and Woolfson (2013) established a direct statistical relationship between the degree of professional development of special education teachers and their attitudes toward mainstream school programmes. Teachers who have more experience in integrated classrooms and in resource rooms are more capable in addressing the learning needs of students with SEN. Moreover, experienced teachers are more effective in developing the writing and reading skills of students with SEN (McGrath 2010).

In the context of the Middle East, the findings are similar. For instance, Khochen and Radford (2012), using mixed methods, explore the attitudes of teachers and headteachers toward

individuals with disability in primary schools in Lebanon. Forty teachers were purposively sampled and completed questionnaires. Results show that the teachers and headteachers have positive attitudes toward inclusive practices in their schools. However, there are hesitations, particularly about including all the students and specifically students with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. The teachers and headteachers mention that they find it difficult to address and handle students with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. Challenges to inclusion in the Middle East include limited training, lack of available specialists, and high costs associated with inclusion programmes. More studies in the Middle East about inclusion are warranted.

Haj Hussein and Al-Qaryouti (2014) examine regular education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and their educational preferences for teaching students with disabilities. Moreover, Haj Hussein and Al-Qaryouti examine the influence of teachers' gender and teaching experience on their attitudes toward inclusion. Seven hundred and three Omani general education teachers responded to a questionnaire. Omani general education teachers hold neutral behaviour, cognitive, and affective attitudes toward inclusion. Only a few teachers believe that full inclusion in regular education classrooms or resource rooms is the best educational setting for educating students with disabilities. Male teachers hold more positive attitudes toward inclusion than female teachers. Teachers with less teaching experience hold more positive attitudes toward inclusion than teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. Teachers who believe that the best educational setting is a resource room hold significantly more positive attitudes toward inclusion than the teachers who believe that the best educational setting is the separate setting and self-contained class. Although the research shows the positive effects of teachers' participation and favourable attitudes toward special education, such research is lacking in the context of resource room programmes. By conducting a study examining teacher's' perspectives on resource rooms, specifically in Oman, this study is the first to contribute to such research.

2.6.3 The Role of Parents in Resource Rooms

Parents have a significant role in the resource room programme, as they also influence the development of their child's writing and reading skills (Dyson 1996). Dyson (1996) examines the attitudes of parents of children with LD and their siblings. Results indicate that an LD child in a family cause enormous stress for the other family members. It also affects the interaction between siblings, as their relationship is strained.

Parents have a significant role in the literacy development of their children. Al-Qaryouti and Kilani (2013) identify four practices of parents that contribute to the development of literacy skills of their children. These practices involve the availability of materials at home, the availability

of activities at home, parents' attitudes, and visits to the classroom of their child. Parents (n=314) living in urban areas participated in the study and answered the invalidated 25-item questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed to measure the degree of parental involvement and how it influences their children's development. Results reveal that the degree of parental involvement ranges from medium to high. Moreover, there are no significant differences for parents' reading and writing practices, income levels, educational backgrounds, gender, and sibling order. Qaryouti and Kilani recommend further investigation into parental involvement in rural areas. High levels of parental involvement in their children's education are linked to several educational, social, and psychological benefits. Parental involvement also influences literacy development of their children, together with high rates of school attendance, good communication with the teacher, and better social adjustment.

In Oman, research into the relationship between parental involvement and children's development of English language literacy skills tends to produce mixed results (Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, and Maamari 2016). A two-section Likert-type response scale questionnaire was administered to 391 parents whose children were enrolled in the state school system. The first part of the questionnaire explored the attitudes of the participants to parental involvement in the English studies of their children. The second part of the questionnaire explored the frequency of parental involvement. Parents are generally aware of the importance of their involvement in their children's education. Moreover, parents believe that they should be involved, not only in home activities, but also in school-based activities. However, despite the awareness and the belief, parents have limited involvement in their children's studies of the English language.

2.6.4 Attitudes of Parents toward Resource Rooms

Somaily et al. (2012) focus on the collection of primary data from 111 parents of children with LD in primary schools of Narjan, Saudi Arabia. The study was aimed at the assessment of parents' attitudes toward the establishment of resource rooms for the children with SEN. The findings of the research show that parents are significantly satisfied with the resource rooms' facilities, and there is no statistical variation reported between the gender, age, income, or family size of these parents. The findings open the discussion and opportunity for a more focused examination of the association between parents of children with LD and the effectiveness of resource rooms. Researchers conclude that positive attitudes of parents toward inclusive practices and resource rooms would lead to better results for children with LD.

2.6.5 The Role of School Administration in the Resource Room Programme

Headteachers have a crucial role in leading changes in educational institutions. Attitudes and perceptions of headteachers toward inclusive practices are important because they are the people who decide whether something is implemented in their schools. Moreover, it is the headteacher's responsibility to assess whether the inclusive practices are effective in the school.

Samson (2011) suggests that children with LD who study in the resource room might not be successful if their parents do not support them at home (e.g., assisting them with homework, checking their log books, and communicating with teaching staff). Sabbah and Shanaah (2010) study the efficacy of resource rooms in Palestine from the perspectives of the resource room teachers, principals, and supervisors. The findings show that resource room teachers, principals, and educational supervisors are highly satisfied with the efficacy of the resource room and its methodologies, tools, equipment, and educational programmes. The objectives of the study of Sabbah and Shanaah (2010) are similar to the objectives of the current study. However, Sabbah and Shanaah's (2010) study was a quantitative study and used questionnaires only. In the current study, a qualitative study research design is used, as well as interviews, observations, and document reviews, to obtain deep information (see more details in Chapter 4).

2.6.6 Attitudes of School Administrators towards Resource Rooms

A headteacher has a significant role in the implementation of inclusive practices in a school. A headteacher is one of the factors that can ensure the success of the implemented inclusive programmes (Villa et al. 1996). Thus, the attitudes of headteachers are crucial to the effective implementation of resource rooms. Livingston et al. (2001) examine the principals' perceptions of various inclusive practices, such as "special day school, self-contained classroom, resource rooms and general classrooms" (p. 20) in primary schools in Georgia. According to the results of the study, school headteachers continue to use resource rooms as ways to help children with LD.

In Livingston et al.'s (2001) study, the authors determine that there is a direct relationship between the experiences of principals of working with students with LD and having positive attitudes toward resource rooms. Additionally, experiences of principals also contribute to their willingness to consider inclusive practices in their schools. Moreover, Livingston et al. (2001) examine the attitudes of principals in primary schools toward resource rooms, which is relevant to this study. However, their study is limited because they only examine rural principals. This study is relatively old, which demonstrates the need for new research addressing the attitudes of headteachers toward resource rooms.

A similar study conducted in Japan by Kataoka et al. (2004) also explores the perceptions and attitudes of principals in elementary schools toward the resource room. Only 40 percent of urban principals have positive attitudes toward inclusive practices. Similar to the finding of Livingston et al. (2001), most principals also express their concern about children with LD, particularly those with behavioural or emotional disorders. The resource room is one of the teaching methods that principals consider as best to help students with LD. Students with LD should be removed from the general education classroom in order to better address their needs. They need one-to-one assistance or assistance from a teacher who helps only a few students at a time. One of the main limitations of Kataoka's et al.'s (2004) empirical study is that the researchers only concentrate on children with LD who could not perform simple actions.

2.7 The Status of Special Education in Oman

SEN schools have existed in the Middle East and North African region since the 19th century. However, special education has only recently been introduced in the Gulf, where previously there has been a lack of public awareness of SEN. One of the reasons that special education is somewhat new is because disability has only recently received attention in Islamic theology. Caring for SEN people derives from the teaching of Islamic religion, so it is an intuitive care. It is not necessary to have a written role or written policy to provide SEN services to those people. Thus, the theoretical and philosophical framework of inclusive education remains challenging for policy makers and educators in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

In the Sultanate of Oman, special education is also a new term. In fact, the *International Agreement on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for Education in an Inclusive Educational Setting* was only signed in 2008 (MoE 2008). In this agreement, the MoE provides special education services to students who are in public schools and special education schools (Weber 2012). Haj Hussein and Al-Qaryouti (2014) comment that Oman remains in the process of educational system reforms to provide educational services and programmes that will address the needs of all students, especially students with SEN. Thus, there is a need to conduct more studies on the status of special education in the Middle East, specifically in Oman.

Since special education remains a new term in the Middle East, the identification of students with SEN is also new. There are no specialists in schools in the Middle East who diagnose LD in students. This task is left to the teacher. Only a few studies have explored the knowledge and awareness of teachers of diagnosing students with LD. Kakabaraee et al. (2012) attempt to determine the awareness of teachers of the identification of LD. They conclude that more than 50% of the teachers in the study have adequate knowledge of LD. However, more than 90% of the

teachers do not have an adequate capability to identify students with LD. There are significant differences in the teachers' knowledge of LD found between gender and different levels of teaching'. Regarding the current study, data were collected in Oman, where 100% of teachers in the FCBE are female. This aspect is relevant, as it might affect the outcome of the study, as the experiences and standards of teaching, training, and qualifications differ from those in other countries.

Some studies were found that explore the status of students with SEN in Oman. Eman and Kazem (2014) investigate the differences in visual-motor integration between children with and without reading disabilities, in the Sultanate of Oman, by employing the Full Range Test of Visual Motor Integration. Students ($n = 364$) from state elementary schools in Muscat, Oman participated in the study. The results of this study provide empirical evidence, demonstrating that learning disabilities and reading disabilities are strongly associated with impairment in visual-motor integration. Assessment of this skill is important in diagnosing children who are suspected of having reading disabilities.

Emam et al. (2015) also examine students with reading disabilities in Oman. Emam et al. examine whether phonemes are crucial in the identification of children at risk of reading difficulties. Students ($n = 240$) who are either referred for learning disabilities or who are having difficulties in phoneme tests participated in the study. Male students received higher scores on phoneme tests than female students. Fourth grade students received higher scores on phoneme segmentations than second grade students. Normally achieving students also received higher scores on phoneme tests than students who were referred for reading difficulties. The study of Emam et al. provides empirical evidence that phoneme tests can be used to identify students at risk of reading difficulties as early as Grade 2.

Comorbidities associated with learning disabilities could also present challenges where special education programmes are relatively new in the Middle East. In another study, Al-Mamari, Emam, Al-Futaisi, and Kazem (2015) investigated the comorbidity of learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Grade 1 to 4 teachers ($n = 321$) in the Sultanate of Oman participated. According to the teachers, Omani students with learning disabilities are likely to exhibit signs of ADHD. Similarly to Eman and Kazem's (2014) study, Al-Mamari et al. (2015) recommend that early identification is essential for learning disabilities. One of the strengths of this study is that its duration was one year (January 2014 to January 2015).

The attitudes of the teachers toward students with learning disabilities and LD are important. The teachers directly work with the students with LD. Thus, their attitudes are crucial to the students' learning process. Due to the lack of LD specialists in Omani schools, teachers have

the primary role of identifying their students' LD or learning disabilities. Thus, it is important to determine the attitudes of teachers toward students with SEN. Emam and Kazem (2015) examine the ratings of teachers of emotional and behavioural difficulty, as well as the LD of their students, in elementary schools in Oman. Eman and Kazem (2015) found out that teachers refer students who exhibit emotional and behavioural difficulty for LD support in schools. However, Eman and Kazem (2015) discovered that there is a question about whether teachers correctly diagnosed the LD symptoms of 439 students who exhibited emotional and behavioural difficulties. Results indicate that teachers rated males and females differently. Usually, male students are diagnosed by their teacher as having an LD because of their hyperactivity. Moreover, they diagnose both male and female students as having LD because of behavioural problems. Emam and Kazem (2015) also link the ratings of teachers with the students' displays of learning disability and the symptoms of emotional and behavioural difficulty. Emam and Kazem recommend further training and professional development programmes for teachers to increase their awareness and understanding about LD because demonstrating emotional and behavioural difficulty is found as not being synonymous with having LD. Emam and Kazem do not directly discuss whether the teachers are correct or wrong in their diagnosis.

Aside from the teachers, the family affects the progress of children with LD. Emam and Abu-Serei (2014) examine whether family functioning can predict the self-esteem and self-concept of children who are normally achieving and children at risk of learning disabilities ($n = 259$) in Oman. Seventy-eight students are at risk of learning disabilities, while 181 are normally achieving students. Family functioning is a strong contributory factor to the self-concept of both sets of students (normally achieving and at risk for learning disability). However, when it comes to self-esteem, family functioning is only seen as a weak contributory factor.

In the Middle East, religion is important to individuals. One of the factors researchers have explored is whether religious coping strategies help disability support staff. Emam and Al-Bahrani (2014) investigate whether religious coping strategies, having purpose in life, inner peace, and religious practices affect the stress levels of staff in community disability centres located in Oman. Female disability support staff ($n = 142$) participated in the study. Positive religious coping strategies are found to be helpful for staff members who interact with individuals with disabilities. Searching for meaning is associated with stress. This study is helpful because religion plays a role in the lives of individuals in Oman. A person using religious coping strategies shows the degree to which that person utilises his or her religious convictions. Furthermore, it is shown to encourage issues by allowing the person to comprehend these issues, while allaying the negative passionate influences occurring from distressing conditions. In addition, it can help a person adjust if these troublesome life events occur. People who use religious adapting methods express feelings of

spirituality, a secure association with God, and a conviction that there is importance in life. Furthermore, they express a sense of feeling a profound connectedness toward others. In the current study, religious coping strategies, especially those of Islam, could be one of the factors that influence the attitudes of teachers toward students with SEN.

The attitudes of teachers toward students with SEN are important. Children with SEN are often isolated and stigmatized in mainstream classes. In Oman, teachers play a crucial role, as they are the ones who diagnose students with LD. There is limited information about whether Omani teachers have positive or negative perceptions of children with SEN (Al-Sharbati et al. 2013). Al-Sharbati et al. (2013) examine teachers' awareness and attitudes toward students with SEN. Based on data from the teachers ($n = 164$), evidence shows that teachers have limited awareness of learning disabilities and LD. Moreover, some teachers have misconceptions about autistic spectrum disorder. Al-Sharbati et al. further explain that this lack of awareness stems from two sources: cultural values in Oman, and contradictory reports from the media and scientific community in Oman. Al-Sharbati et al. recommend that there should be enlightened views presented to Omani teachers to overcome misconceptions and negative attitudes toward children with SEN.

While there are only a few studies concerning special education services and programmes in Oman, there is a gap in knowledge about Omani special education services. Previous researchers recommend further studies about special education services, programmes, and interventions (Al-Sharbati et al. 2013; Emam and Al-Bahrani 2014; Emam and Kazem 2015). Previous researchers usually use the Learning Disabilities Diagnostic Inventory (LDDI) scale as a means of identifying students with learning disabilities (Emam and Al-Bahrani 2014; Emam and Abu-Serei 2014; Emam and Kazem 2015). In addition, some authors use the terms LD and learning disability interchangeably, where these two terms are similar in the Omani context (Al-Sharbati et al. 2013; Emam and Al-Bahrani 2014; Emam and Abu-Serei 2014; Emam and Kazem 2015). Inclusion programmes are some of the programmes that aim to help students with SEN interact with their peers who do not have SEN. Thus, in the next section, inclusive education and inclusive programmes are discussed.

2.8 The Research Gap

There are gaps in the existing literature on inclusive education and resource rooms. Although there is research in the existing literature on resource rooms, the majority of these studies are over a decade old. Additionally, the existing research on resource rooms shows a lack of focus on the Middle East, which is significant, given the recent emergence of inclusive

education in the region. Since special education represents a new term in the Middle East, only a few studies explore inclusive education, and there is a need for additional research. In the context of resource rooms, during the review of existing literature, only one study was conducted in the Middle East. This lack of studies on resource rooms shows a gap in the knowledge about the use of inclusive practices. It is important to learn more about resource rooms in the Middle East because this is one of the strategies used to help students with SEN.

In addition to contributing to a gap in the research, the study also makes a positive contribution for policymakers to use in Oman in the field of inclusive education. In Oman, there are no written policies about resource rooms or teaching students with SEN (Al-Ghafri 2009; Al-Mahrezi et al. 2016; Al Riyami et al. 2004). Where there is a lack of research on inclusive education and resource rooms in the context of Oman, this study initiates a contribution to the literature. It might also initiate further dialogue on the need for reforms in Oman regarding inclusive education in general and resource rooms in particular.

In this literature review, it has been found that previous researchers support resource rooms as a way of addressing the SEN of children with LD (Schiemer and Proyer 2013). Resource rooms provide a focused approach that can integrate the various needs of children with LD. Resource rooms have also been found to instil and encourage collaboration among teachers, school administrators, children with LD, and their parents. However, resource rooms have limitations, such as promoting limited social involvement of students with LD. Even though resource rooms have limitations, they are methods that can help children with LD. The effectiveness of resource rooms is influenced by attitudes, involvement, and collaboration of parents, teachers, and school administrators.

In Oman, there are only a few studies that explore the use of resource rooms in children with LD (Al-Ghafri 2009; Cook and Inglis 2012). Previous studies conclude that resource rooms could be one of the strategies to help children with LD (Al-Ghafri 2009; Cook and Inglis 2012). Specifically, the current study provides evidence on ways in which resource rooms could provide an educational environment that supports children with LD. It is further established that teachers, school administrators, and parents have a crucial role in the success of resource rooms. In this study, the perceived roles and attitudes of teachers, school administrators, and parents in Oman about resource rooms are examined. This examination provides new knowledge about resource rooms in Oman. Based on these research gaps, the research questions emerge.

2.9 Summary of Chapter Two

The general problem studied is the mixed results in the literature on the appropriateness of using resource rooms for children with LD. The specific problem studied is the lack of exploration on the placement of children with LD in resource rooms within the specific geographic context of Oman (Al-Ghafri 2009; Chappell 2000; Cook and Inglis 2012). The purpose of this study is to understand the use of the resource room and how it supports children with LD in the FCBE in Muscat, based on the perceptions of key stakeholders, such as parents, children with LD, school inspectors, headteachers, and resource room teachers.

The resource room is an inclusion typology in which students spend part of the day in the mainstream classroom and part of the same day in a resource room (Al-Zoubi and Bani Abdel Rahman 2016). Inclusive education is a process in which all students are considered in making the curriculum and designing lessons every day that cater for the individual learning needs of all the students (Zundans-Fraser and Lancaster 2012). However, the majority of studies on resource rooms are not recent and focus on only a single part in the process of inclusive education. Hence, this current study includes an examination of the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in Oman. In addition to contributing to a gap in the research, the study also makes a positive contribution for policymakers in Oman in the field of inclusive education.

Chapter 3: The Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

The discussion of the theoretical and conceptual framework will commence with the academic and social implications of resource rooms, serving as a rationale for the use of resource rooms for children with LD. To separate the two research questions from existing theories and models, the theoretical framework focuses on two overarching theories and model: (a) social theory and (b) the inclusion model. Social theory is directly related to the research problem because the theory provides insights into the role of the educational environment in the learning process of children with LD. Social theory also emphasizes the importance of the interaction of students with LD with their teachers and peers in the learning process. The inclusion model is directly related to the research problem because resource rooms can be considered as one of the typologies of inclusion, where children spend time both in mainstream classrooms and in a specialized education setting in a given school day. Both frameworks provide insight into why the use of the resource room can be beneficial to children with LD.

This chapter will outline the theoretical framework and theoretical issues relating to using the resource room to support children with LD in reading and writing skills in FCBE in Muscat schools. This chapter is organised into the following sections: (a) overview of the theoretical and conceptual framework, (b) social theory, and (c) the inclusion model. The chapter ends with a summary of the key components of the theoretical and conceptual framework.

3.2 Overview of the Theoretical Framework

To situate the research questions within existing theories and models, the theoretical framework focuses on two overarching theories/models: (a) social theory and (b) the inclusion model. Each of these provides an insight into the two research questions. Figure 1 is a diagram of the conceptual framework generated to inform the findings regarding the perceptions of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in relation to resource rooms. This conceptual framework presents a rationale for why resource rooms can be beneficial to children with LD. Specifically, the inclusion model and social theory are used in the discussion chapter to contextualize the findings that are reported in the results chapter. The conceptual framework illustrates the relevance of the inclusion model and social theory in understanding the research questions.

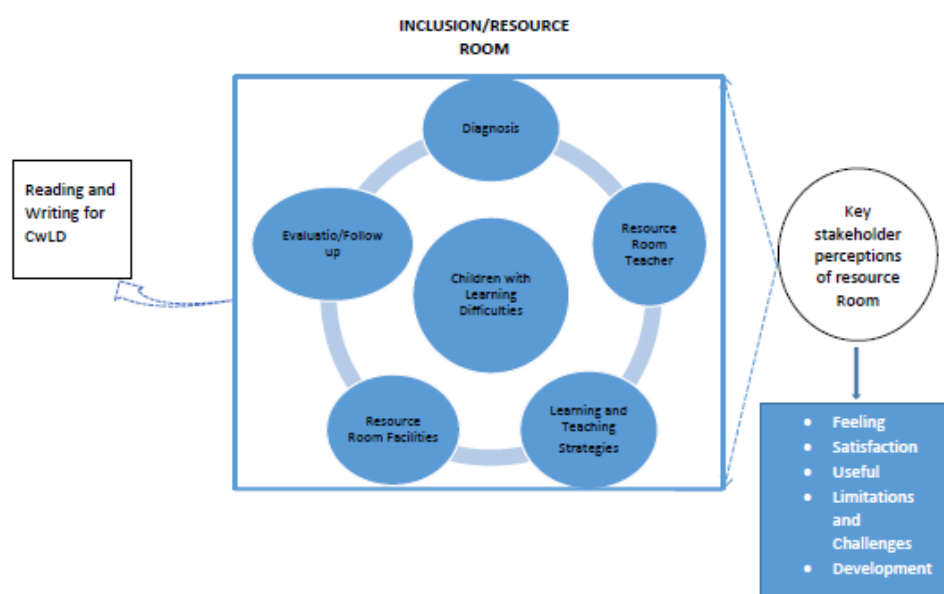


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Based on the theoretical and conceptual framework presented in the diagram, the three main concepts central to the study are the perceptions of different stakeholders, resource rooms, and children with LD. Both the inclusion model and social theory inform the conceptual framework and the analysis of data. Based on the diagram, the use of resource rooms to address the needs of children with LD is informed by social theory, highlighting the importance of social interaction in the cognitive processes of learning. The social interaction between children with LD and their peers who do not have LD, teachers, parents, and others, such as psychologists and social workers in school, has a role to play in the learning process. The perceptions of teachers regarding resource rooms are informed by the inclusion model.

In order to answer the first research question regarding the ways in which the resource room provides a useful educational environment in the FCBE in Muscat for supporting children with LD, the social and academic implications of resource rooms provides a foundation in which the research problem is viewed. Past research has showed that resource rooms have academic and social implications that might affect implementation (Al-Zoubi and Abdel Rahman 2012; Elbaum 2002; McQuarrie and Zarry 1999; Pavey et al. 2013).

Social theory provides a theoretical foundation for understanding why resource rooms are used to address the need of children with LD through Individualized Education Programmes. Individualized Education Programmes can be beneficial to students with writing and reading difficulties because educational goals and objectives are individualized, based on their specific

educational needs and limitations (Pretti-Frontczak and Bricker 2000). In resource rooms that have partial inclusion settings (i.e., students with LD spend some of their time in the mainstream classroom and some of their time in the resource room), the goals and objectives of Individualized Education Programmes can be implemented, which might not be possible in mainstream classroom settings. For example, implementing an Individualized Education Programme for specific students might not coincide with the goals of the mainstream classroom, possibly causing difficulties in teaching the entire class (Donohue and Bornman 2015).

Social theory also helps to address the first research question because the theory provides insights into the role of the environment in the learning process of children (Kraker, 2000). Based on social theory, resource rooms could provide a teacher who creates a learning environment by considering the unique educational needs of children with LD (McIntyre et al. 2010). Social theory supports the use of resource rooms as a way to improve the reading and writing skills of children with LD.

To answer the second research question, pertaining to the general perception of both inclusion and resource room programmes that are held by children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors, the inclusion model serves as the foundation for understanding their perceptions of whether children with LD can benefit from resource rooms. The process of inclusion involves the attempt of educators to address all the needs of students with varying levels of intellectual abilities, weaknesses, difficulties, or disabilities (Sebba and Ainscow 1996). Children with LD, their parents, teachers, headteachers, and school inspectors might express their perceptions of the success and appropriateness of resource rooms based on their perceptions of and views on inclusion.

The second research question also explores the advantages and disadvantages of using the resource room through the perceptions of the stakeholders, which are likely to be rooted in their perceptions about inclusive practices. The perceptions of the resource room stakeholders could have a positive impact on the success of resource rooms because these stakeholders are responsible for the formulation and implementation of school policies pertaining to inclusion (Ryndak et al. 2011; Swanson et al. 2012; Werts et al. 2014). The opinions of education stakeholders regarding the placement of children with LD in resource rooms give grounds for developing the learning environment of resource rooms and the learning process.

Teachers' perceptions of the resource rooms and children with LD are also vital for teaching and learning. These perceptions might help teachers to become effective by developing their teaching skills, strategies, and reflection (Swanson et al. 2012). In addition, the role of the school inspectors is to provide training and assistance to the resource room teachers; they act as

a link between the school and the MoE. If the parents of children with LD have positive opinions of inclusion, then they are more likely to have positive perceptions about resource rooms (Ryndak et al. 2011). When a school's leadership has positive views of the resource room, then facilities and social inclusion are more likely to be provided for this learning mechanism. This finding is consistent with the findings of Donahue and Bornman (2015) who conclude that the perceptions of teachers about inclusion affect their classroom practices.

3.3 Social Theory

School education teaches children skills - not only academic skills but also behavioural skills. For children with LD, developing academic skills may feel beyond their control. Therefore, there may be barriers to learning these skills, which could result in low esteem and social issues, particularly when children with LD consider themselves less competent than students without LD (Ntshangase et al 2008). It is therefore important to address learning issues, i.e., academic and behavioural skills, within the classroom setting.

Learning social theory was developed by Albert Bandura. He explains that, through observing, modelling, and imitating others, one can learn cognitive and behavioural skills. Academic and behavioural modelling is adopted via verbal instruction, live modelling (of another individual), and symbolic modelling (Miller 2011). According to learning social theory, these occur in four stages: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Miller 2011). Through these four means, children with LD have the opportunity to learn behaviourally and academically in the inclusion class. Observational learning theory inclusion may act microcosmically, as society or learning communities occur, in which children with LD can interact with students without LD, thereby developing friendships and working habits (Miller 2011). This cooperative learning means the students can act as each other's teachers, feeding knowledge to one another (Piaget and Vygotsky; Slavin 2009). Students without LD could be paired with a student with LD. This pairing would not only build a sense of belonging for the student with LD, but also help develop communication and listening skills.

Social theory is directly related to the research problem because the theory provides insights into the role of the education environment and social interaction in the learning process of children with LD. The main principle of social theory is that social interaction is the foundation of the process of the learning of individuals (Vygotsky 1998). In order for cognition to be developed, two levels of learning processes are necessary to occur: (a) the social level and (b) the individual level.

The first stage of social theory is learning at the social level, wherein interactions with other people provide an opportunity to acquire knowledge (Vygotsky 1998). Learning at the social level entails the use of attention, memory, and concept formation. By interacting with other people within a specific social or cultural setting, individuals can use higher executive functions as the foundation for the learning process.

The second stage of learning involves what Vygotsky (1998) calls the *zone of proximal development*, a limitation of an individual's learning process. The zone of proximal development is an area of exploration where students are cognitively prepared, but they require further help from other people in order to be fully developed. Through the process of scaffolding, social interaction can be instrumental in using previous knowledge to advance the learning of more complex ideas or concepts. The zone of proximal development emphasizes the importance of determining the knowledge that a student currently knows and does not yet know (Vygotsky 1998). Teachers and more experienced peers can provide the social interaction needed for a student to build on their previous learning to acquire more complex knowledge or skills (Vygotsky 1998). Activities such as collaboration, discourses, discussions, and modelling support the learning process of students to facilitate intentional learning.

Using the concepts of social interaction and the zone of proximal learning as central to social theory, resource rooms can provide a learning environment that can help children with LD develop more complex knowledge and skills (McIntyre et al. 2010). Given the central role of the theory in the research phenomenon, social theory is used to inform the data analysis and the discussion chapters of the study. Once the findings are reported, the discussion focuses on contextualizing the themes from the data using the main principles of social theory.

The concept and practice of inclusion is highly consistent with Vygotsky's social perspective that argues that all educational initiatives must be integrated in rich social and cultural interaction (Kraker 2000). Social theory posits that an environment that provides opportunity for social interaction plays an important role in the learning of students (McIntyre et al. 2010). Specifically, the social and cultural interaction of children with their teachers and peers in classrooms can either enhance or hinder the process of learning (McIntyre et al. 2010).

Social theory is related to constructivism, which considers children as active participants in the seeking of knowledge, the understanding of their experience, learning satisfaction, and problem solving (Bender 2008; Illeris 2009; Pritchard 1998; Woolley 2011). This form of learning is a transformative experience, where opportunities for learning enable a child to learn more deeply, in a flexible way, and where new information is absorbed. Resource rooms provide an opportunity for learning through purposeful engagement and valued activities with other more

experienced students and the teacher (Al-Zoubi and Rahman 2016; Somaily, Al-Zoubi, and Rahman 2012).

Even though they are related, social theory differs from constructivism in its conceptions and assumptions about knowledge (Packer and Goicoechea 2000). Conceptions of knowledge or ontology pertain to the nature or the essential features of existence or reality. Assumptions about knowledge or epistemology pertain to different theories on how knowledge is acquired, known, or understood.

In terms of ontological assumptions, both social theory and constructivism recognize that knowledge is relative, subjective, and socially created (Packer and Goicoechea 2000). Concerning the differences between the two perspectives, the conception of knowledge in constructivism is more focused on the process of social negotiation in order to establish the “what” of a concept. For Vygotsky (1998), the ontological assumption of social theory is that learning is a situated activity wherein “what you do is firmly and inextricably embedded in the social matrix of which every person is an organic part” (Nardi 1996, p. 7).

In terms of epistemological assumptions, both social theory and constructivism recognize social interaction as an important component in the acquisition of knowledge (Packer and Goicoechea 2000). Both perspectives recognize that learning cannot be isolated from social interaction (Thorne 2005). Concerning epistemological differences, the assumptions of knowledge of constructivism are more grounded in processes and structures. Conversely, social theory uses a broader context, wherein processes and structures are understood within the larger culture or historical context (Vygotsky 1998).

Social theory has become a popular theoretical foundation for understanding learning and the importance of social interaction, particularly between teachers and students (Mercer and Howe 2012; Murphy et al. 2009). Social theory considers that the social environment or learning community has an impact on the learning process (Murphy et al. 2009). According to social theory, learning occurs through purposeful engagement and valued activities (Bender 2008; Illeris 2009; Pritchard 1998; Woolley 2011). Children learn various skills in classrooms through social interaction (Murphy et al. 2009).

Using social theory as a rationale for this study, resource rooms could be an educational setting that could prevent segregation and labelling of students who have LD. The benefits of the resource room are that children with LD also have the opportunity to study in the mainstream classroom, alongside their peers who did not have LD, while receiving additional educational support, specific to their SEN, for periods during the school day in the resource room (McQuarrie

and Zarry 1999; Pavey et al. 2013). For teachers, resource rooms can be beneficial in providing an opportunity for meaningful social interaction in which students with LD are supported as a result of having more focused time to address their difficulties (Bender 2008). Having students of varying abilities in one classroom may not give the students who have do not have the adequate attention needed for individualized learning, which can be helpful for children with LD (Bender 2008; McNamara 1989).

For teaching to be effective, it is important that the context is considered, such as the language and socio-cultural backgrounds of students (Palincsar and Klenk 1992; Manset-Williamson and Nelson 2005). Based on social-cultural theory (Mercer and Howe 2012), teachers should act as facilitators of dialectical meaning-making processes for children with LD. For this theory to be effective, these following factors are vital: the quality of the interaction within the environment, the relevance of the language of the instructions provided by the facilitator, and the advance toward progressive independent learning to encourage self-determination for children with LD. The aim of these factors is to improve a student with LD over time so that he/she is able to reach his/her full potential (Palincsar and Klenk 1992; Manset-Williamson and Nelson 2005).

One limitation of social theory, when applied to the study, is the rigidity of the structures and processes involved in learning, which might not be stable and consistent across different time periods, contexts, and groups of people (Thorne 2005). Given that the current study is based on the use of resource room in the Middle East among children with LD, some of the processes and structures central to social theory might not be as relevant. There might be historical and cultural components that are unique to Muscat that cannot account for the accurate learning process of children with LD in the said context.

Another limitation of the application of social theory in this study is that resource rooms can partially restrict social interaction with more experienced peers, which is one of the important tenets of social theory (Al-Ghafri 2009). However, it is the argument of this study that resource rooms can provide more meaningful social interaction through individualized attention that could offset the possible limitations of being taken out of the mainstream classrooms for some portions during the day.

3.3.1 Reading

The reading skills of children with LD is one of the concepts that is explored in the study. Based on social theory and the importance of environment in learning, resource rooms could give children with reading difficulties the educational environment needed to improve their skills. Resource rooms could provide the educational environment that could accommodate the needs

of students with writing difficulties, which might not be possible in mainstream classrooms (McIntyre et al. 2010). For example, constant practice in reading could play a significant role in the enhancement of the skills of students with reading difficulties (White 2013).

Reading skills affect a student's academic performance, underscoring the importance of developing the reading abilities of children with LD (Bender 2008; Tilstone and Porter 2000; Winebrenner and Kiss 2014; Woolley 2011). Based on social theory, reading skills of children can be enhanced by making changes in their environment, which pertains to the classroom (McIntyre et al. 2010). One explanation for the acquisition of reading skills is that children acquire skills through interaction with other more knowledgeable people of a group or culture, such as teachers and classmates (Rogoff 2003). Specifically, learning can occur through observing and listening to other people read (Rogoff 2003).

3.3.2 Writing

The writing skills of children with LD is one of the concepts that is explored in the study. According to social theory, children who experience writing difficulties might experience these difficulties due to problems relating to their environment, such as the general education classroom or resource room (McIntyre et al. 2010). The acquisition of writing skills can be understood as the socialization of children with the more competent people within a culture or social group (Rogoff 2003). Specifically, children with writing difficulties could enhance their writing abilities by observing and interacting with other people (Rogoff 2003).

Writing skills affect the academic performance of students, which means that teachers need to spend sufficient time in developing the writing abilities of children with LD (Bender 2008; Tilstone and Porter 2000; Winebrenner and Kiss 2014; Woolley 2011;). Every LD child learns from different instructional approaches, such as visual strategies, auditory strategies, and language strategies. Language difficulties, such as reading, also have an effect on the ability of children with LD to communicate socially (Woolley 2011).

Based on social theory in relation to the importance of context in learning, such as the educational setting where teaching occurs, resource rooms can give children with writing difficulties the educational environment needed to improve their skills. Chia et al. (2009) argue that a successful intervention programme for children with writing difficulties needs a two-stage approach. Teachers must first decide the nature of the accommodation that is needed in order to address the difficulties of children with problems in written expression because the understanding of the child's perspective is important to rectify the writing difficulties. Teachers then need to seek the assistance of fellow teachers for special education and experts in

educational psychology to understand the emotional needs of these children with writing difficulties. Resource rooms can provide the educational environment that can accommodate the needs of students with writing difficulties, which may not be possible in mainstream classrooms (McIntyre et al. 2010).

3.4 The Inclusion Model

The inclusion model is directly related to the research problem because resource rooms can be considered as one of the typologies of inclusion whereby children spend time both in mainstream classrooms and in specialized education setting in a given school day. This setting differs from other settings, where students with LD either attend special education classes or are fully integrated into mainstream classrooms. As a typology of inclusion practice, resource rooms provide an opportunity for teachers to give specialized attention to students with LD without completely removing them from the mainstream classrooms (Auclair et al. 2008; Pavey et al. 2013).

Most of the literature categorised, especially the literature in the United States, indicates that mainstreaming is one of the practices used in inclusion (for more details see Chapter 2). In Oman, the resource room programme is labelled under the inclusion programme (Emam and Kazem 2014). The inclusion model is selected as part of the theoretical framework because the perceptions of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in Oman might be influenced by their perceptions of inclusion. Knowing the perceptions of the key stakeholders toward the inclusion of children with SEN could lead to a better understanding of the willingness of teachers to work with students who have LD (Alberto et al. 2010). Moreover, parents' involvement in inclusive practices might have a strong positive impact on the effectiveness of teachers as instructors (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003). The perceptions of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors of inclusion could provide insights into their perceptions of using resource rooms to accommodate the educational needs of children with LD (Alberto et al. 2010; Desforges and Abouchaar 2003). As discussed in the previous section about the important of context in understanding social interaction, this current study differs from other studies because the focus is on the unique perspectives of stakeholders in Oman.

The practice of inclusion can be partial or full. Partial inclusion involves students with LD spending some of their time in the mainstream classroom and some of their time in the resource room. Full inclusion involves them spending their entire time in the mainstream classroom (Nepi,

Fioravanti, Nannini, and Peru 2015). The process of inclusion, whether partial or full, generally involves the following:

The process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering its curricular organization and provision. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend and, in so doing, reduces the need to exclude pupils. (Sebba and Ainscow 1996, p. 9)

Inclusion is “rather than focusing only on the education of children with difficulties and others with special educational needs, inclusive education is understood as a philosophy supporting and celebrating diversity in its broadest sense” (Kugelmass 2004, p. 3). Inclusive educational practices involve the integration of students with SEN with other students in mainstream classrooms with the goal of providing all students equal opportunity and access to education (Bender 2008).

The perceptions of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors of inclusion might provide insights into their perceptions of resource rooms (Hemlata 2013), to develop a strategy that can assist students with writing and reading difficulties. Given that the inclusion model from the literature is primarily based on the international framework from the West, this study focuses on the practices of inclusion in Oman based on the perspectives of key stakeholders. Examining the perceptions of stakeholders in Oman could illuminate the possibly unique social context that could help to develop the resource room prospective.

3.4.1 The Resource Room

The specific typology of inclusion examined in this study is the resource room typology. Resource rooms, which can be characterized as partial inclusion, are individualised learning environment settings in which the skills of individuals are enhanced through repeated practice (Rea et al. 2002). The resource room setting is an educational placement where therapeutic assessment and education provide children with LD with a scheduled time in their educational day when they are not in the regular classroom and when they can receive individual or small-group learning, which is based upon their specific educational needs (McNamara 1989). The application of resource rooms in assisting students with LD is an alternative to the practice of mainstreaming students with LD (Deshpande 2013).

The rationale that informs the practice of the resource room as a partial inclusion practice is individualized accommodation of the educational needs of children with LD, especially when mainstream classrooms cannot provide the learning environment to meet specific goals and

objectives. The goals of individualized education are based on the specific needs of each child who has difficulties or disabilities (Pretti-Frontczak and Bricker 2000; Reich 2010). Teaching in resource rooms requires a plan so that the learning objectives for each student are reached. To achieve the objectives of individualized education, teachers apply different strategies to their instruction, such as meta-analysis, multi-sensory, music, and drama (Winebrenner and Kiss 2014; Woolley 2011). Teachers often reflect on their teaching strategies to ensure self-development and the academic develop of their students. (Bender 2008; Winebrenner and Kiss 2014; Woolley 2011). In Oman, the resource room is not as well thought out as it is in the West; therefore, one must question whether these practices, teaching styles, or methods occur in Oman, as well as in the Middle East and the West.

The learning environment created by resource rooms for children with LD involves a significant opportunity for transformation and improvement because of exposure to activities that can enhance their behaviours and intellectual abilities. Transformational learning is supposed to be acquired at a later stage of adult education (Jarvis 2006). However, Kegan (2000, cited in Mezirow 2000) emphasised that this learning should not be narrowed down explicitly to the epistemology, but should be developed throughout life. Thus, the concepts of this learning can be applied to early education.

Children with LD attend the resource room for only part of the school day; for the most part, they are attending regular classrooms with other children who do not have LD (Bender 2008). Attending mainstream classrooms prevents isolation from their peers who do not have LD (Prince and Hadwin 2013). Inclusive practices can also help in improving the self-efficacy of students, including children with LD who often experience low self-esteem. Self-efficacy may be reflected in both the academic and social achievements of students (Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham 2013). Resource rooms have the potential to engage children with LD because most schools have few students with identical difficulties, highlighting the utility of having a learning environment that can address their specific learning needs (Bender 2008). Regardless of the type of LD a student may have, resource rooms can provide effective teaching strategies that can help students with LD (Bender 2008; Moody et al. 2000; Winebrenner and Kiss 2014).

Teachers in resource rooms play various roles in the instruction of children with LD, including creating an individualised programme based on a child's specific needs (Bender 2008). Resource room teachers follow each LD child to the regular classroom and cooperate with the teacher of the regular classroom to improve his or her social and academic performance (McNamara 1989). Resource room teachers also maintain regular communication and attend meetings with parents of children with LD to assess their progression at home and to see whether

any challenges experienced can be resolved at home. Another role of resource room teachers is to teach children with LD based on learning strategies adapted to the students' learning needs (Bender 2008; McNamara 1989).

Resource rooms restrict the social interaction of children with LD with mainstream students (Al-Ghafri 2009). Even though resource rooms can be helpful in improving the achievement of students with LD, the social aspect of functioning may be negatively affected (Somaily, Al-Zoubi, and Abdel Rahman 2012). Major issues, such as social inclusion, lack of a competitive environment, and less interaction with the students with no LD, may not be consistent with the tenet of the importance of social interaction in the learning process. For example, Al-Zoubi and Abdel Rahman (2012) and Elbaum (2002) contend that the social concept and self-esteem of children with LD might be negatively affected by resource rooms. Despite this disadvantage, Craig (2006) asserts that the use of a resource room is an enhanced, effective, and convenient method of teaching students with LD due to the concentrated instruction that students with LD can receive from their teachers.

3.5 Summary of Chapter Three

The theoretical framework of the study is rooted in two main educational concepts and theories: (a) social theory, and (b) the inclusion model. The theoretical framework informs the key concepts of the study, which are the perceptions of education stakeholders, resource rooms, and children with LD. The theoretical framework also provides the foundation, supporting the appropriateness of resource rooms in helping children with LD to enhance their writing and reading skills.

Social theory emphasizes the role of social interaction in the learning process of children, specifically the importance of interaction between teachers and students in the acquisition and enhancement of knowledge (McIntyre et al. 2010). Rooted in the constructivist framework of learning, children with LD are considered to be active participants in the seeking of knowledge, the understanding of their experience, learning satisfaction, and problem solving (Bender 2008; Illeris 2009; Pritchard 1998; Woolley 2011). Based on the assertions of social theory about social interaction and the zone of proximal development, the reading and writing skills of students with LD could be enhanced by providing an educational environment to enhance the opportunity for individualized and meaningful social interaction (McIntyre et al. 2010).

Studying the perceptions of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors of inclusion could provide insights into their practices regarding the use of resource rooms to address the educational needs of children with LD. The perspectives of key stakeholders

in Oman has never been examined in previous studies, which justifies the importance of this study's purpose and goals. Inclusion, either partial or full, depends on a child's capabilities, disabilities, and school facilities, which give students with LD the opportunity to become integrated into mainstream classrooms with other students who do not have SEN (Kugelmass 2004). The perceptions of stakeholders could have a positive impact on the success of resource rooms (Ryndak et al. 2011; Swanson et al. 2012; Werts et al. 2014), underscoring the importance of exploring the perceptions of key stakeholders.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the qualitative research method, particularly the traditional qualitative research design. The chapter considers this approach, particularly in relation to special education and LD. It is shown and argued that the traditional qualitative research design is a suitable approach to use to undertake research of individuals with LD to generate detailed and in-depth information, which might not be achieved in quantitative standardized instruments (Brantlinger et al. 2005; Nind 2008). The rationale for using qualitative research design for the study is to determine similarities and differences among the seven selected schools in Oman, by using rich and detailed data collected from different stakeholders. This method could lead to data that would answer the research questions in this study. Exploring the resource room through semi-structured interviews and observations provided the researcher with the means to effectively gain further understanding of the resource room as a learning environment for children with LD from the perspectives of teachers.

Data were collected using individual semi-structured interviews and observation. Data were analysed using thematic analysis in order to determine patterns and themes from the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The findings were represented by themes and composite description of (a) the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the FCBE in Muscat, Oman for supporting children with LD, as well as (b) the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource room programmes regarding the resource room initiative in Oman. Thus, this chapter discusses the nature of the current study, the philosophy of qualitative research design, the importance of the design in special education, the nature of a traditional qualitative study and its use in SEN and LD, why the resource room is the focus of the research, and the implications of qualitative study in SEN regarding the conceptual framework involving the inclusion model.

4.2 The Research Method and Design

The purposes of the current qualitative research were (a) to explore the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the FCBE in Oman for supporting children with LD and (b) to investigate the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource room programmes regarding the resource room initiative in Oman.

4.3 Justification for the Use of Traditional Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is the comprehensive examination of a research problem using flexible perspectives, tools, and approaches (Creswell 2013; Marshall and Rossman 2014). As a result, qualitative study can combine quantitative (“quasi-statistics”) and qualitative perspectives and tools if the research problem necessitates that kind of in-depth exploration. The result of a traditional qualitative research design is an in-depth description of the inclusion and resource room.

The phenomenon and the context are linked with each other in such a way that one cannot be separated from the other, justifying the use of traditional qualitative study design. The researcher attempted to put into context inclusion and the resource room through interviews and observations, to provide a deep description of the perceptions and experiences of the area under research (Creswell 2013; Marshall and Rossman 2014). Therefore, the qualitative study design was the appropriate approach by which to understand and explore the experiences and perceptions of resource room stakeholders and children with LD in Oman. Special education is represented as a complex field, which is further complicated by the variability of the participants.

A traditional qualitative study design was selected as the most appropriate qualitative research design because of the lack of clear separation between the phenomenon and context being explored in this study (Marshall and Rossman 2014). The phenomenon and the context are linked with each other in such a way that one cannot be separated from the other, justifying the use of the traditional qualitative study design.

The qualitative research design is fitting for this current research to answer the research questions. This study seeks to grasp the knowledge about using the resource room rather than outcome measures that may restrict or limit participants’ responses. The qualitative research paradigm is interpretive and allows for descriptive response and expansion of thoughts, ideas and views of the area under investigation, i.e., the resource room. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of the perceptions of the use of resource rooms and inclusion.

4.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this qualitative study were to explore (a) the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the FCBE in Muscat for supporting children with LD and (b) the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource room programmes regarding the resource room initiative in Oman. Knowledge that could be gained from the study could lead to improved

understanding of the appropriateness of resource rooms in helping children with LD. This knowledge might improve the academic proficiency of children in the FCBE in Muscat with LD. The researcher outlined the following primary objectives and the corresponding research questions:

1. To explore the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the FCBE in Oman for supporting children with LD.
2. To investigate the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource room programmes regarding the resource room initiative in Oman.

4.5 Research Questions

The research questions of the study are the following:

1. What are the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the FCBE in Muscat for supporting children with LD?
2. What are the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource room programmes regarding the resource room initiative in Oman?

4.6 The Participants

The population of this study consists of the 39 state schools in Muscat city. Muscat is the capital city of Oman and was selected as the focus in the study because the resource room programme is widely implemented within the FCBE and Muscat. Currently, there are approximately 585 children enrolled in the resource room programme, 70 teachers, eight school inspectors, and 39 headteachers for all schools in this government in the academic year of 2014 to 2015 (MoE, 2015). From that population, the sample consisted of (a) seven mainstream schools operating a resource room programme and inclusion, (b) seven headteachers of the mainstream schools who used inclusion and resource room programmes selected to take part in this research, (c) nine teachers of children with LD in the seven schools taking part in this study, (d) 105 children with LD in the seven schools taking part in this study (i.e., 15 children with LD in each school), (e) at least one or both parents of the 105 children with LD who took part in the study this study, and (f) four school inspectors from the MoE who work as inspectors of the LD programme in Arabic Language and Mathematics in the FCBE in Muscat.

4.7 The Sampling Procedure

To prevent bias, the researcher randomly selected seven out of the 39 schools that have implemented the resource room in Muscat, Oman by drawing names out of a hat which called simple random sample (SRS). The consent forms (Appendix C) and PIS (Appendix D) are written in English and translated into Arabic by the researcher who is a native Arabic speaker. Data collection initially was planned to commence from 31 August 2014, when the Omani academic year started and the children returned to school. However, data collection was delayed by six weeks as the University of Southampton rules stipulate that ethical approval must first be granted through its ethics committee prior to getting approval from Muscat, Oman. The researcher obtained the approval from the University of Southampton via ethics and research governance online (ERGO) 18 October 2014. Permission to conduct the data collection from the MoE in Oman was obtained on 26 October 2014. The researcher started the data collection on 27 October 2014.

A letter of permission with a list of all schools with resource rooms in Muscat and contact details was provided by the researcher. The researcher approached each school by telephone to explain the purpose of the research and why they had been approached to take part. Thirty-nine schools agreed to consider taking part, and copies of the consent form and PIS were posted to the schools. Only six weeks had been allocated for data collection in Oman because the researcher was based in the U.K. and had to return for supervision, transcribing, transcription translating, and data analysis. The researcher had to extract as much quality data with a depth of information as possible during the six-week visit to Oman; hence, the researcher predicted that she could undertake approximately four to five interviews per day over the six weeks. Therefore, seven schools were selected, as this was the maximum number of schools that could be observed and the maximum number of interviews that could be undertaken within that timeframe.

The schools that had been selected to take part were then contacted. The schools that were not selected were sent a letter to inform them and thank them for their time. The researcher then made a Gantt chart/schedule for data collection. Each school received an initial visit from the researcher so that she could introduce herself, give the school a copy of the letter of permission from the MoE, and give each prospective participant a copy of the consent form. In this meeting, the researcher spoke to each prospective participant face to face prior to their consenting, to give them the opportunity to ask any questions they had. The researcher made one to two subsequent visits to each of the seven schools. These subsequent visits also gave each prospective participant time to think about whether to take part in the research, and to go back to the researcher with any further questions. The prospective participants gave permission to

take part by signing the consent form, and the researcher arranged appointments for participant interviews.

It must be emphasised that each school and participant was given a participant number for confidentiality and anonymity. Each participant in the study was assured that their personal details would remain confidential, that any information provided to the researcher would not be used for anything other than for research purposes, and that it would not affect their school's/children's education in any way.

4.8 Data Collection

4.8.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Once participants had consented to take part, the researcher undertook the interviews. All the interviews that were conducted were semi-structured (Appendix A). Every interview was conducted in a quiet and private space. All interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis (i.e., participant and researcher). In the interviews, the researcher looked for different information from different groups of participants, such as school inspectors and LD teachers. Different questions were formed for each group, with the focus on benefits and challenges of resource rooms in Muscat. Each interview with the LD teachers (LDT) took between 60 and 90 minutes. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the participants and the corresponding schools in which they work.

Table 1

Participants of Interviews in all Seven Schools

School	Headteacher	LDT	Children	Parents	LD Teacher
School 1	1 headteacher	1 LD (of Arabic) + 1 LDT (of Mathematics)	15 children with LD	6 parents	
School 2	1 headteacher	1 LDT (of Arabic)	15 children with LD	7 parents	
School 3	1 headteacher	1 LDT (of Arabic)	15 children with LD	No parents participated in this school	
School 4	1 headteacher	1 LDT (of Arabic)	15 children with LD	1 parent	
School 5	1 headteacher	1 LDT (of Mathematics)	15 children with LD	No parents participated in this school	LD teacher in Arabic had maternity leave at that time
School 6	1 headteacher	1 LDT (of Arabic) + 1 LDT (of Mathematics)	15 children with LD	6 parents	
School 7	1 headteacher	1 LDT (of Arabic) + 1 LDT (of Mathematics)	15 children with LD	1 parents	
The Department of Special Education in MoE	The head of the department	4 school inspectors of Arabic Language			

There has been a considerable amount of research (Kvale 1994; Mishler 1991) suggesting guidelines on ways in which researchers may conduct an interview. The interview is the main method for data collection in study designs (Kvale 1983; 1994; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Research shows that interviews are a suitable means of revealing the understanding of participants of a phenomenon (Bartsch and Wellman 1995). For an interview to yield useful information, an adult must feel comfortable and be without fear of consequences. If not, interviews can be subject to the same answer syndrome that often plagues written surveys and scales (Zambo 2004). Other data collection tools, such as survey questionnaires and other self-reports, cannot provide the in-depth, comprehensive, and rich data needed to answer the problem and research questions. Survey questionnaires tend to have a predetermined set of answers, limiting the possible responses that can be uncovered from the participants.

The interview usually varies in duration from a few minutes to a couple of hours, depending on the nature of the research and the type of respondent. For this study, structured interviews would not have been the best method of extracting information from participants because of the lack of flexibility in the method regarding the opportunity to ask probing or follow-

up questions. Rather than using either of these methods, this study focused on the use of open-ended semi-structured questions, allowing the respondent to answer freely, thereby obtaining more useful information. The questions that followed were then entirely based on ways in which the respondent answered the questions of the interviewer. Thus, the questions were not standardised (Wimmer and Dominick 1997). It was a suitable way to deal with a sensitive topic, such as LD/learning disabilities, while creating a rapport between the interviewer and respondent (Baxter 2005; Lewis 2002; 2004; Wimmer and Dominick 1997). This interview approach was flexible, providing a large amount of detail. The respondents were subject to answering the question asked during the interview; therefore, necessary information and permission needed to be acquired before the interviews were conducted. A summary of the benefits of this interview approach is (a) to enable the interviewer to learn about experiences that could not be directly observed, (b) to add an inner perspective to outward behaviours, (c) to allow for probing, and (d) to increase the accuracy of response. Respondents could raise concerns and enable modification to the lines of inquiry.

Through interviews, researchers can abstract people's views and perspectives. Lewis (2002; 2004) concentrates on the methodological challenge of interviewing people with LD. Lewis (2002) argues three key principles in interviewing: (a) authenticity, ensuring that views expressed are fair and representative by cross-checking strategies and contexts; (b) validity, requiring checks as to whether interpretations of views expressed are correct; and (c) reliability/trustworthiness, concerning whether responses are typical of what the person believes. Once again, the social and historical context is part of the methodological challenge as "individuals need to have self-esteem to believe that their views are valid and important to believe that they will be listened to, responded to and understood" (Lewis and Porter 2004, p. 195). Individuals with LD usually experience lower self-esteem than people who do not have LD (Bauman 2012.). Hence, children with LD may need more emotional support from a familiar, valued person involved in the interview process (Nind 2008; i.e., their learning disability teacher).

An interview guide was prepared prior to the interviews to ensure a consistent procedure for all the participants (see Appendix A). The interview guide contained a list of open-ended questions based on the review of literature and the conceptual framework. For the first research question, involving the use of resource rooms in helping children with LD, open-ended questions were asked to gain insights into the different ways in which children can be helped as a result of the resource. The questions focused on the possible academic and social benefits of resource rooms for children with LD (Al-Khateeb and Hadidi 2009; Somaily et al. 2012). For the second research question, open-ended questions were asked to gain insights into the different

perspectives of resource rooms of key stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, headteachers, children, and school inspectors.

The purpose of the interview of children with LD was to gain further insight into the use of the resource room from the learners' perspective. This insight might provide a "grassroots level" understanding of the resource room, to identify whether children with LD have sufficient support with reading and writing. However, it is important to factor in, when interviewing children with LD, that these interviews can present challenges because of the respondents' capabilities or communication (Mertens and McLaughlin 2004). Therefore, the researcher had to be aware that interviewing children with LD might require a more tailored approach, as people with LD might find it difficult not only to understand a question, but also to respond to a question.

According to Booth and Booth (1996), there are four areas in which children with LD encounter challenges, which are related to the challenges experienced in writing and reading. These are as follows: (a) inarticulateness, which is associated with anxiety, low self-esteem, isolation and language skills; (b) unresponsiveness, specifically with open questioning; (c) difficulty transferring experiences and thinking into abstract terms; and (d) conceptual difficulty around time, which makes experiencing their own story difficult. Moreover, Lewis (2004) notes that question and answer formats can be more limiting compared to the use of statements or narratives.

In terms of communication, learning, and emotions, children with LD may require systematic support when expressing their views, due to problems within these areas; however, care should be taken not to distort the views that are being expressed by the children with LD (Lewis, Newton, and Vials 2008). Therefore, one may use cue cards, drawing, and/or playing to overcome the challenges around expression of view (Lewis et al. 2008). These visual and practical methods are particularly effective for children with conditions such as autism. Interviews can be in the form of open discussion, showing pictures, and asking stories about the activities performed during study in the resource room. This form of interview, as previously suggested, may be the most efficient way to interview children with LD, as usually children with LD have difficulty with their communication skills, such as with their vocabulary (Nind, 2008).

The researcher arranged to meet children and a parent of each child at the child's school at a time that was convenient to the participants. The researcher interviewed each child about the resource room programme and inclusion and his/her ideas about the services provided to the child in his/her school. Each interview took approximately one hour and no more than two hours. A parent was present at all times during each child's interview, both because the child was a minor and to ensure that the child was comfortable. To ensure further the child's comfort, the

interviews were conducted in a private, quiet room at the school, with only the researcher, the child, and the parent present. Additionally, the researcher began each interview with an informal chat with the child to help him/her feel comfortable. Children were invited to create drawings as a further means of helping them to feel comfortable. The subsequent interview was also conducted in an informal, conversational manner to ensure the child's comfort and to elicit candid responses.

4.8.1.1 Interviews of Parents of Children with Learning Difficulties

This study also involved using interviews to investigate the perceptions of parents of children with LD toward the resource room and inclusion of children with LD. The interview was aimed to collect data related to the satisfaction of families of services provided to their children in the resource room and their views about its impact on the children's academic progress. The researcher interviewed a sample of parents of children with LD to understand the role of parents in the progress and success of resource rooms. In addition, the researcher addressed the problems, challenges, and obstacles of using resource rooms from the viewpoints of the parents. This illuminated the impact on their children's academic proficiency.

All parents interviewed were mothers. This was due to the families' beliefs that mother should be primarily responsible for matters related to the children's education. All the mothers who participated in this study reported that they hold a comparatively low level of education, with none having advanced further in school than the sixth grade. Some do not know how to read or write. Their comparatively low level of education might account for their belief that a child's education is primarily or wholly the mother's responsibility, as this belief is not characteristic of Omani culture as a whole.

4.8.1.2 Interviews of School Inspectors

Interviews with school inspectors of LD programmes might benefit from the knowledge obtained through this research, as it could provide information about the implementation of this programme. The process of implementation needs vigorous controlling and monitoring of the activities performed in the resource rooms, the performance of LD teachers and children with LD, the participation and information of parents, and the training of stakeholders to improve the outcomes of resource rooms. Therefore, it was important to interview them face to face to obtain in-depth information about the resource room. In addition, it was important to learn the challenges and obstacles that school inspectors face during the implementation and monitoring of the resource room programme in state schools.

4.8.1.3 Interview of Headteachers

The researcher interviewed seven headteachers in schools that implement the resource room programme in FCBE in Muscat. This interviewing allowed the researcher to obtain a full depth of information through exploring headteachers' experiences of applied resource room programmes, as different information might be expressed by each respondent. With the assistance of existing research on the use of combining the resource room and learning for children with LD in the general education school, the researcher designed the interview questions to investigate the attitudes of headteachers toward this combined use of learning environments for children with LD (Appendix B).

4.8.1.4 Interview of Learning Difficulties Teachers

The researcher interviewed each LD teacher from all seven schools selected. The interviews with LD teachers assessed the teaching approaches, learning facilitation practices, curriculum designing and monitoring, provision of academic material and presentations, communication abilities, classroom discipline and behaviour management, and co-operation with teachers within GES.

4.8.2 Observation

The purpose of current qualitative observational research is to explore people's experiences, behaviours, and actions that occur naturally, which occurs under the observation of a researcher. In this study, the researcher used a passive participation style of observation in the resource room. This involved the researcher having no interaction with the participants, thus preventing the researcher from intervening or causing an event and enabling the collection of observation data that accurately reflected participants' true practices when no one was watching. Even the presence of a stranger in the resource room who is not intervening in any way might still distract the students. This issue may occur because people with LD are more sensitive to changes in their environment (Somaily et al. 2012).

The observations were completed with the help of notes or memo writing of actions of children with LD. The presence of the researcher, in this context, assisted in gathering first-hand information of the events that occurred in the resource room. Some behaviours and attitudes were difficult to measure or address through interviewing or through other methods; thus, the direct and natural observation gave more clear and precise details of the behaviours, attitudes, and reactions of students and teachers during class. It also gave an explanation and interpretation of reactions to certain situations. For that reason, the researcher used observation as a strong

tool in this study. The researcher observed 12 classroom instructions across the seven selected schools.

The observation sheet included the most important factors for resource room observations, which were based on McNamara (1989), Bportfolio (2013), and Das et al.'s (2013) studies about resource rooms, such as accessibility, assessment, classroom organisation, classroom climate, curriculum/methods of instruction/teaching strategies, communication, social skills, behaviour management, discipline, and reflection. The sample observation sheet, used in the current study, can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Observation Sheet Used in Sample Schools

School	Observation No. 1	Observation No. 2	Observation No. 3	Remarks
School 1	✓ in Mathematics class	✓	✓	
School 2	✓ in Arabic class	LDT was absent	LDT was absent	
School 3	✓ in Arabic class	✓ in Arabic class	✓ in Arabic class	
School 4	✓ in Arabic class	×	×	The school was under renovation, so the staff and children moved to another school until the end of maintenance operations. The resource room was under renovation because there were not enough classrooms in that school. For that reason, it was difficult to observe the resource room more than once.
School 5	✓ in Mathematics class	×	×	LDT in Arabic was on maternity leave. The purpose of observation is to observe the resource room during an Arabic lesson and the way in which children with LD get support in reading and writing.
School 6	✓ in Mathematics class	✓ in Arabic class	✓ in Arabic class	
School 7	×	×	×	LDT in Arabic was on sick leave after the initial interview

Observation is used as a tool to back up the interviews, while providing greater validity and reliability of the research (Golafshani 2003). The visual details gained from the observations, might provide further information about the resource room and actual behaviour as it occurs (McIntosh et al. 1993), while analysing details that are difficult to express verbally. Therefore, this

methodology incorporates different approaches to ensure validity and trustworthiness of the study (Golafshani 2003). These approaches included interview and observations.

The themes (Appendix A) that the researcher selected for the observations were based on a mixed methods study by Das et al. (2013). The themes were used as bases for the observation because these represented the identified concerns of primary school teachers about the inclusion of children with LD in resource rooms. However, the researcher also focused on the resource room as an alternative to the inclusion setting for children within GES, and therefore expanded on Das et al.'s (2013) themes. This concept of resource room and inclusion was important to highlight the differences and applications of both approaches in the context of the specific cultural and academic settings in Oman. The implications for further research in this area assisted the researchers in drawing their conclusion about the specific applications of the resource room context in the schools of Oman. For example, McNmaras (1989), Bportfolio (2013), and Das et al. (2013) used the themes for the observation in Table 3 to critique the use of the resource room and inclusion.

To create a more robust piece of research, the factors that might impact negatively on the observational research process were considered. One factor that might have affected this current research is known as the Hawthorne Effect (McCarney et al. 2007). The Hawthorne Effect is the concept of participants changing their behaviour in response to a change in their environment (Rubak et al. 2009). The Hawthorne Effect did not affect the current research. The researcher observed the participants in the resource room, who might have been aware that they were under the observation of a researcher and might have consequently changed their behaviour to influence the study. The researcher used the following methods, based on Beasley et al. (1993), to reduce the impact of reactivity of the subjects under observation: (a) the researcher tried to remain as discreet as possible by not interfering with the environment being observed; (b) the researcher avoided eye contact with the subjects in the resource room; (c) the researcher did her best not to make any noise, so as not to disturb the learning process; (d) the researcher ensured that the LD teacher under observation was fully aware that all information taken from the observation remained confidential and would only be accessed by the research; and (e) the researcher observed the same resource room subjects (the same LD teacher with the same children with LD) three times to check for consistency.

Table 3

Head Themes and Justification of Subthemes

Head theme	Definition	Things/Behaviours to Observe	Operationalization
Accessibility	How the classroom is physically/mentally accessible for children with LD	The resource room location, size, doors, windows, etc.	Observation was used to understand the accessibility of resource room.
Assessment	How the LDT assesses the progress of children with LD in terms of assessments, presentations, social skills, and academic knowledge.	Whether the LDT reviews and summarises what was done during the previous lessons (Valdois et al, 2004). If the LDT successfully balances oral and written practices (Gersten et al, 2005; Guay et al., 2010). Homework, short exams, notebooks, paper worksheets, etc.	Observation was used to identify the children with LD's strengths and weaknesses, thereby providing educational services to suit their academic skills.
Classroom organisation and classroom climate	How the classroom is an appropriate educational environment for children with LD in terms of sitting arrangements, learning tools provision, ambience, and physical environment.	Organisation of the tables, chairs, location of teaching, etc.	Observation techniques were often used to investigate how the children with LD feel about their educational environment.
Curriculum/methods of instruction/teaching strategies	The LDT's teaching strategies and learning style for the children with LD in terms of providing material, teaching techniques, communication, and self-presentation of LDT.	Recorded materials provided to the children with LD in order to integrate listening and reading skills (Whiteley and Smith, 2001; Gersten, et al. 2001). The LDT's provision of reading lists and materials in advance (Chard et al., 2002).	Observation was used to ascertain how effectively the resource room helped teaching children with LD to develop their academic skills.
Communication and social skills	The social environment of the classroom and how the LDT and children with LD communicate with each other.	The LDTs' methods of explanation of the complex terminology and unknown words (Stein and Talcott, 1999). Whether the LDT uses interactive presentation (Smith-Spark and Fisk, 2007).	Observation has sought to understand student and teacher interactions and how the learning environment affects children with LD's ability to learn.
Behaviour management and discipline	How LDTs manage the inappropriate behaviour of the children with LD. The rules and regulations set out by LDTs	Which methods the LDT uses to reduce the visual and audio distractions in the classroom (Valdois et al, 2004).	Observation usually gave a good opportunity to watch and see actions and behaviours in a normal environment, especially with children with LD in the resource room.
Reflection	How the resource room supports children with LD	The types of data presentation applied by	Observation demonstrated how

as a type of inclusion in GES through perceptions of LDTs and children with LD.

the LDT to attract the children with LD's attention and stimulate their perceptual skills (Andersson, 2010; Stein and Talcott, 1999).

factors that may affect children with LD's perceptions in various contexts could be taken into consideration.

4.9 Data Analysis

After the interviews and observations were completed, the researcher prepared the files for analysis. For the observation data, pre-determined themes, such as accessibility, assessment, classroom organisation, classroom climate, curriculum/methods of instruction/teaching strategies, communication, social skills, behaviour management, discipline, and reflection were used for the coding process. The analysis was based on developing codes that could be subsumed to these pre-determined categories based on the literature.

For the interview data, the audio recordings were transcribed, and the observation notes were collated and transferred into several Microsoft Word documents. The researcher transcribed the interviews to ensure that familiarity with the contents of the data could be achieved. The transcription process was entered into Microsoft Word. Every interview was translated into English by the researcher and the translation proofread by a native English speaker. Key statements, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in Arabic with their English translation were placed in an Excel spreadsheet with the corresponding participant number. All data were transferred to NVivo (Babbie 2010), a computer programme that stores and organises qualitative data for analysis.

After the interviews were conducted and the audio recordings transcribed, data analysis was undertaken. The main framework of the analysis followed the suggestions made by Miles and Huberman (1994). The three key procedures included (a) data reduction, (b) data display, and (c) drawing of conclusions (Miles and Huberman 1994). Data reduction involved the reduction of data into codes, where meanings were simplified and represented in terms of a few words or phrases. These codes were organized into categories in order to assign themes that reflected the data as a whole. The data display involved the presentation of the findings using tables, figures, or graphics in ways understandable to the readers. The final step of the analysis was to generate conclusions to answer the research questions of the study.

The specific analytical technique used was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is the systematic analysis of qualitative data through coding and categorization (Braun and Clarke 2006). The end goal of thematic analysis is to generate themes central to the perceptions and

experiences of the participants, which are instrumental in answering the research questions of the study.

The first phase of thematic analysis was the reading and rereading of the data (Braun and Clarke 2006). The interview transcripts and observation notes were read and reread in order to generate preliminary codes. At the end of this stage of the analysis, a list of preliminary codes was generated, containing all the important meanings extracted from the interview transcripts and observation notes. Only statements, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that the researcher found relevant to describe the phenomenon and answer the research questions were retained in the preliminary list.

The second phase of thematic analysis was the generation of a comprehensive set of categories based on interrelated codes that were generated (Braun and Clarke 2006). Codes were collapsed into categories based on the research questions of the study. At the end of this stage, the researcher listed all the potential themes based on the categories and codes that were developed in the previous stage of the data analysis.

The third phase of thematic analysis involved listing all the possible themes based on the list of codes that were developed from the interview transcripts and observation notes (Braun and Clarke 2006). Codes were combined to form the overarching themes of the study. These themes were further refined and revised in the succeeding stages of the analysis.

The fourth phase of thematic analysis was the final analysis and verification of the themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). Each theme should reflect the research questions and the central phenomenon of the study. The researcher went back to the raw data to review each theme to assess the relevance to the phenomenon that was explored.

The fifth phase of thematic analysis involved linking the themes to the corresponding research questions (Braun and Clarke 2006). The themes should reflect the answers to the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the FCBE in Muscat for supporting children with LD and the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource rooms. Each theme was described to understand the individual meaning of the themes.

The sixth phase of thematic analysis involved generating a thick description of the phenomenon by detailing the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the FCBE in Muscat for supporting children with LD and the perceptions and experiences of children with learning difficulties, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource rooms (Braun and Clarke 2006). The thick descriptions generated

contained the summary of the responses of each participant as a sample group, supplemented by direct quotes from the data. The final report reflected the perceptions and experiences of the entire sample, based on the codes and themes that were generated.

4.10 Validity and Reliability of the Study

In qualitative studies, validity is often operationalized in terms of the credibility of the study, which pertains to the extent to which the results presented can be considered accurate and trustworthy. The validity of this study was enhanced by using strategies such as member checking and triangulation (Anney 2014). These strategies strengthened the validity of this study in terms of gaining accurate findings based on the true experiences and perceptions of the participants.

Member checking was used in this study by sending each participant the summary of the analysis of his/her interview (Houghton et al. 2013). The goal of member checking is to consult with the participants about the accuracy of the interpretation of the researcher of the interview data. The researcher asked each participant to provide relevant comments about the summary to improve its accuracy. The comments of the participants in this study were reanalysed with the intent of possibly gaining insights that had not yet been uncovered.

Triangulation was used by including two data sources (i.e., interviews and observations) of data collection in order to raise the validity of research findings. The purpose of using triangulation in this study was to obtain different dimensions of the phenomenon. The research undertaken was qualitative. Therefore, as asserted by Leung (2015), validity in qualitative research, including this study, was linked to appropriateness of the tools, processes, and data.

In qualitative studies, reliability is often operationalized relating to ways in which the results can be considered dependable or replicable (Golafshani 2003). The reliability of the study might have been enhanced using audit trails and generating a detailed description of the methodology. To enhance the reliability of the study, the researcher provided a description of the research instruments used to obtain significant findings. Since qualitative studies, in general, do not aim to replicate the processes and results as is the case in quantitative studies, Leung (2015) suggests, “The essence of reliability for qualitative research lies with consistency” (p. 4).

4.11 Pilot Study

No pilot study for this research was conducted by the researcher due to time constraints. Where the research was conducted in Oman, due to the nature of the research, the researcher

had to apply for ethical approval in the U.K. In order to undertake the research in Oman, the researcher then had to gain permission in Oman. As the process of gaining permission to undertake this research in Oman took time, it was not possible in the timeframe of this PhD to gain permissions for further research studies; therefore, only a full-scale study was conducted.

Because the study involved children with LD, it was time consuming to gain ethical approval, which created further time limitations. In order to conduct a pilot, further time limitations would have occurred due to the nature of the research involving children. Because the research was focused on an Omani culture, it would not have been worthwhile conducting the research within the environment of the U.K.

4.12 Limitations of the Study

Any research, however diligently and vigilantly designed and implemented, may still have limitations that can influence the generalisation of the results. This study carried out data collection in seven resource rooms in Omani state-funded schools across Muscat. Therefore, the results could not be generalised to all resource rooms, but these could provide unique and in-depth insights about the perceptions of the specific sample selected (Brantlinger 2002). The study could not be generalized to all resource rooms because of the unique sociocultural context of Oman, which might not be applicable to other countries with different laws, policies, cultures, and beliefs. However, generalizability does not represent a goal of qualitative studies because this is meant to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Marshall and Rossman 1999). Using the constructivist approach to knowledge, qualitative studies enable a deeper understanding of a phenomenon based on the subjective experienter or perceptions of individuals that are directly related to the phenomenon being explored (Brantlinger 2002).

4.13 Ethics

To enhance the ethical standards of the study, several strategies and procedures were used. Informed consent forms and information sheets were used so that participants were fully aware of the purpose and nature of the study. Other key procedures for confidentiality, withdrawal, recording of interviews, and risks and benefits were discussed. If participants voluntarily agreed with the terms of the study, they were asked to sign these informed consent forms. No participants were forced to be part of the study without their voluntary consent. They understood that they could withdraw from the study upon request at any point of the research (Appendix E, ethics committee approval letter).

4.14 Summary

This chapter provides a discussion of the nature of the current qualitative study method and its relevance in researching children with LD. This traditional qualitative study aims to explore: (a) ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the FCBE in Oman for supporting children with LD and (b) the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource rooms. Data were obtained by conducting semi-structured interviews and classroom observation. All data were analysed using thematic analysis. To create a robust methodology and enhance the validity of the results, the researcher applied strategies, such as triangulation, transparency, and objectiveness.

Chapter 5: The Findings of Research Question 1

Semi-structured interviews were used for all interviews. Interviews were conducted with parents, teachers, headteachers, school inspectors, and supervisors and took place in a quiet and private space at the participants' schools. These were conducted on a one-to-one basis, except in the cases of children, who each had one parent present. The researcher sought different information from each group of participants. Thus, different questions were prepared for each group, with the focus on benefits and challenges of resource rooms in Muscat. In addition, the researcher engaged in passive participant observation in the resource room. This observation involved the researcher having no interaction with the participants, thus preventing the researcher from intervening. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent (or with the consent of the parent and child, for child participants) and transcribed verbatim.

After the interviews and observations were completed, the researcher prepared the files for analysis. The analysis was based on developing codes that were partnered with pre-determined categories based on the literature. The main framework of the analysis followed suggestions made by Huberman and Miles (1994). The three key procedures included (a) data reduction, (b) data display, and (c) drawing of conclusions (Huberman and Miles 1994). Data reduction involved the reduction of data into codes, where meaning was simplified and represented in terms of a few words or phrases. These codes were organized into categories to assign themes that reflected the data as a whole. Data display involved the presentation of the findings using tables, figures, or graphics in ways that would be understandable to the readers. The final step of the analysis involved generating conclusions that led to answering the research questions of the study.

For this current study, the researcher became familiar with the data through extensive reading and rereading of the interviews to gain an understanding of the content. This understanding involved reading through the interviews three times and writing initial reflections through analytic memos. After the initial readings, the researcher then read through the data again with categories, or what Hatch (2002) calls *typologies*, in mind. Patton (1990) defines 86 typologies as classification systems made up of categories that divide some aspect of the world into parts. According to Hatch (2002), typologies are generated from theory, common sense, or research objectives.

For this study, the researcher used the typologies from the literature review as the constructs through which to view the data. After reading through the data with each construct or typology in mind, the researcher coded the data into categories by taking excerpts of text from

the data and identifying it within a particular category. The researcher used NVivo coding, uploading the participants' text in its original form. The categories used in the initial data coding and reduction process included (a) accessibility; (b) assessment; (c) classroom organization and climate; (d) curriculum/method of instruction/teaching strategies; (e) communication and social skills; (f) behaviour management and discipline; (g) role of the participant; (h) relationship between school and family; (i) benefits of inclusion; (j) benefits of the resource room; (k) drawbacks of inclusion, and (l) drawbacks of the resource room. After everything was coded into these categories, the researcher read through the data again and engaged in three additional rounds of data coding and reduction within each category. During this intuitive and emergent data analysis process, the researcher wrote notes on her thoughts and insights. Through this process, the researcher began to interpret the data to find significance and meaning through pulling salient themes, reoccurring ideas, and patterns of belief that resonated collectively throughout the interviews and participant observation.

Research Question 1 asked the following: What are the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the First Cycle of the Basic Education in Muscat for supporting children with learning difficulties? From this research question, six themes emerged from the interviews and from the participant observations: (a) insufficient accessibility and inadequate resources, (b) assessments of students and of the LD programme, (c) classroom organization and climate, (d) teaching strategies, (e) communication and social skills, and (f) behaviour management and discipline.

5.1 Theme 1: Insufficient Accessibility and Inadequate Resources

While the participants in this study did not specifically mention the theme of accessibility, the researcher, through her observations of resource rooms in seven different schools, found that accessibility was a problem. This problem was observed in the design of products, tools, devices, computing programmers, services, or educational environments for students with SEN. More specifically, this observation indicated that classrooms and schools were poorly designed and inadequately supplied. For example, some resource rooms were not suitable for students with physical disabilities. Only one of seven schools had two resource rooms. However, even these two resource room classes were underprepared; on the day of the researcher's observations, the school had one resource room class devoted to Arabic language and another to Mathematics. Both classes were in massive disarray and lacked the necessary ready-to-use tools and devices. These two resource room classes were located among regular classes, integrated into the school's layout and close to the school's utilities.

The remaining six schools had one resource room, in which the Arabic Language and Mathematics teachers divided the resource room into two by using tables. In terms of design, the schools did not seem to consider the physical and dynamic abilities of the students with LD when designing the doors and windows. Resource rooms must be purpose-built in order to accommodate their students. The resource room in this particular school had doors that were heavy and bulky, with hefty knobs that made these difficult for students to open. None of the doors was automatic, and the large windows had no curtains.

The resource room should be flexible and useful for students with LD, especially in this stage, because the students were still young and in the process of growth (McNamara 1989). While the MoE provided one white smart board and three computers in each resource room (and had pledged to install and maintain them because the funding was not available), none of the recently provided technology had been connected, and therefore was not working. Moreover, there were neither special tools nor special materials, such as children's toys, recording/video devices, TVs, or even children's colouring books in any of the resource rooms. Children with LD need these because they learn better by using more than one strategy and learning style (Cook 2004; Glomb and Morgan 1991; Smith-Spark and Fisk 2007). All resource rooms lacked furniture, and there were neither lockers nor libraries to store materials or personal property. Therefore, the resource rooms were difficult to access and lacked the appropriate resources.

5.2 Theme 2: Assessments of Students and of the LD Programme

This theme encompasses two forms of assessment: assessment of the LD programme and assessment of the academic progress of students with LD within the programme. Given the disparate responsibilities of school and programme employees, each category of participant was separated by response in this theme. The significance of this theme was that assessments of the LD programme and of the success of students with LD were means of identifying and subsequently correcting deficiencies in the LD programme. Thus, a lack of adequate assessments would constitute a weakness in the LD programme to the extent that it allowed other weaknesses to escape systematic and objective detection. Conversely, strong assessments would allow for continual, targeted improvements to be made to the programme, based on the needs of all stakeholders.

According to the Department of Special Education Headteacher, the success of the LD programme was evaluated, in part, by the number of students who were enrolled on the programme. However, she noted that there were no assessment tools in place to measure the effect of the programme – specifically the integration aspect – on the students themselves (Mrs.

Al Adawi): “We are in urgent need of actually studying the subject of integration, its impact on the pupils, the benefits of it and of knowing its disadvantages.”

School inspectors had two different methods of assessment to ensure that the educational environment for LD resource rooms was supportive and successful: watching periods and follow-up forms. All four school inspectors who were interviewed described “presence watching periods”, in which they observed resource room classrooms in order to evaluate students; these observations occurred two to three times per classroom per year. As SI1 said, assessment occurred “through presence watching periods (observing the lesson time) in learning difficulties classes at schools... I usually attend two or three time each term, watching periods for the same teacher.” SI2 concurred, saying that evaluation happened “through presence watching periods with learning difficulties teachers two or three time in the term, or according to my timetable for school visits during the term, because we have 40 schools in Muscat province.” These present watching periods helped aid the evaluation of how resource room classrooms were functioning, providing an assessment for both teachers and administrators.

In addition, all of the four school inspectors (100%) described formal evaluations (via forms) that they completed to assess the LD teachers and their classrooms, after the in-class observations, in addition to the formal assessments by the school’s principals. These forms acted as a follow up for teachers. SI3 explained the following:

We have follow-up forms for the learning difficulties teacher [that] we fill after each watching period. We meet with the learning difficulties teacher twice a term. In addition, the school principal assesses the performance of each learning difficulties teacher at the end of every school year.

The academic development of the children was based on literature on teaching students with LD and teaching students with LD in a resource room, and guidelines. SI4’s statement reflected the statement made by SI3, that the judgment of the principal was partly based on the academic developments of the children with LD:

We assess the LD teacher using a follow-up form based on classroom observations, observing the teacher working with children with learning difficulties in the learning difficulties class [and], in addition, through assessment which the school principal makes on the learning difficulties teacher and via the academic improvement of the child.

The researcher measured and judged that by using literature on teaching students with LD and teaching students with LD in a resource room, and guidelines.

Similar to the school inspectors' responses, all seven of the headteachers (100%) said that they used classroom observation and follow-up evaluation. In both the cases, the assessment was of the teachers, rather than of the students. However, the ultimate goal for both was to ensure a more successful classroom for children with LD. HT1 described the process:

By attending classes, watching, and having a follow-up list of teacher learning difficulties, we see teaching methods and see what the plans and preparation and follow up for the pupil are... The learning difficulties teachers are assessed four times during the semester.
(HT1)

Four of the seven headteachers (57.1%) also noted that a school inspector's visit was common, and those school inspectors filled out their own reports. Moreover, four school inspectors mentioned that they assessed the programme by tracking students both within the LD classroom (resource room) and regular classrooms. As HT6 said, "We track the regular class pupils in their class and the learning difficulties pupils, and also have a follow up with the teacher to check her pupils with learning difficulties in regular classrooms." Moreover, two headteachers – HT5 and HT7 – described parental observation as a form of assessment. HT5 said, "Some parents give us their views on the development of their son / daughter."

Arguing that all of these tools helped the headteachers to assess the LD programme, HT5 defined the programme as successful: "The LDP (learning difficulties programme/resource room) is successful if it fulfils the conditions for the proper diagnosis and a qualified teacher is available, and for providing an educational environment by all appropriate means and tools for teaching [children with] learning difficulties." The LD teachers' form of assessment was not of the LD programme as a whole, but instead of their students' academic performances. Table 4 demonstrates the ways in which the LD teachers assess their students.

Table 4

LD Teachers' (LDT) Evaluation of Children with LD

	Daily	Weekly	Verbal	Written
LDT1	✓		✓	✓
LDT2	✓			✓
LDT3	✓		✓	✓
LDT4	✓		✓	✓
LDT5	✓		✓	
LDT6		✓		✓
LDT7	✓			✓
LDT8	✓		✓	✓
LDT9	✓		✓	✓
LDT10	✓		✓	✓

Nine out of the 10 teachers (90%) said that they evaluated their students on a daily basis to ensure they reached their educational targets (which are based on individualized plans, discussed in a subsequent section). Moreover, six out of the 10 LD teachers (60%) said they used both a written and oral form of evaluation, while three out of 10 (30%) said they used written evaluations only. Just one teacher (10%) used only a verbal assessment. LDT1 described how evaluations were conducted and how they felt it linked to educational targets:

I evaluate the children before the end of each session through performing verbal and written evaluations of the activities provided during the session. I also evaluate the child after the end of each educational target. It is safe to say that the evaluation process is provided on a daily basis. Before teaching a new target, I revise the previous targets to make sure the child fulfils his/her targets and connects the new targets with the previous ones. In addition, I follow up the child's performance and academic progress in the regular class and review the activities and evaluation provided by the regular class's teacher.

The teacher of LD should evaluate each student with LD based on his/her IEP. She needs to review and re-plan her IEP if her student does not achieve the goal in the IEP. If the goal is not achieved, there is something wrong in her IEP or her student's performance is higher or lower than the teacher's expectations. LDT2 also explained how the use of follow-up plans and integration of the student within the regular class is essential to the assessment process:

Through performing evaluation activities after each session. I also revise the previous targets to make sure the child masters them before defining a new target. In this context, I may also make short periodic examinations in addition to the educational follow-up plan of the child in the regular class alongside taking his/her performance's progress under the supervision of the regular class's teacher.

The real success of students with LD is not just in the resource room, so the teacher of LD has to check her student in her/his regular classroom to ensure that her/his achievements meet the appropriate goals in the resource room and regular classroom. The student with LD will not have a certificate in the resource room but she/he will achieve this certificate when she/he has passed her/his grade in the regular classroom. Hence, the teacher should make sure that her student uses the resource room skills in her/his regular classroom. Teachers of LD should cooperate with regular classroom teachers to provide support to the students with LD.

LDT4, LDT8, LDT9, and LDT7 similarly conducted their assessment in conjunction with the regular class teacher. As LDT4 explained, “I also prepare an evaluation book to record the reading and writing skills of each child and then the regular class’ teacher does the same and then I revise the evaluation book to consider the progress of the child.” One of the teacher’s roles is to follow up students with LD to ensure that they perform their tasks’.

LDT3 noted that their assessment involved not just academic but also social progress using a variety of media:

I evaluate each child from the social and academic perspectives. Concerning the social evaluation, the child takes part in the school’s radio and improvises on a daily basis. During his/her presence in the radio, in order to notice his/her personality’s progress, I communicate with the regular class’ teacher, follow up the activities, examinations and skills he/she has in the regular class and follow his social and academic progress up with his/her family. Concerning the academic evaluation, I follow his/her progress in the regular class and perform short written and oral examinations. I also follow up the activities he/she is enrolled in during each session to evaluate his/her progress.

The purpose of the resource room is to provide support to the students with LD academically and socially, not only in the resource room itself, but in the regular classroom and in the school.

LDT8, LDT9, and LDT10 also emphasized the importance of both individualized lesson plans and creating and hitting targets based on those plans. Individualized plans form the basis of evaluations of student progress, as these present clearly defined goals that the student can be observed as falling short of, meeting, or exceeding. When students progress in a manner different from that described in the plan, the plan might need adjustment, as LDT8 explained:

I evaluate the child according to his accomplishment of the educational target; then he moves to the next target and so on... If the child does not manage to accomplish his/her target or if he/she does not manage to master it, I do not waste the time on this

particular step and refer to the individual educational plan to check if there is something wrong or the target is higher than the abilities of the child.

LDT9 concurred, adding, "I evaluate the child on a daily basis before teaching him/her a new target and revise the previous targets. I also evaluate his/her performance after teaching him/her the new target at the end of the session."

The LD teachers' responses reinforce and satisfy the Learning Strategies requirements, which state that:

The teachers evaluate the child before teaching him a new target through reviewing the previous target. They also evaluate the child before the end of the classroom to make sure the fulfilment of the target through written and oral activities based on the target. Furthermore, the child is to be evaluated at the end of every week to make sure the fulfilment of the weekly individual educational plan and evaluate him/her through short examinations before the end of every classroom.

In this way, the resource room helps to ensure that students are provided with an educational environment that is appropriate for their level of learning and evaluation of the room by school inspectors, coupled with daily or weekly evaluation of student progress by LD teachers, might ensure that the programme is responsive to students' changing needs, and individual plans are continually adapted while their implementation is being monitored.

The observations of the researcher only partially supported the responses of the interviewees. The researcher noted that the resource room teachers used an individual education plan as a plan applied to the children enrolled in the resource room classrooms, and a weekly prepared plan was devoted to each child enrolled on the programme. However, at the same time, she also found that the classroom lacked appropriate tools for pre-class and post-class performance evaluation; the examinations used to evaluate the progress of the children's performance were irrelevant to what the children learned in the regular classrooms. For instance, when the researcher observed the resource room, she found a shortage of tools, assistive technology equipment, and colouring books that are essential tools for teaching students with LD. The researcher also noted that there was a wide gap between what the children learned in the regular classrooms and what they learned in the resource room classrooms. For example, the academic skills taught to students with LD in the resource room were very basic and simple compared with the academic skills that were taught in the regular classroom, which led to a difference and gap in academic levels between students with LD and their peers in the regular class. Despite what the LD teachers said in their interview responses, the researcher found that

there was no linkage between the respective curricula of the regular classroom and the resource room. The teaching guidelines for teachers of students with LD made clear that the resource room plan should be parallel with the regular classroom plan because the goals are the same: to promote the success of students with LD.

5.3 Theme 3: Classroom Organisation and Classroom Climate

Participants interviewed for this study predominantly overlooked the idea of classroom organisation and climate. In fact, only two – both of whom were LD teachers – commented on this theme as an important means of supporting children with LD. LDT5 described how the needs of children with LD are translated into the way the classroom is set up:

Some children suffer from a severe distraction, so they are provided with an environment free of visual or audio distractions in the learning difficulties class. The children in the regular classes are with bigger numbers and less productivity in contrast to the conditions in the learning difficulties class, in which their numbers are fewer and productivity is much better... The learning difficulties class comes with a well-suited environment that is adequate to teach the children with learning difficulties.

LDT6 described the resource room indirectly, in reporting the perceptions that other teachers had of the resource room's organization and climate:

The regular classes' teacher sees that the learning difficulties class has loveable, interesting and more effective educational materials than the regular class. The regular class' teacher sees that the learning difficulties class has a more comfortable environment educationally and academically.

The researcher had her own observations of the adequacy of the classroom, which were not in agreement with the views of the LD teachers. While the researcher noted that the chairs and tables in the resource room classrooms were designed for children of six to nine years old, and the ventilation and lighting were sufficient, the used furniture was inappropriate and inadequate. The classrooms also lacked any form of organization. Moreover, the researcher observed that there were no educational corners for audio devices, libraries, or individual learning; these types of corners contained only essential resources that needed to be provided in the resource room classrooms. Similarly, there were no spaces to store and maintain the educational materials, nor were there the necessary materials, devices, tools, and activities to teach children with LD.

5.4 Theme 4: Teaching Strategies

Within this theme, LD teachers discussed two major ways in which they used their curriculum, methods of instruction, and teaching strategies to help support children with LD. These included individualized plans for the students and the inclusion of innovative teaching methods. Their responses were then evaluated according to the researcher's observations, as well as what school inspectors expected from the teachers. This theme was more relevant than previous themes. The curriculum and Individualized education plans not only determined the accessibility and resource needs of the resource room, they also served (in conjunction with student and teacher performance evaluations) as bases for evaluating the programme as a whole.

5.4.1 Individualized Educational Plans (IEP)

According to the learning strategies, which are the guidelines for LD teachers, the two key aspects of teaching children with LD are individualized plans and targets within these individualized plans. This learning rubric requires, "The targets are to be taught to each child according to the educational individual plan. The teacher reviews the targets and their progress. In the case of failure, the teacher reviews and re-prepares the individual plan of that child." Four of the 10 LD teachers (40%) also described the importance of individualized plans in supporting LD students within the resource room classroom. As LDT1 explained:

The main target of the LD classes is to provide help and support to the children with LD to support the skills they are weak in, by using different and various educational methods in accordance with every child's level via an individual educational plan. Teaching in the LD programme is based on the individual teaching methods or through small groups which are harmonious in abilities and skills.

Furthermore, LDT1 asserted, "Through the LD class, the child can enhance his/her academic level of achievement based on an individual educational plan." Both LDT3 and LDT5 agreed with this assessment, contending that their main strategy was a mix of this individualized plan and the use of small groups. LDT9 described ways in which these individualized plans were formed, as well as the targets that derived from those plans:

The use of methods is based on the condition of each child enrolled in the programme. This is based on their readiness, learning abilities and difficulty level. We follow the individual teaching plan with every child. I put the targets in accordance with the children by using various and interesting educational materials and methods. I focus on the child

himself/herself and the skills he/she has and I enhance his/her answer, the matter which sustains his/her morale and positively affects his/her academic level of achievement.

Another LD teacher was less positive about the individual plan. LDT4 described the plans as an added burden on teachers who already had large workloads and little support from administrators:

The efforts of the learning difficulties teacher are not appreciated at all. There is no collaboration between the school's administration and the learning difficulties teacher. We (learning difficulties teachers) are forced and committed to perform the individual plan. I have thirty children; hence I should prepare thirty plans – [one] for each child, alongside preparing, designing and innovating the educational materials in addition to the missions I am obliged to perform in the school, so this is considered as an extra effort to do.

Two school inspectors in this study described their role as, in part, helping and training LD teachers to formulate these individualized plans. As such, these plans were the core of the LD programme. As SI1 explained, "We train LD teachers how to write individual education plans according to the case of the child and review the individual education plan with the teacher and way in which the plan will be implemented." SI2 also noted their role in following up on these IEPs:

We train the LD teacher how to write the individual education plan . Our role is to follow the progress of the individual education plan for the child in the LD class, and whether the plan is right for the child or not.

In addition to the school inspectors, the observations of the researcher supported this description by both the school inspectors and the LD teachers. The researcher noted that the learning in resource room classrooms was based on the process of learning among harmonious and very small groups of four children with similar abilities. Moreover, she found that some individual cases were subjected to individual learning (child-teacher) when the teacher used an IEP for each child on a weekly basis. In accordance with each IEP, the teachers also made specific preparations for each classroom.

5.4.2 Innovative Teaching Methods

All 10 of the LD teachers (100%) used multiple, innovative forms of teaching with and for their students with LD. These teachers explained that by using different and unique forms of teaching strategies, they could help students with LD who might learn in different ways. Thus,

innovative teaching methods allowed teachers to expand the scope of LD instruction, while tailoring it more finely to the needs of diverse, individual students. To be effective, an innovative teaching method would be applied when a student's poor performance under standard methods indicated that an innovation was necessary. Thus, this theme was closely related to the teacher evaluations of student performance discussed above. Likewise, innovative teaching methods were limited by the condition of the classroom and the resources (including time) that were available to the teachers. Thus, classroom climate and resources might be seen as exerting some influence on the range of innovative teaching methods that LD teachers could implement. Table 5 depicts the variety of teaching methods the teachers used.

Table 5

LD Teaching Methods

	Multiple-Senses	Learning-by-Playing	Modelling	Drama	Other Methods
LDT1				✓	✓
LDT2					✓
LDT3	✓	✓		✓	✓
LDT4		✓	✓		✓
LDT5			✓		✓
LDT6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LDT7	✓	✓			✓
LDT8	✓	✓		✓	✓
LDT9	✓	✓	✓		✓
LDT10	✓	✓	✓		✓

All 10 LD teachers used one or more innovative teaching methods; six (60%) employed multiple-senses strategy; seven (70%) used the learning-by-playing; five (50%) used modelling; four (40%) used drama, and all 10 (100%) used other teaching methods as well. These other strategies varied greatly. LDT3 used cards as a peer-to-peer method. In addition, she used multiple-senses strategy, the learning-by-playing method, and learning-by-drama method. LDT4 applied the target illustration strategy, cards, and the imitation method, in addition to the modelling method, learning-by-playing method, and "different methods, yet I neither know their educational nor scientific name."

As LDT5 described, "Using such educational strategies is based on the child's need to use more than one strategy, yet sometimes one strategy is more than adequate with some children." Additional methods included the visual and audio shutting down strategy (LDT2, LDT5, LDT9), conversation and dialogue (LDT6), the psychological treatment strategy and psychological entertainment strategy (LDT7), the reading-learning strategy and pronunciation-learning strategy

(LDT8), the target illustration method (LDT2, LDT9), the repetition method, simple-to-complex strategy, and illustration method (LDT1, LDT10), and the modelling method.

“I also use learning-by-playing method and multiples-senses strategy.” As LDT10 described,

The type of strategy relies on the target I desire to accomplish. I may use one or more than one strategy. I may also consider the interests of the children and their attraction to the strategies that focus on motion and multiple senses.

However, the researcher’s observations did not necessarily correlate with LD teachers’ self-proclaimed methods. While the researcher found that the teachers provided instructions and explanations in a clear manner, as well as some repeated and duplicated instructions for the children who did not understand, the researcher also found that teaching methods in the resource room classroom was not based on clear teaching strategies that were specific to the children in the resource room.

5.5 Theme 5: Communication and Social Skills

In relation to previous themes, results have indicated which resources and processes were available and used to help LD students succeed academically. Within this theme, the effect of the LD programme on the social dimension of children’s success was examined. The LD teachers were clear that they believed the resource room helped students to gain self-confidence and eradicate shyness and uncertainty. In turn, the teachers contended that students could form better social relationships and become more active members of the school. Seven of the 10 LD teachers (70%) made similar assertions about ways in which children with LD’s social skills had improved within and outside of the LD classroom (resource room). As LDY1 explained,

Through interacting in the LD class, the child manages to gain self-confidence... This is also reflected in his/her sustainable social skills, ability to frame new social relationships and earn positive social behaviours, not just in the learning difficulties class, but all over the school and home.

LDT7 and LDT8 concurred, explaining how self-confidence emerged from the students’ experiences in the resource room:

The resource room (LD class) helps the children with LD in overcoming the issues of shyness and silence; hence they become more socially stimulating and participating. Previously, it has been intimidating for the children with LD to stand in front of the whole class. However, after being enrolled in the learning difficulties class, those children

become more self-confident and such issues are no longer as serious. The resource room decreases the issue of the children's sensitivity and they are far too young. Now those children become more active in school and enjoy a fresh start in learning because we now use a play-learning method, which is loved by all children. Now the child with learning difficulties feels they are the focus of interest and encouraged by teachers, which boosts his/her morale and he/she becomes more interested in making an effort and developing his/her level of achievement even in the regular class too.

Many of the teachers also used the phrase "productive and stimulating" within the context of school. As LDT2 said, the self-confidence gained in the LD classroom (resource room) helped the student "to be a productive and stimulating person, not just in the learning difficulties class, but also all over the school. The child becomes more responsible because he/she feels and productivity and stimulated." This new self-confidence, coupled with an attitude of productivity and provocation, serves the function of eliminating fear and shyness. LDT4 called it "independence" and said it "pushes them to be more positive." For LDT3, the programme is about "breaking the psychological barriers which hinders the progress of the children and affects their academic achievement including fear, hesitation and tension."

While the researcher's observations did not specifically address the idea of self-confidence, her surveillances certainly indicated a warm, personal, and valuable relationship between the LD teacher and their students. The researcher noted that the teachers maintained eye contact with the children during the lesson, while encouraging the children to participate whether at her/his desk or sitting, or at the board or standing with her/his peers in the resource room. Moreover, the researcher observed that the teachers engaged the children enrolled in the resource room in the different school social activities, such as using the daily radio. The teachers would listen carefully to the children when they talked and, more generally, took care of all the students. Such relationships would seem to corroborate the type of self-confidence and social skills to which the LD teachers were referring.

5.6 Theme 6: Behaviour Management and Discipline

The final theme was only touched on by one of the LD teachers. However, the researcher did observe the ways in which behaviour management and discipline were used in the resource room to help students. Given that discipline could have an impact on both the academic and social successes of students, this theme had significance for the previous five themes, as it revealed ways in which teachers kept student behaviour in alignment with the LD programme's overarching requirements and with each student's individual plan. For LDT6, the reason there was

more control in LD classrooms (resource rooms) was size; smaller classrooms allowed teachers to better focus on their students:

The fewer the children in the class is, the more the teacher can care, notice and modify the child's behaviour in the class. Hence, the notes on the learning difficulties class concerning the behaviours of the child are more detailed than the regular class. The learning difficulties class helps with treating the children's pronunciation issues. Such issues do not only affect their academic level of achievement, but they affect their social conditions. The learning difficulties class helps the child with sustaining his/her self-confidence; hence he/she becomes more interactive and stimulating whether inside or outside the learning difficulties class.

The researcher's observations reinforced the views of LDT6; she found that the learning difficulties classrooms (resource rooms) were well regulated and ordered, with a generally happy student body. The researcher found that the LD teachers tried hard to control unacceptable behaviours in the resource room and most frequently did control the class and maintain the good behaviours of the children. Despite this, some teachers were incapable of handling certain behavioural issues that might occur in the class, due to their lack of what was called "Classroom Behaviour Modification." The teacher accepted the opinions and suggestions of the children, and students were free to express their opinions. Moreover, the resource room teachers were attuned to the condition and needs of each child enrolled in the resource room programme and were generally amiable, which was in contrast to the children's opinions about the regular classes' teachers. The students were also well-behaved, according to the researcher's observations. They strictly followed the rules and regulations, whether in the resource room or in the school, and were generally positive and happy.

5.7 Summary of Research Question 1

From the first research question, six themes emerged: (a) insufficient accessibility and inadequate resources, (b) assessments of students and of the LD programme, (c) classroom organization and climate, (d) teaching strategies, (e) communication and social skills, and (f) behaviour management and discipline. While the participants in this study did not specifically mention the theme of accessibility, the researcher, through her observations of resource rooms in seven different schools, found that accessibility was a problem. More specifically, this observation indicated that classrooms and school were poorly designed and inadequately supplied.

The second theme encompassed two forms of assessment: assessment of the LD programme and assessment of the students with LD within the programme. According to the

Department of Special Education Headteacher, the success of the LD programme was evaluated, in part, but the number of students who were enrolled in the programme was not. However, she noted that there were no assessment tools in place to measure the effect of the programme – specifically the integration aspect – on the students themselves. School inspectors had two different methods of assessment to ensure that the educational environment for resource rooms was supportive and successful: observation periods and follow-up forms.

Similar to the school inspectors' responses, all seven of the headteachers (100%) said that they used the dual methods of classroom observation and follow-up evaluation. In both cases, the assessment was of the teachers, rather than of the students; however, the ultimate goal for both was to ensure a more successful classroom for the children with LD. Nine out of the 10 teachers (90%) evaluated their students on a daily basis to make sure that they reached their educational targets (which were based on IEPs, discussed in a subsequent section). Moreover, six out of the 10 LD teachers (60%) used both a written and oral form of evaluation, while three (30%) used written evaluations only, and only one teacher (10%) solely used an oral assessment. However, teacher evaluations were used by the teacher and sometimes conveyed to the parent, but these were not systematically collected and evaluated by higher levels of administration. Thus, parents and teachers were the only stakeholders who performed any assessment of student achievement.

Participants interviewed for this study predominantly overlooked the third theme of classroom organisation and climate. In fact, only two – LD teachers – commented on this theme as an important way of supporting children with LD and a point of pride for the LD programme. However, researcher observations indicated that classroom resources were inadequate for the curriculum or irrelevant to the needs of students with LD.

Within the fourth theme (teaching strategies), school inspectors and LD teachers discussed two major ways in which they used their curriculum, methods of instruction, and teaching strategies to help support children with LD. These included individualized plans for the students and the inclusion of innovative teaching methods. This theme had significant relevance to other themes discussed by participants, as teaching strategies, curriculum, and individualized plans determined the resource and support needs of the LD room itself; these served as a basis for evaluating the performance of individual students and the programme as a whole.

Within the fifth theme, the LD teachers were clear that they believed the resource room helped students to gain self-confidence and eradicate shyness and uncertainty. In turn, the teachers contended that students could form better social relationships and become more active members of the school. Seven of the 10 LD teachers (70%) made similar assertions about ways in which students with LD's social skills had improved within and outside of the resource room.

The final theme of behaviour management and discipline was only touched on by one of the LD teachers. However, this emerged as a theme because a number of researcher observations were made in relation to it. The researcher observed the ways in which behaviour management and discipline were used in the resource room to help students. She found that the teachers and the LD students got along well; they appeared affectionate and happy, and classes were conducted mostly in an orderly manner.

Chapter 6: The Findings of Research Question 2

Research Question 2 stated the following: What are the perceptions and experiences of children with learning difficulties, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource room programmes regarding the resource room initiative in Oman? From this second research question, there emerged six themes: (a) role of the participant, (b) relationship between school and family, (c) benefits of inclusion, (d) benefits of the resource room, (e) drawbacks of inclusion, and (f) drawbacks of the resource room.

6.1 Theme 1: The Role of the Participant

Within this theme, participants described what their roles and responsibilities were within the LD programme (resource room). Because these roles were specific to the job or position of the individual, the responses were divided by the type of participant.

6.1.1 School Inspectors

All four of the school inspectors interviewed were in agreement about their role within the LD programme (resource room). Each of the four (100%) noted that their responsibility was to provide support and assistance to the LD teachers, and three of the four (75%) noted that they had to follow up on the progress of the programme. As SI3 explained,

My role is to follow up the programme application progress and follow up the teaching process for the LD teacher, to provide aid and assistance to the teacher, and to make sure of providing the appropriate class for learning difficulties at school.

SI4 agreed and added that part of that aid and assistance involved evaluation of the programme and the teachers:

Our role is to assess the work progress of the learning difficulties programme (resource room) and assess the work of the learning difficulties teacher. [We are] providing help to the teacher and the necessary things to the progress of the programme, such as devices and educational aids or providing advice and consultation to the teacher about how to teach children with learning difficulties.

Only one (SI1) said the role included any direct contact with the students. Thus, according to participant reports, direct contact between school inspectors (SI) and children was minimal, and the SI's role was primarily to monitor the implementation of the programme from an

administrative perspective and to help LD teachers when observations or teacher reports indicated that such assistance was necessary.

6.1.2 School Administration (Headteachers)

The headteachers viewed their role in the LD programme (resource room) primarily as threefold: supporting LD teachers; diagnosing, supporting, and following up with students with LD; and connecting parents to the school. All seven headteachers (HT) (100%) described part of their role as helping the LD teachers. For HT1, this involved “supporting learning difficulties teachers and encouraging them to attend training courses [and] allocating a special budget for the purchase of teaching aids.” HT2 also referred to supporting the teachers by obtaining money for teaching tools, while HT3 said support involved “helping learning difficulties teachers overcome obstacles that she may encounter.”

All seven headteachers (100%) also described their role as providing support for students with LD. However, the ways in which they did this varied slightly. For HT5 and HT6, this role included the diagnosing of students with LD. HT5 explained the role as follows:

First, identifying pupils with learning difficulties by the regular classroom teachers and transferring them to LDP, reporting them to the social specialist about their situation, and then reporting to the school principal who should approve the transfer of the pupil after having the consent of parents.

HT6 added that this process of diagnosing students should be done in conjunction with the LD programme (resource room) and regular teachers. Three headteachers – HT1, HT2, and HT4 – specifically referred to their role in supporting students with LD in the classroom and in the school. HT1 noted that their role included “providing and creating a suitable educational environment for pupils with learning difficulties.” While for HT2 this meant “providing social services for pupils with learning difficulties [and] enabling the participation of pupils with learning difficulties in various school activities, in order for them to be integrated academically and socially.”

Finally, four headteachers (HT1, HT3, HT6, and HT7) (??%) also included follow up with students with LD as a crucial part of their role. This included “pursuing an educational plan for each pupil enrolled in LDP” (HT1); “follow up the activities carried out by pupils with learning difficulties in the regular classroom and learning difficulties classrooms” (resource room) (HT6), and “follow-up the pupils’ transfer from the normal class to the learning difficulties classes, and

follow-up his/her performance in both regular and learning difficulties classrooms (resource rooms) through their teachers” (HT7).

The final aspect that headteachers referred to as part of their role in the LD programme (resource room) was acting as a liaison between parents and the school. Three of the seven headteachers (42.8%) described their responsibility to the families and the school. HT2 noted that the job entails “helping the learning difficulties teacher in communicating with the parents of pupils enrolled in LDP.”

HT3 said the role included “providing advisory services to the families with learning difficulties and their children.” HT7 added that their role included “communicating with parents of pupils with learning difficulties and keeping them updated about the development of the level of their son/daughter in LDP.” Thus, the role of HTs was distinguished from the role of SIs in several ways. First, HTs reported having extensive contact with students, including contact that gave them administrative discretion over the composition of the LD programme (i.e., evaluating students). While both HTs and SIs reported that their roles involved the support of teachers, their responses indicated that HTs took a more assistive role with respect to teachers by encouraging professional development, allocating funds, and assisting with the administration of the resource room. Conversely, SIs appeared to take a more evaluative role with respect to teachers by observing and assessing teacher performance.

6.1.3 Parents

While parents of students with LD clearly did not have any official role in the LD programme (resource room) inside the school, their role remained an essential component of the programme’s success. Parents reported their role in four different ways: helping with homework and studies, talking with their children, discussing with LD teachers/the school, and observing their children in school. The distribution of responses can be found in Figure 2, which shows what parents believed to be their role in the LD programme.

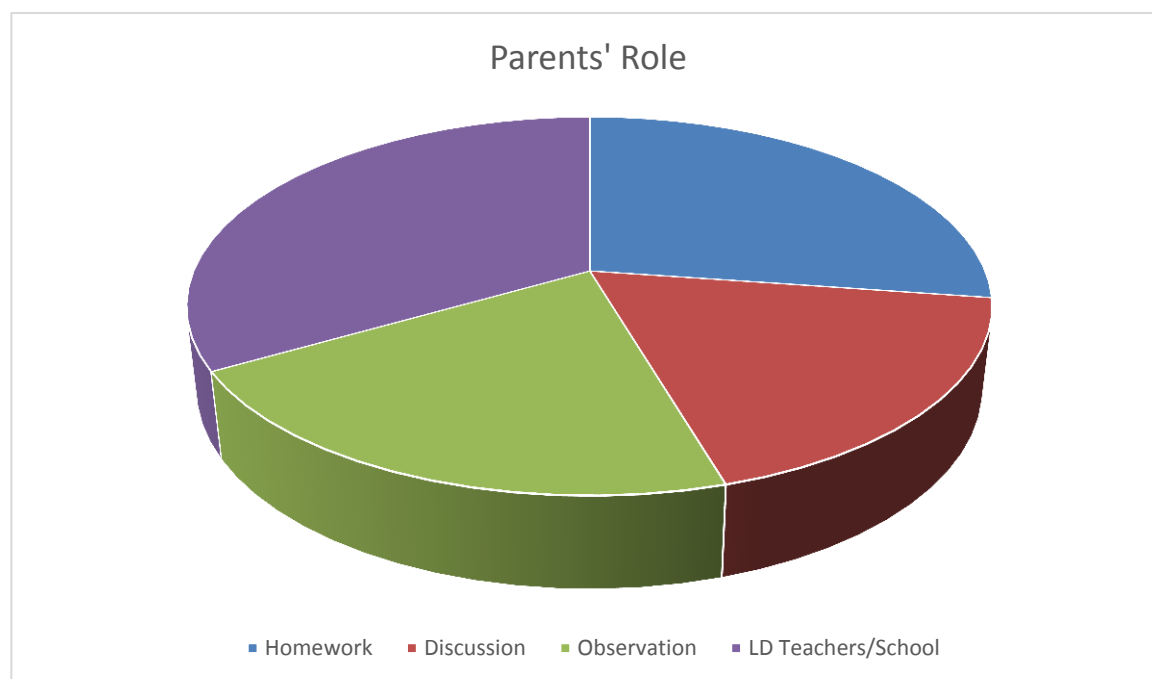


Figure 2. Parents' role in LD Programme (resource room).

All parents noted that their role involved at least two of these facets; some included three ways in which they were involved in the LD programme (resource room). Nine parents said they helped with their child's homework; six said that they talked and discussed with their child to assess their progress; seven parents noted that they observed their child at school, and 11 communicated with their child's teacher of LD or the school. Often, the role of the parent in the home caused an expansion of the role of the school. As P8 explained,

Through helping my son in revising his lessons daily, I observed that his education level is low, and I communicated with the regular class teacher and the school where they told me about the status of education of my son.

The same was true of P6, who had concerns about interactions at home that led to the LD programme (resource room):

"Through talking with my daughter, I found that her education level in Arabic is very low as she does not know the letters, she does not know how to read and she is in the lower of the third class. I communicated with the regular class teacher and she mentioned to me that she'd prefer to transfer my daughter to the learning difficulties programme (resource room) to be helped."

Some parents went to the school to help with their child. P7 noted that involvement occurred "through the continuous visits to the school and the observations of the regular class teacher."

In all iterations of these roles, the parents believed their job was to identify any LD their children might have and survey their academic progress. In comparing the responses of parents to the responses of SIs and HTs, parents reported being in contact exclusively with teachers, while HTs indicated that they had some interaction with parents. Without needing to determine which responses were more accurate, it might be seen that the LD teacher was the primary liaison between the school and the family. In the following section, the relationship between teachers and parents is examined in more detail, as it is critical to the LD child's success.

6.2 Theme 2: The Relationship between School and Families

There was little consistency within this theme between different groups of participants. While students saw their families as extremely involved, and parents also assessed themselves as immersed in the LD programme (resource room) and process, the LD teachers did not view families as collaborative. Finally, the headteachers described ways in which the school tried to maintain a relationship between the school and the family.

6.2.1 Students with LD

As part of the interview process, the researcher began with an informal chat with the child to help him/her feel comfortable. Children were invited to create drawings as a further means of helping them to feel comfortable. Figures 3, 4, and 5 below are representative of the pictures drawn by students across grade levels. The majority of students drew images of children in a school or classroom setting, often with other students and a teacher figure. In each of the included images, this was the case. Also incorporated into these images were features of the classroom environment, including desks, activity centres, and posters. There was no indication in any of the images that the classroom or school environment was an oppressive or distressing one. On the contrary, the figures in these images have been drawn to appear happy and even exuberant, with smiling faces and arms flung up. Teachers (represented by the taller figures) were not oppressive or fearsome, and they appeared friendly, open, and eager to work with the children.



Figure 3. Drawing by a child with LD.



Figure 4. Drawing by a child with LD.

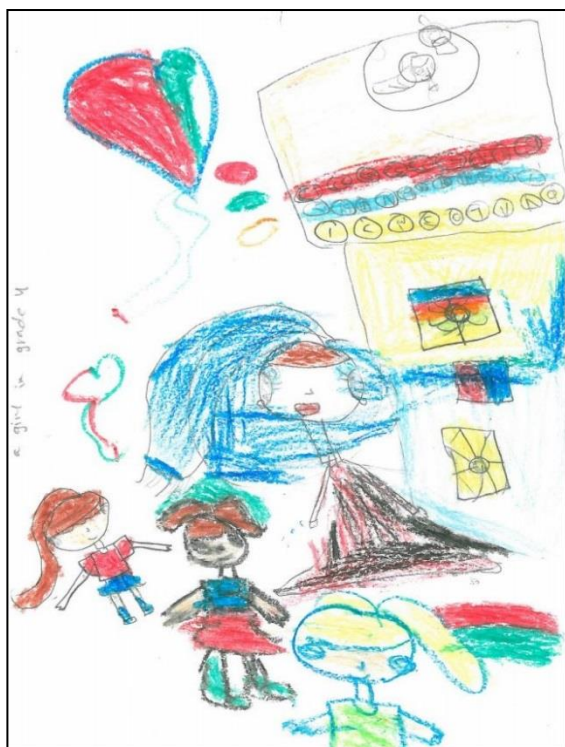


Figure 5. Drawing by a child with LD.

After the drawings were completed, when the interviews began, students with LD were asked by the researcher: "Upon arriving back home, does your father or your mother help you to do your homework?" Children answered this question simply by stating who, if anyone, helped them with their homework, and in some cases by indicating the frequency with which they received this help. One hundred and one out of 105 students with LD (97.1%) said that when they came home, their mother, father, or brother helped them with homework; only four said they received no help. Fifty-four of those who received help, received it from their mothers only, while 32 received help from both parents, and 15 reported that they received at least some help from a sibling. Twenty of those who received help reported that they received this help only sometimes because the parent who provided the help was otherwise busy. Child 9 offered one such response, saying, "My mother sometimes helps me if she is not busy."

Moreover, 70 (66.6%) students with LD said their parents encouraged them to go to the learning difficulties classroom, while 35 did not know if their parents urged them to attend those classes. All children answered either, "Yes" or "I do not know" to the question of whether they received parental encouragement to attend the LD classes, except one child (Child 15), who answered, "Yes, but I told them that I do not want to go there."

Overall, this theme indicated that children believed their family played a compelling (from the child's perspective) role in their LD education. More specifically, the data showed that students receive help from their family members, and family members were active in their

support and participation of their children. No child indicated dissatisfaction with his/her parent's level of involvement, but child participants did not report communications between teachers and parents, or parental visits to the school and classroom. This finding indicated that children were unaware of their parents' relationship with the school, as their parents described it.

6.2.2 Parents

The 21 parents who participated in this study were all mothers, due to the families' belief that the mother should be primarily responsible for matters related to the children's education. In discussing their families' relationship with the school, the mothers described the types of contact between themselves and the school. The mothers reported two types of contact: contact initiated by themselves and contact initiated by the school. Contact initiated by the school was either initiated by the LD teacher or by a school administrator (although the LD teacher would be the one to convey the message).

Eighteen of the 21 mothers reported that they had received communications initiated by the LD teacher regarding their child. P6 offered a description of this type of contact that was representative of the descriptions provided by the other mothers: "Cooperation is made by learning difficulties teacher. She communicates with me continuously and informs me about my daughter's level." P20 described the medium of communication in teacher-initiated contacts, which, in her case (and in the cases of seven other mothers), took place at least some of the time by telephone: "Sometimes the learning difficulties teacher dials me to inform me about the status of my son at school."

The other 10 parents who reported teacher-initiated contacts did not specify how they had been contacted. Only one parent (P2) reported that contacts had been initiated by the school and conveyed through the LD teacher: "The school tries to help me by providing advice and instructions through the learning difficulties teacher." Four parents reported that they had no contact or relationship with the school except through the LD teacher. P9 offered a representative response to this effect: "There is no cooperation by the school, except the learning difficulties teacher informs me of the status of my son." Three parents did not report any school- or teacher-initiated contacts.

Mothers reported two types of parent-initiated contacts with the school: visits to the school to inquire about the child (which were distinguished from visits to the school to observe the child, discussed in section 6.1.3, above) and phone calls to the LD teacher. All 21 mothers reported that they made visits to the school to inquire about their LD child's status, and seven of the mothers described their visits to the school as either "frequent" or "continuous." In a

representative response to this effect, P12 reported that she obtained information about her child “through my frequent visits to the school”. Nine of the mothers reported that they had contacted the LD teacher by phone. P10, who reported that she had both visited the school and dialled the LD teacher, stated that she obtained information about her LD child “through dialling the learning difficulties teacher or personal presence [at] school.”

According to school policy, the family should be included in the committee that developed the personal plan for an LD child. However, none of the mothers who participated in this research had contributed to her child’s personal plan. Instead, their relationship with their children’s school was limited to the school -- or parent-initiated contact described above -- and to the homework assistance described by the children in the previous section. In order for the parents to sign the form that gave the school permission to place the child in the LD classroom, the mothers had communicated with the LD teacher about the nature of the programme. However, these communications had in all cases been limited and had consisted only of the teacher providing information to the parent. Most parents mentioned only one discussion of this nature with the teacher. As P3 said, “They [the school] told me that my son needs support and the best place for it is the learning difficulties class, where he will receive more care and support with the academic skills which he suffers from.” P5 had a similar, minimal relationship with the LD teacher:

The learning difficulties teacher explained to me the status of my daughter, which I am aware of. She mentioned that they will provide support for my daughter and the children of the same education level in a special class named the learning difficulties class.

P21 had a similar conversation with the teacher, the extent to which seemed to be an assessment of and plan for the student with LD:

The learning difficulties teacher explained completely about the education level of my son. She mentioned to me that he was included in the learning difficulties programme, [and that] he will receive support through the learning difficulties programme and she explained to me the manner of providing support to him in this class.

One parent, P13, actually met with the LD teacher to discuss the programme: “I met the learning difficulties teacher where she illustrated to me the problems that my daughter suffers from and she advised me to include her in the learning difficulties programme to receive support and help.”

As discussed in Chapter 4, the mothers who participated in this research achieved a comparatively low level of education, with none having advanced beyond the sixth grade, and

some being unable to read or write. This low level of education might partly account for the parents' lack of knowledge about LD, a deficit evidenced by their requests that their LD children be placed in the resource room for science and social studies. Parental reports of involvement with the school exceeded children's reports, which were limited to descriptions of homework assistance and encouragement, and they greatly exceeded the reports of teachers, who saw families as uncollaborative.

6.2.3 Learning Difficulties Teachers (LD Teachers)

The LD teachers had a different understanding of the relationship of the parents with the school. Overall, the teachers felt that parents had a low level of engagement with the school. All 10 of the teachers (100%) said that most families were not collaborative at all, while two of those 10 (20%) said that some families were involved with the progress. LDT1 frankly stated,

"The parents do not collaborate with us to follow up their children's level of achievement in school. They play no role, when we inform them of their child's academic progress in the learning difficulties class. I mentioned before that the parents are neither collaborative nor following up their children's progress in the programme."

LDT2 added, "They lack the awareness of the learning difficulties issue." This lack of awareness is a problem, according to LDT5, "The children's parents play no actual role in the learning difficulties programme. And if they do, it is wrong because of their lack of knowledge and awareness."

Other teachers noticed the gender gap in the school/family relationship. LDT6 explained, "The parents are neither collaborative nor following up their children's progress in the programme. They do not attend the meetings held in the schools. Most of the parents who follow their children up in the schools are mothers."

One teacher, LDT3, took partial responsibility for the lack of relationship between parents and school:

I see no role played and that is maybe because of me as I do not consult any of them. I should create more powerful relationships with the children and their families. I have a plan to show to the children's parents in order to learn their opinion and engage them in it for the benefit of the child of course after making sure that the child reaches a good level according to the individual educational plan. The work of the learning difficulties teacher relies on the support of the child's family, which plays an important role in sustaining the academic and social performance of the child.

However, two teachers noted that, while a lot of parents were not involved, some were, and it depended on a variety of factors. LDT7 explained,

We do our best to contact them by using different means to try to provide any help to the family, whether by contacting them, inviting them to meetings or sending them SMSs via WhatsApp (the quickest to deliver; hence the best means). Some families try hard to support their children and such awareness is based on the cultural, academic and economic level of the family itself.

LDT8 agreed, adding that the relationship between school and family “relies on the family itself; hence, some families are collaborative, yet others are not. It is safe to say most of the families play no obvious role in the learning difficulties programme.”

Taken together, the responses of LD teachers indicated that parental involvement in LD education varied from family to family, but that most families did not engage even minimally in their children’s education. When engagement did occur, it was almost always exclusively through the mother, with the father having no interactions with the teacher or the school. Data from themes discussed above gives support to this account of the situation. As discussed above, all parents who participated in this study were mothers, and all reported that their involvement with the school was for the most part passive, consisting of receiving telephone calls, observing the child, observing the classroom, and occasionally asking a question of the child or the teacher. Parental responses implied that they had different expectations of their level of involvement with the school than the teachers did; teachers believed that their relationship with parents should be collaborative, rather than consisting of the occasional relaying of news that would elicit no significant feedback. The responses of headteachers in the following section might highlight the perspectives and expectations of teachers, as well as how parents’ expectations differed.

6.2.4 Headteachers

Unlike the parents, students, and LD teachers, the administration explained what the relationship should be between the family and the school. All of the headteachers described the process the school goes through with the family: informing them of LD enrolment, follow-up, status updates, and frequent communication. These steps are described by HT1:

After the approval of the parents of their son’s/daughter’s enrolment, the school provides them with a detailed explanation on the status of their son/daughter academically and socially and a copy of the educational plan. For optimum follow-up, the school has developed the student guide. In this guide, teachers in both regular and learning

difficulties classrooms (resource room) write daily observations on the development of pupils' level at the school, and teachers ask parents to focus or follow up their children on certain targets and write observations as well.

The communication aspect between the teacher and the parents was highlighted by all the headteachers. HT2 described this relationship as one primarily initiated by the school: "Usually, communications and support are provided for the pupil and his/her family through the learning difficulties teacher, because she remains in touch with the family." This comment confirmed parent responses, indicating that most communications between school and family were initiated by the LD teacher. However, HT3 and HT4 also described the opportunities for parent-led involvement at school. As HT3 explained,

School administration has allocated two days a week for parents to come to school, and inquire about and follow up their children in all academic and social aspects. The school also encourages parents to cooperate with the school... [There are] workshops presented by learning difficulties teachers for families of children with learning difficulties about learning difficulties.

HT5 and HT6 similarly discussed the opportunities provided by the school for parental involvement in the form of support services. As HT5 noted, "The school provides social counselling by a social specialist and academic support." HT6 added other social support methods and volunteer opportunities provided by the school to engage the parents:

We always strive to provide psychological and academic support for pupils with learning difficulties and their families and open the door for discussion with families about the status of their son/daughter. We have also applied in the school an idea which is where a volunteer mother attends the activities class and plays the role of the teacher to teach pupils a specific skill or read a story. The objective is for the family to notice the importance of their role in the school, and the pupil feels that his family is not his family alone, but also includes his classmates. This idea has played a prominent role and had positive results.

Based on the responses of the headteachers, it appears that schools tried to foster and develop a relationship between the families and schools of children with LD; however, it was less clear how well such attempts worked. The LD teachers and the parents interviewed for this study had different perspectives on the parents' involvement with the programme and the definition of what such involvement entails. Not one of the parents who was interviewed reported that they had participated in any of the activities described by the headteachers, and teacher responses

confirmed that contact with parents was scarce at best. However, headteachers described the schools as somewhat passively inviting parents to participate, as exemplified by HT6's description of the process as "open[ing] the door for discussion with families." HT3 did not describe how parents were "encouraged" to cooperate with the school, although other HTs made it clear that contact with parents was exclusively or almost exclusively through the LD teacher.

6.3 Theme 3: The Benefits of Inclusion

The third theme to emerge from the second research question is the benefits of inclusion. Within this theme, there were two main subcategories: (a) improving relationships and social skills and (b) reinforcing feelings of inclusion. In general, participants had a positive experience of inclusion. Twenty out of the 21 parents preferred their child to learn in the regular classroom but with added support for their LD. Figure 6 demonstrates the distribution of responses to this theme by participants. Findings showed that supervisors considered feelings of inclusion to be the most significant benefit for the child, while social skills and relationships were perceived as less important. Parents, on the other hand, unanimously reported that they valued the inclusion room primarily for its effects on social skills and relationships, while feelings of inclusion were far less significant.

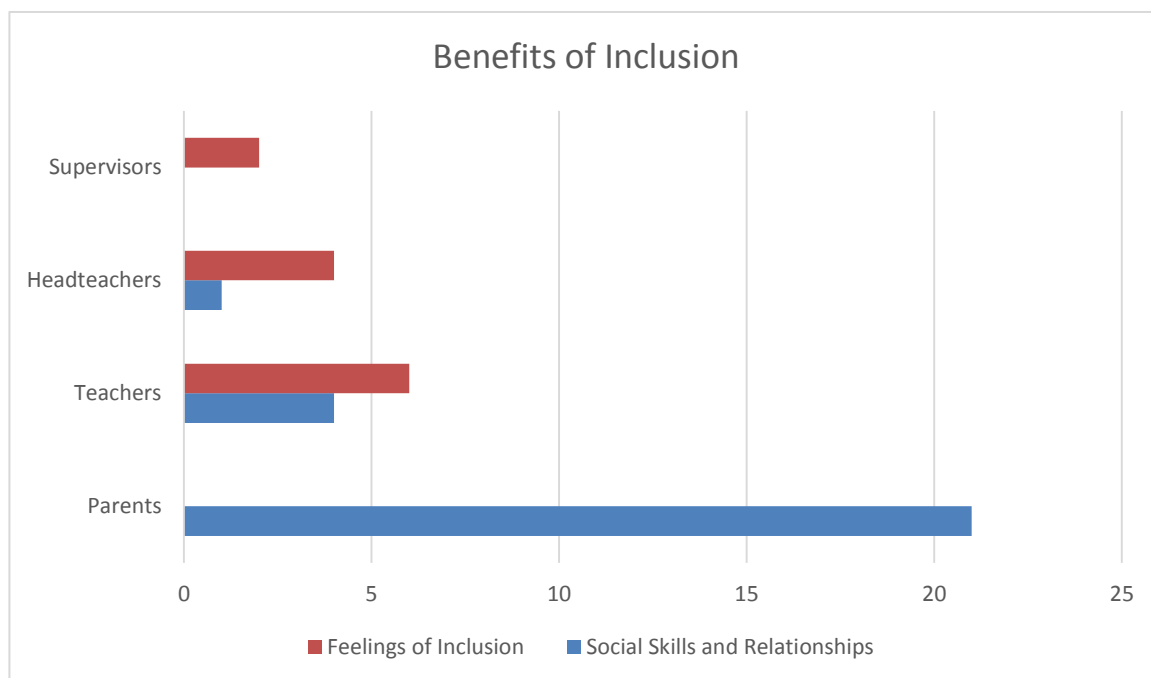


Figure 6. Benefits of inclusion.

6.3.1 Improving Relationships and Social Skills

Parents overwhelmingly believed that the greatest benefit of inclusion for their child was fortifying relationships and social skills; all 21 parents (100%) said that this was a benefit. Four LD teachers agreed and one headteacher, citing it as a benefit. P1 said, “My son forms friendships with children of the same age. He learns social skills in the regular class. He learns as if he is a child who is just challenged by reading and writing skills as the rest of his peers.” P5 agreed, saying her daughter “gains friendships and positive, social and behavioural habits through inclusion/interaction with the rest of her peers in the regular class.”

P8 described the regular classroom as “the natural place for them,” contending that was where they could “form friendships and social relations with their colleagues.” Parents also described the positive effects of gaining “experiences from colleagues” (P10) and discovering that “his colleagues are not different from him” (P11).

Teachers agreed that inclusion was beneficial for students’ social skills and relationships. Four teachers (LDT1, LDT3, LDT7, and LDT10) described how inclusion augmented students’ relationships in school. LDT7 explained, “The child gains and learns some social skills and behaviours from his/her peers and classmates in the regular class. The child participates with his/her peers and classmates in the different school activities.” LDT10 agreed, adding, “The child gains fruitful social skills by interacting with his peers and classmates and the rest of the teachers in the regular class.”

One of the headteachers also cited social skills and relationships as a benefit of inclusion. HT7 ascribed the benefit of inclusion as one of confidence, which leads to better social skills:

In terms of the social aspect, the inclusive education has enhanced self-confidence in the pupils, as they became interactive not only in the learning difficulties classroom but also at school; but in general, it also helped in improving the social relations among all pupils.

6.3.2 Reinforcing the Feeling of Inclusion

Closely related to the benefit of social skills and relationships, respondents also noted that the feelings of inclusion gained from integrated classrooms were essential. Feelings of inclusion were distinguished from relationships and social skills because the former refers to a subjective condition reported by the child or inferred from his/her behaviour, while the latter (relationships and social skills) refers to objectively observable behaviours, such as how many other children a given child interacts with, how friendly and sustained the interactions are, and how readily the child befriends his/her peers. Two school inspectors, six LD teachers, and four

headteachers cited the feeling of inclusion as a benefit of integration in the regular classroom. SI1 explained that it was beneficial for the students with LD because they “are not isolated from their colleagues.” SI2 also added that by being in regular classrooms, children with LD do not miss out on other activities:

The benefits of the learning difficulties programme to the pupil is to be in the regular class and receive support in the learning difficulties class, then he/she is not isolated from peers in the regular class. He/she only goes to the learning difficulties class two or three times a week. He/she should not be deprived of the other activities which his/her peers take part in in the regular class, such as sport and music periods and other activities.

For the LD teachers, feeling a part of the class and similar to their classmates is a crucial benefit of inclusion. LDT1 explained, “The child learns in the regular class, which is the actual educational environment where he/she is surrounded by his/her peers and mates. He/she does not feel different from the rest of the children.”

LDT2 described how students would not “feel separated from the rest of the children in the regular class”, and LDT5 echoed that sentiment, saying, “He/she is not socially isolated and carries out his/her school activities freely and equally just like the rest of the children.”

Interestingly, LDT7 and LDT8 also described the benefits of inclusion for the students without LD, rather than just the students with LD, noting that it helped them with mindfulness and understanding about LD:

The child learns in the regular class, which is the actual educational environment where he/she is surrounded by his/her peers and mates...The attitudes of the rest of the children in the regular class toward learning difficulties are not altered because they become aware of the meaning of learning difficulties and the class for LD.

Four of the seven headteachers (57.1%) also cited the importance of feelings of inclusion for students. All four of them mentioned the importance of children with LD not being isolated from their classmates who do not have LD, and being able to learn in a setting with students who do not have LD. HT7 said, “LDP has not isolated the pupil from continuing his education in the regular class” and HT6 agreed, noting that inclusion “represents the best way to provide support to pupils while attending his/her normal class, which in turn avoids the pupil experiencing the feeling of being isolated from his/her social surroundings.”

There were two notable outliers within this theme. HT3 and SI1 argued that the benefit of inclusion was a financial one. HT3 contended, “The LPD is economically useful, as it has helped the state avoid setting up a private institution dedicated to providing assistance services for pupils

with learning difficulties; besides, LDP is cost-effective.” S11 agreed, adding that the programme “is considered as a saving from the economic aspect for the family and the school, as the class is in the regular school.”

Hence, one might see the relative importance of objectively observable social skills and relationships versus subjective feelings of inclusion, which tended to be rated more highly among participants who had more contact with the child, and of lesser importance among participants who had little or no contact with the child. SIs, who reported (as discussed earlier in this chapter) that they had little or no contact with children, were unanimous in citing feelings of inclusion as the benefit of the inclusion classroom, whereas headteachers, who reported somewhat more contact with children, and teachers, who were in contact with children daily, placed proportionately more emphasis on social skills and relationships in their responses. Parents (mothers, in all cases), who might be seen as having the most prolonged and intimate contact with the children, were unanimous in naming social skills and relationships as the primary benefit of inclusion, and omitting any mention of the subjective aspect.

6.4 Theme 4: Benefits of the resource room

The fourth theme is the benefits of the resource room. Within this theme, there were two subcategories: (a) intensive care and innovative methods and (2) self-confidence. Every category of participant in this study cited benefits from the resource room. Students themselves were happy with their experiences in the resource room. In fact, 103 out of the 105 (98%) children said they were happy, pleased, or liked being in the resource room. For 36 of these students (34.2%), it was their teacher who made the classroom welcoming and agreeable. As S4 said, “My teacher there is wonderful with us.” S5 added, “My teacher rewards us when we answer correctly and she does not shout in my face at all.” S26 described the LD teacher: “The teacher in the learning difficulties classroom is very understanding and she is close to all the pupils. She helps us using attractive and various ways.” These comments were consistent with researcher observations that discipline and behaviour management in the resource room were not only effective but loving.

Seventy-eight (74.3%) students said that their favourite thing about the resource room was the diversity of learning methods. As S10 said, “We learn in interesting and various ways, which they do not have in the regular classroom.” S21 added, “We learn in exciting ways and the teacher is close to us and makes efforts to deliver the information.” These comments provided some confirmation of the reports of LD teachers to the effect that a variety of innovative instructional methods were used. Moreover, 94 out of the 105 (89.5%) said that they were not embarrassed or shy about having to go to the resource room. Despite this, 100% of students

noted that they had more friends in their regular classroom than in the resource room. These comments were consistent with data from parents indicating that the resource room is more beneficial for relationships and social skills.

6.4.1 Intensive Care and Innovative Methods

The first subcategory within this theme is intensive care and innovative methods, two concepts that were frequently linked together by the participants. Eleven parents, two school inspectors, and the head of the Department of Special Education all discussed how the resource room offered children with LD additional support and unique teaching methods. The parents were particularly grateful for the extra attention and different teaching styles that were provided in the resource room. P1 noted, “My son receives more care than the regular class. The learning difficulties teacher provides the proper support that my son needs. He learns in an interesting and exciting way.” P5 concurred, saying, “In the learning difficulties class, the children receive care more than in the regular class. They also learn in a beautiful class with attractive colours using various and interesting educational aids.” P6 echoed this sentiment: “In the learning difficulties class, my daughter receives support and care to help her overcome the obstacles which she faces. The children learn in homogenous groups, in a beautiful and varying way using interesting educational aids.” P4 and P16 both noted how the extra attention and learning methods helped to improve the child’s sense of self: “My son receives more care. He learns from new exciting methods. They use educational aids and attractive tools with him. He is rewarded and enhanced continuously. He feels that his efforts are appreciated.”

The school inspectors – SI4 and SI2 – who also cited the benefits of added attention and innovative teaching methods, stressed the relationship between the two. Because LD teachers are able to offer more individualized attention, they are also able to offer more individualized teaching strategies. SI4 explained, “The advantage of the programme is that it provides the support to children with learning difficulties outside the regular class using specialized means and educational aids that are not used in the regular class.” SI2 added, “The children with learning difficulties receive specialized education via an interesting a wonderful method in the learning difficulties class, using modern and advanced educational aids that are not used in the regular class.” Finally, the head of the Department of Special Education also mentioned the importance of attention and innovation in the classroom, arguing that it raises the level of the students academically:

The level of the pupil becomes better because learning difficulties teachers use understanding, construction, connection, analysis and comprehension skills, not only to

read or write for the pupil, but also to reach the academic level of his/her grade ... they enrolled using the skills and various activities, such as arts, sports and music in teaching pupils with learning difficulties.

These results coincided with students' responses in confirming that teachers made effective use of innovative and tailored teaching strategies to meet students' needs. However, researcher observations that the application of innovative teaching methods was somewhat unsystematic were consistent with the responses just quoted.

6.4.2 Self Confidence

The second subcategory of this theme is self-confidence; the head of the Department of Special Education, one school inspector, three LD teachers, and seven parents cited the benefit of self-confidence that students gained in the resource room.

For the head of the Department of Special Education, this confidence was essential in helping students achieve academically in other subjects: "The learning difficulties programme helps students to enhance confidence in themselves, in a way that reflects positively on their academic level in the rest of the subjects, such as English language, science and social studies etc." SI4 agreed with this assessment, linking the boosting of confidence of the student with more academic and social success: "The child also receives special care in a way that enhances his/her self-confidence and reflects on his/her academic and social role."

The LD teachers similarly discussed the ways in which self-confidence gained in the resource room translated into more academic and social attainment. LDT6 said that the resource room helped "the child with gaining self-confidence. The child fulfils the targets he/she missed in the last few years to reach his class's level of achievement." For LDT7 the benefits were emotional and academic:

[The programme is] raising the level of the children with learning difficulties, reducing the negative effects that might result from the learning difficulties emerging in the future and focusing on the psychological status of the child, not just his academic level. The learning difficulties category is always ignored in the regular class, yet it finds a profound interest in the learning difficulties classes. Such classes work on sustaining and raising the child's self-confidence, the matter that positively reflected on his/her academic level of achievement.

LDT10 concurred, noting the process of self-awareness and self-esteem that confidence gave the students: "The children with learning difficulties become more self-confident, which is reflected in

their self-perception, in which they now own powers that are reflected in their academic and social skills in a positive manner.”

For the seven parents who noted the benefits of self-confidence, the link to academic success was the most important aspect. However, they also noted the link to social improvement. P10 said, “My son feels that he is a person [worthy] of attention. He is enhanced and rewarded for his positive efforts in the learning difficulties class which has increased his self-confidence.” P3 and P21 noted the link to social behaviour: “Now, my son has more self-confidence than before. It also reflect[s] on his social behaviours. I think that the learning difficulties class is the best place for my son.” P9 credits the teacher with helping to nurture self-confidence: “The learning difficulties teacher is excellent; she provided the academic and psychical support for my son which led to increase self-confidence.” P7 agreed, saying that the extra attention paid helped with self-assurance: “I found that my son receives support in the learning difficulties class. He receives care, strengthening self-confidence for him.” Finally, P12 noticed that this confidence translated into home life: “My daughter learns though a desirable and an interesting method with a similar group of her peers. She has become more confident in herself, and it has been noted at home.”

Notable in many of the responses from parents, teachers, and the SI was the participants’ assessment of the direction of causation: Many of the respondents believed that the resource room enhances confidence, and that enhanced confidence leads, in turn, to improved performance. Given that more individualized instruction might have improved performance and that improved performance might have increased confidence, participants’ statements about the relationship between confidence and performance were significant; these had implications for other aspects of the learning situation that might affect confidence, such as the feelings of inclusion and relationships, discussed above as benefits of the inclusion classroom, and the potential for stigma to be associated with inclusion, discussed below.

6.5 Theme 5: The Drawbacks of Inclusion

The fifth theme to emerge from the second research question is the drawbacks of inclusion. This includes four subcategories: lack of attention, lack of diverse teaching methods, stigma, and none. Figure 7 demonstrates the distribution of responses to the fifth theme.

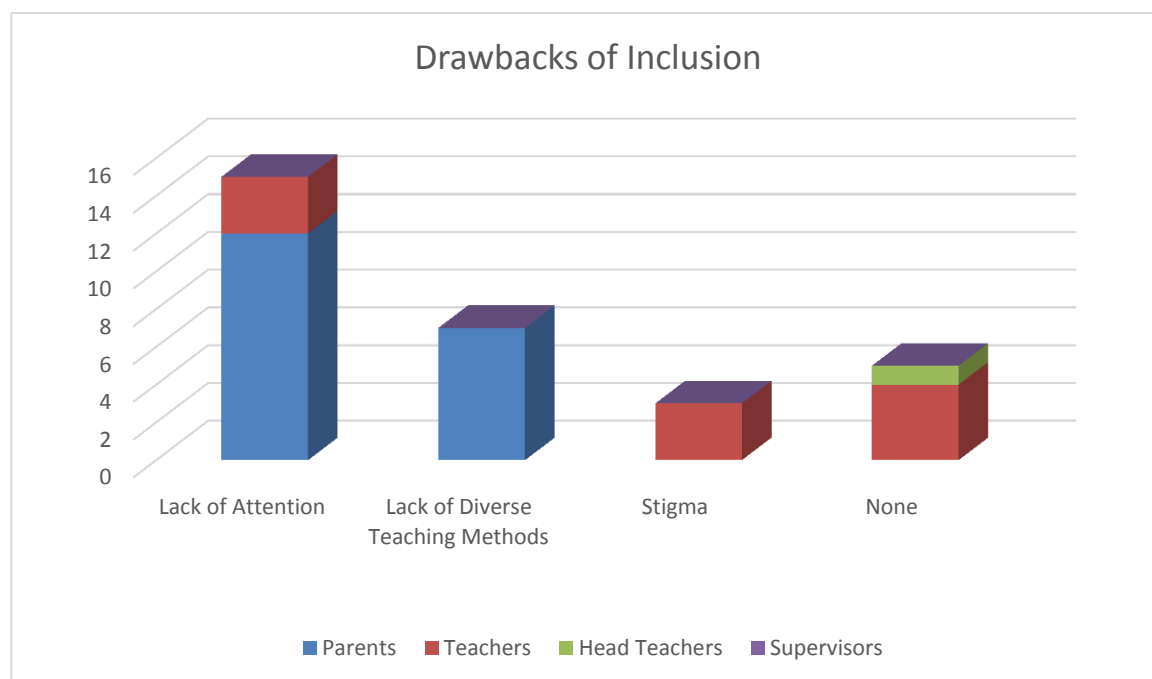


Figure 7. Drawbacks of inclusion.

6.5.1 Lack of Attention

The first subcategory is lack of attention. Twelve parents, three LD teachers, and two headteachers commented on the lack of attention that LD students received when they were integrated into regular classrooms. For some parents, the lack of attention was at the isolation level. The reasons for this isolation varied, the teacher favouring higher-achieving students and dislike students who have low motive in her classroom. P1 said, “The learning difficulties teacher is not keen on my son as he is weak. He feels that he is ignored in the regular class.” P4 pointed to more attention paid to higher-achieving students and the high number of students in the classroom:

My son does not find that he has enough care in the regular class. The teacher is keen on the categories of high and average level, and she [the teacher] is not keen on children with a low level [of ability] due to the large numbers. My son is semi-isolated in the regular class.

P8 agreed, saying, “My son is totally ignored in the class; she [the teacher] is keen on the children with a high level [of ability] and the rest of the children are neglected.” P6 added, “Maybe the teacher in the regular class ignores my daughter and she [the teacher] does not make her take part like the rest of her peers in the class because of her weak education level.”

Other parents did not use the word neglect, but they remained concerned about the lack of care given to their children. P2 said, “The regular class teacher has a larger number in the same class and teaches them at one time, so she has not enough time to be attentive to all the children at the same time.” And P5 simply stated, “My daughter finds little care in the regular class.” This corroborated responses from students, discussed above, in which the children favourably compared their nurturing resource room instructors with the far less nurturing teachers they reported encountering in the regular class.

All three LD teachers also characterized the lack of attention in regular classrooms as isolation. Primarily, the teachers saw this as regular teachers being unable or unaware of how to best teach children with LD. LDT8 noted, “Some of the regular class teachers do not collaborate with the LD classes’ teachers. The child feels isolated in his/her regular class.” LDT4 explained,

The most obvious con is that the regular class teacher depends on the learning difficulties teacher to handle the child and his/her issues and isolated him/her in the regular class. The regular class teacher believes that the learning difficulties teacher has magic solutions to all children’s issues whether in the regular class or the learning difficulties class or even in the school generally. This results in an increasing number of children in the learning difficulties class due to the negligence of the regular class teacher.

LDT7 also cited the apathy of regular teachers as part of the problem:

The regular class teacher sees all children suffer from low achievement and also considers the children not enrolled in his/her class as children with learning difficulties who should be enrolled in the learning difficulties class. Hence, the regular class teacher does not care about such children and never participates with them in the summer or additional activities. The child feels isolated in his/her regular class.

However, the two headteachers characterized the lack of attention as a problem of overcrowding in regular classrooms. HT5 explained,

Due to the limited availability of classrooms, learning difficulties teachers of Arabic and Mathematics have to put all pupils in one class, which leads to overcrowding and the inability of each teacher to apply the methods and techniques described.

HT4 agreed, saying, “The number of pupils enrolled may be large, so one learning difficulties teacher is not enough.”

6.5.2 Lack of Diverse Teaching Methods

This subcategory was cited only by parents, seven of whom mentioned that regular classroom teachers used a static and monolithic approach to teaching, which was not necessarily fitting for their child's academic needs. P3 wanted the regular teacher "to change the classic teaching methods which she uses," while P5 complained that "the teacher in the regular class does not diversify her teaching methods." P13 characterized these methods as "boring" and "classic" and P11 argued that because "the teaching methods of the [regular] teachers are bad" their child's "grades are always low."

These drawbacks supported participants' answers about the benefits of the resource room, one of which was innovative teaching methods. The use of innovative teaching methods as an exclusive feature of the resource rooms was further corroborated by student and teacher reports, discussed in relation to the benefits of resource rooms, above.

6.5.3 Stigma

Three LD teachers noted the problem of stigma associated with LD students in the regular classrooms. LDT5 and LDT1 explained,

Some children in the regular class may mock the child with learning difficulties, in some rare cases, due to his/her low academic level of achievement and attack him/her when he/she moves to the learning difficulties class, which they describe as "a class for weak children".

LDT7 agreed, "The rest of the children do not suffer from any cons in the regular class, yet they have some negative attitudes toward the learning difficulties class considering it as 'a class for weak children.'"

Chapter 7 will include a discussion of the findings of previous researchers, which indicate that cooperative activity may be the most effective way to remove stigma, with the consequence that inclusion classrooms have been found in other contexts to mitigate or eliminate stigma rather than to exacerbate it. Results in the present study indicate that the students who were stigmatized were the students who were isolated by teachers, suggesting that non-LD students in the inclusion classroom might be taking cues from teachers who ignore the needs of struggling children.

Finally, one headteacher and four LD teachers (LDT2, LDT3, LDT9, and LDT10) argued that there were no drawbacks to inclusion. As HT2 said, “There are almost no negative points in LDP; and, on the contrary, its advantages are clear at a positive level for pupils.”

6.6 Theme 6: Drawbacks of the Resource Room

There are two minor subcategories that emerged from the sixth theme, The Drawbacks of the Resource Room: none and missed periods. Overall, students themselves had no issues with the resource room. Ninety-two students said they were not embarrassed or shy about going into the resource room, while 11 said they sometimes did feel this way.

As one student noted, “Sometimes, I feel shy because my classmates in the regular classroom laugh at me when I go to the learning difficulties classroom as I’m feeble.” S67 said they felt embarrassed “because I feel that I’m different from my classmates,” while S97 said, “Yes, I feel shy because I feel not normal like other students.”

One drawback that might occur because of the resource room was that students missed periods, and therefore classes, by going to the resource room. Six parents, three LD teachers, two headteachers, and one school inspector all pointed to the possible problem of lost classes. P6 said, “I do not find disadvantages, but one problem may be that my daughter misses some lessons taken in the regular class due to being in the learning difficulties class at that time.” P4 agreed, saying,

From my point of view, the most negative thing is only some of lessons and homework which my son misses on going to the learning difficulties class. The regular class teacher is not keen on or does not remember to give him the things which he missed in the regular class. This has an effect on him writing his homework or he gets a punishment on the following day.

Moreover, two parents noted, there are no make-up sessions for what their children miss. As P15 said, “The children miss some periods when they go to learning difficulties class and they do not compensate them later.”

Three LD teachers also pointed to lost periods as a drawback of the resource room. LDT8 noted, “The child misses some new skills, lessons and activities in the regular class when he/she is in the learning difficulties class.” LDT5 discussed the consequences of missing these classes:

The child misses some sessions in the regular class when he/she is in the learning difficulties class. This is a matter that badly affects his/her examinations and the

evaluation provided by the regular class teacher; hence, his/her results become are low...It is not enough to devote just two or three sessions to the learning difficulties class. Such few sessions will never cover the skills the child is weak in. Some regular class teachers do not make this up for their.

Two headteachers also discussed the drawback of missed classes. HT6 explained,

Some pupils when they go to attend some classes in a learning difficulties classroom miss new activities and lessons taught in the regular class, and some regular classes do not pay attention to teachers or ask them to repeat these lessons.

HT1 described the reason behind these missed classes and the consequences:

There is no specific and fixed schedule for pupils with learning difficulties to go to learning difficulties class, because the pupil attends these classes during the basic time of Arabic Language or Mathematics classes two or three times a week. This makes him/her miss some classes and learning new activities and objectives in the regular class, which is reflected in his/her performance in the exam or assessment of those lessons.

Finally, one school inspector, SI3, also cited missed periods. The participant said, "Maybe there is a problem when the child goes to the learning difficulties class: he/she misses some lessons or skills which his/her peers took in the regular class."

However, for the majority of parents, there were no drawbacks to the resource room. Eighteen out of 21 parents (85.7%) said that there were no problems with the resource room, which corresponded with how their children, the students with learning difficulties, also felt about the classes.

6.7 Summary of Research Question 2

From this second research question, there emerged six themes: (a) the role of the participant, (b) the relationship between school and family, (c) the benefits of inclusion, (d) the benefits of the resource room, (e) the drawbacks of inclusion, and (f) the drawbacks of the resource room. Within the first theme, participants described what their roles and responsibilities were in the LD programme. All four of the school inspectors interviewed were in agreement about their role, as it applied to the LD programme. Each of the four (100%) noted that their responsibility was to provide support and assistance to the LD teachers, and three of the four (75%) noted that they had to follow up on the progress of the programme. The headteachers viewed their role in the LD programme primarily as threefold: supporting LD teachers; diagnosing,

supporting, and following up children with LD; and connecting parents to the school. All seven headteachers (HT) described part of their role as helping the LD teachers. Parents reported their role in four different ways: helping with homework and studies, talking with their children, discussing with LD teachers/the school, and observing their children in school.

The second theme was the relationship between school and families. There was very little consistency within this theme between different groups of participants. While students saw their family as extremely involved, and parents also assessed themselves as immersed in the LD programme and process, the LD teachers did not view families as collaborative. Closer comparison of participant responses indicated that teachers and family members had different expectations of what the school/family relationship should involve, with mothers expecting themselves only to remain minimally informed of their child's progress, but teachers approaching the relationship with the expectation of a collaborative partnership in designing and implementing the child's IEP. Finally, the headteachers described how the school tried to maintain a relationship between the schools and the families.

The third theme to emerge from the second research question was the benefits of inclusion. Within this theme, there were two main subcategories: relationships and social skills and feelings of inclusion. In general, participants had a positive experience of inclusion. Parents overwhelmingly believed that the greatest benefit of inclusion for their child was fortifying relationships and social skills; all 21 parents (100%) said that this was a benefit. LD teachers agreed, with four citing it as a benefit, but only one headteacher said the same. Closely related to the benefit of social skills and relationships, respondents also noted that the feeling of inclusion gained from integrated classrooms was essential. Two school inspectors, six LD teachers, and four headteachers cited the feeling of inclusion as a benefit of integration in the regular classroom. It was interesting to note that groups of participants assigned greater importance to relationships and social skills versus the subjective feelings of inclusion, according to how much contact they had with the child, with parents finding objectively observable relationships and social skills far more important than the subjective feelings of inclusion, and with school inspectors, who had almost no direct contact with children, giving far greater priority to feelings of inclusion.

The fourth theme was the benefits of the resource room. Within this theme, there were two subcategories: intensive care and innovative methods, and self-confidence. Eleven parents, two school inspectors, and the head of the Department of Special Education all discussed how the resource room offered children with LD additional support and unique teaching methods. The head of the Department of Special Education, one school inspector, three LD teachers, and seven parents cited the benefit of self-confidence that students gained in the resource room.

The fifth theme to emerge from the second research question was the drawbacks of inclusion. This included four subcategories: lack of attention, lack of diverse teaching methods, stigma, and none. Twelve parents, three LD teachers, and two headteachers commented on the lack of attention that children with LD received when they were integrated into regular classrooms. Seven parents mentioned that regular classroom teachers used a static and monolithic approach to teaching, which was not necessarily fitting with their child's academic needs. Three LD teachers noted the problem of stigma associated with LD students within the regular classrooms. Finally, one headteacher and four LD teachers argued that there were no drawbacks to inclusion.

There were two minor subcategories that came from the sixth theme of drawbacks of the resource room: none and missed periods. Overall, students themselves had no issues with the resource room. Six parents, three LD teachers, two headteachers, and one school inspector all pointed to the possible problem of lost classes. However, the majority of parents (eighteen out of 21; 85.7%) said that there were no problems with the resource room, which corresponds with how their children, the children with LD, felt about the class.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the research findings in relation to both the theoretical and conceptual framework and the extant literature on the subject. The findings of this study, in addition to the literature currently available, will also be linked to the aims of this study. These objectives are: (a) to explore the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the FCBE in Muscat for supporting children with LD and (b) to investigate the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource room programmes regarding the resource room initiative in Oman. The following categories are related not only to the experiences, feelings, and perceptions of the participants of this study, but also are discussed within the context of the extant literature on students with LD. In this way, the researcher can compare and contrast the findings of this study with topics that are relevant to the existing literature. Moreover, these topics directly address both research questions of this study, by examining the educational environment of the resource room, as well as the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders within the resource room programmes.

7.2 Inclusion

Inclusion is one aspect of the education experience that students with LD receive. Inclusion means that students learn both in the mainstream classroom (inclusion) and in the resource room (specifically for students with LD). Inclusion is associated with the highest degree of student involvement in the social processes and the maximum time spent with peers (Conrad and Whitaker 1997). The concept of inclusion is highly consistent with the social perspective that argues that all educational initiatives should be integrated in a rich social and cultural context (Kraker 2000). The researcher found that, in general, the stakeholders were positive in their views about inclusion. Twenty out of the 21 parents preferred their child to learn in the regular classroom, but with added support for their LD.

Moreover, this study found that one headteacher and four LD teachers argued that there were absolutely no drawbacks to inclusion. As the HT2 said, "There are almost no negative points in LDP; and, on the contrary, its advantages are clear at a positive level for pupils." These findings correlate with Khochen and Radford (2012) and Hamiour (2013). In Khochen and Radford's (2012) mixed-method study, in which 40 teachers were interviewed, teachers and headteachers in

Lebanon were found to have positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students in mainstream schools. Hamiour (2013) studied 532 teachers who had a positive and acceptable view of inclusion in their schools irrespective of their gender or age.

7.3 Social Skills and Inclusion

According to the extant literature, there is some evidence that resource rooms could have negative implications in the social interaction of children with LD (Al-Ghafri 2009). Major issues, such as social inclusion, lack of competitive environment, and less interaction with the students with no LD, might compromise the effectiveness of the resource room as a holistic approach to instruction. Al-Zoubi and Abdel Rahman (2012) and Elbaum (2002) contend that the social concept and self-esteem of children with LD might be negatively affected by resource rooms. As a result, students with LD attending resource rooms might be more likely to experience emotional and social problems than students without SEN (Bryan et al. 2004).

However, the results of this study do not comprehensively support that research. Parents overwhelmingly believed that the greatest benefit of inclusion for their child was fortifying relationships and social skills; all 21 parents (100%) said that this was a benefit. Teachers agreed that inclusion was beneficial for students' social skills and relationships. Four teachers and one headteacher similarly described how inclusion augmented students' relationships in school.

Respondents also noted that the feeling of inclusion gained from integrated classrooms was essential. Closely related to the benefit of social skills and relationships, respondents also noted that the feeling of inclusion gained from integrated classrooms was essential. Two school inspectors, six LD teachers, and four headteachers cited the feeling of inclusion as a benefit of integration in the regular classroom. These results corroborated some of the extant literature, which finds that attending mainstream classrooms prevents isolation of students with LD from their peers who do not have LD (Prince and Hadwin 2013).

Similarly, Nutbrown, Clough, and Selbie (2009) argue that students with LD experience an increase in self-esteem and socialization skills. According to social theory, learning occurs through purposeful engagement and valued activities (Bender 2008; Illeris 2009; Pritchard 1998; Woolley 2011), and children learn various skills in classrooms through social interaction (Murphy et al. 2009). The results of this study indicated that parents, teachers, and headteachers all believed that inclusion did aid in socialization with peers.

7.4 Stigma

Both the results of this study and the literature on inclusion show the problem of stigma with LD students in the regular classrooms. In this study, three LD teachers noted the problem of stigmas associated with LD students within the regular classrooms, and parents were concerned about the ways in which the peers of their children would accept their children with LD. These findings coincided with the literature on stigma and inclusion. Bossaert et al. (2013) reveal that parents of preschool and primary school children are more concerned about whether their children's peers will accept their children inside the inclusive classroom.

Moreover, the literature points to ways in which inclusion assists in reducing stigma. As inclusion does not put a label on students with SEN, by applying this educational environment, the potential of the stigma of having SEN is removed (Thomas and Loxley 2007). This environment will also have a positive effect on students with SEN who might have low self-esteem and therefore it enhances the learning potential of students with SEN. Al-Sharbati et al. (2013) recommend that there should be enlightened views presented to Omani teachers in order to overcome misconceptions and negative attitudes toward children with SEN. While the participants in this study were more concerned with the stigma that could come in the regular classroom, the literature helps to illuminate that inclusion can combat those concerns.

7.5 Lack of Individual Attention

Twelve parents, three LD teachers, and two headteachers commented on the lack of attention that LD students received when they were integrated into regular classrooms. For some parents, the lack of attention was at the isolation level. The reasons for this isolation varied, from the student's dislike of the teacher to the teacher favouring higher-achieving students. All three LD teachers also characterized the lack of attention in regular classrooms as isolation. Primarily, the teachers saw this issue as regular teachers being unable or unaware of how to best teach LD students.

This concern is echoed by the extant literature on students with LD and inclusion. Research shows that having students of varying abilities in one classroom may not give teachers the adequate attention needed for individualized learning, which can be helpful for children with LD (Bender 2008; McNamara 1989).

7.6 The Resource Room

Every category of participant in this study cited benefits from the resource room. Students themselves were happy with their experiences in the resource room. In fact, 103 out of the 105 (98%) children said they were “happy”, “pleased”, or “liked” being in the resource room. For 36 of these students (34.2%), it was their teacher who made the classroom welcoming and agreeable. This data showed support for the academics who argue that when primary schools have many children with LD, the resource room might be the best educational setting for these students to learn (Ebersbach et al. 2013; Kobayashi and Kuboyama 2003; Winebrenner and Kiss 2014).

7.7 Individualized Attention

The rationale for using resource rooms is primarily rooted in gaining academic benefits for children with LD (Bashir and Scavuzzo 1992). While the participants in this study did not specifically cite academic benefits of the resource room, they did overwhelmingly discuss the importance of individualized attention, which would ultimately lead to better learning and better academic outcomes. According to the Learning Strategies, which are the guidelines for the LD teachers, the two key aspects of teaching LD students are IEPs and targets within these IEPs. This learning rubric required the following: “The targets are to be taught to each child according to the educational individual plan. The teacher reviews the targets and their progress. In the case of failure, the teacher reviews and re-prepares the individual plan of that child.”

These plans are the core of the LD programme. Two school inspectors in this study described their role as, in part, helping and training LD teachers to formulate these IEP. In addition to the school inspectors, four out of the 10 LD teachers (40%) also described the importance of IEPs in supporting students with LD within the resource room classroom. The observations of the researcher supported this description by both the school inspectors and the LD teachers. The researcher noted that the learning in resource room classrooms was based on the process of learning among harmonious and very small groups, with only four children in each one who shared the same abilities. Moreover, she found that some individual cases were subjected to individual learning (child-teacher), where the teacher used the IEP plan for each child on a weekly basis. An IEP was also prepared for each classroom.

These findings correlate with the literature, which asserts that resource rooms could be a significant tool for addressing the needs of students with LD because of access to specialized instruction and attention from teachers (Zoellner et al. 2008). Burns et al. (2013) examine ways in

which personalized learning influences overcoming reading difficulties. They find that a highly individualized learning environment helps students with reading difficulties to overcome their difficulties. Burns et al.'s study is of particular importance to the current research, as it analyses the effect of the resource room on students with reading difficulties.

In addition, the literature merges with the findings of this study in the use of IEPs. Academics argue that teachers of resource rooms play various roles in the instruction of children with LD, including the creation of individualised programme based on a child's specific difficulty (Bender, 2008). IEPs can be beneficial to students with difficulties in writing and reading because educational goals and objectives are individualized, based on their specific educational needs and limitations (Pretti-Frontczak and Bricker 2000). Through the resource room with partial inclusion settings (i.e., students with LD spend some of their time in the mainstream classroom and some of their time in the resource room), the goals and objectives of IEPs can be implemented, which might not be possible in mainstream classroom settings.

7.8 Innovative Teaching Strategies

In this study, parents and teachers connected the concept of individualized studies with that of innovative teaching strategies. Eleven parents, two school inspectors, and the head of the Department of Special Education all discussed how the resource room offered students with LD additional support and unique teaching methods. The school inspectors, who also cited the benefits of added attention and innovative teaching methods, stressed the relationship between the two. Because LD teachers were able to offer more individualized attention, they could offer more individualized teaching strategies. The parents were particularly grateful for the extra attention and different teaching styles that were provided in the resource room.

Not only is the use of innovative and different teaching styles supported by the extant literature, but research also connects those strategies with IEPs, just as the participants of this study did. Academics contend that one role of resource room teachers is to teach children with LD based on learning strategies adapted to their learning needs (Bender 2008; McNamara 1989). To achieve the objectives of IEPs for every student, teachers apply different strategies to their instruction, such as meta-analysis, multi-sensory, music, and drama (Winebrenner and Kiss 2014; Woolley 2011). Teachers should reflect on their teaching strategies to ensure self-development and the academic development of their students (Bender 2008; (Winebrenner and Kiss 2014; Woolley 2011).

The teachers in this study reinforced the literature's perspective on multiple teaching styles. All 10 of the LD teachers (100%) used multiple, innovative forms of teaching with and for

their students with LD. These teachers explained that by using different and unique forms of teaching strategies, they were able to help students with LD who might learn in different ways. All 10 LD teachers (100%) used more than two teaching methods; six (60%) employed multiple-senses strategy; seven (70%) used learning-by-playing; five (50%) used modelling; four (40%) used drama; and all 10 (100%) used other teaching methods, as well. Moreover, teachers in this study acknowledged that their use of varied methods was a function of helping specific students with specific needs. As LD10 said, “The type of strategy relies on the target I desire to accomplish.” In this way, the findings of this study correspond with the literature on resource rooms.

7.9 The Role of Teachers

The role of the teacher in the resource room is discussed by multiple academics. Research finds that the perceptions of the resource room by teachers has a positive impact on the success of resource rooms because these teachers are responsible for the formulation and implementation of school policies pertaining to inclusion (Ryndak et al. 2011; Swanson et al. 2012; Werts et al. 2014). The opinions of education stakeholders regarding the placement of children with LD in resource room gives grounds for developing the learning environment of resource rooms and the learning process. Teachers’ positive perceptions toward the resource room and children with LD are vital for teaching and learning to be effective, and to encourage teachers to continue to develop their teaching skills, strategies and reflection (Swanson et al. 2012).

The LD teachers in this study had an overall positive perception of the resource room. The LD teachers who participated in this study agreed that LD classes helped reduce the pressure on and effort made by the regular class teacher with the children with LD in the regular classroom. Those such classes produced more awareness compared to at any time before, concerning the LD both from the perspective of the teachers and the children. The class and strategies within it relied on each child’s difficulty, preparations, and abilities. The LD teachers said that this helped students to improve academically. Every LD teacher (100%) had a positive impression of the good that resource rooms can achieve.

In addition to the perceptions of the teachers, the extant literature outlines the other important roles that LD teachers play. According to Al-Zoubi (2007), teachers in resource rooms have several duties: Teachers

1. perform assessment and evaluation to categorize the students according to their difficulty and abilities,

2. design IEPs for each student that will address the capabilities of each student based on the current level of the learner,
3. provide the students with the necessary skills for them to learn,
4. collaborate with other general education teachers, and
5. maintain open communication lines with parents because the teacher has to have regular meeting with parents to discuss the progress of and services needed by their child.

All of these roles, specified by Al-Zoubi (2007), were echoed by the LD teachers in this study. Assessment and evaluation were very important to the LD teachers; nine out of the 10 teachers (90%) evaluated their students on a daily basis to make sure that they reached their educational targets (which were based on individualized plans). Moreover, six out of the 10 LD teachers (60%) used both a written and oral form of evaluation, while three (30%) used written evaluations only, and only one teacher (10%) solely used a verbal assessment.

In this study, the teachers described how evaluations were conducted and how these linked to educational targets. IEPs were designated as essential within the LD programme by headteachers. In addition, four of the 10 LD teachers (40%) also described the importance of IEPs to supporting students with LD within the resource room classroom. In this study, teachers also employed a multitude of teaching strategies in order for students with LD to hit their educational targets. Five of the LD teachers (50%) noted that regular class teachers used the educational materials that they had made for the students with LD, while four LD teachers (40%) noted that the resource room reduced the stress on regular teachers. While these responses were not strictly descriptions of collaboration, this study's LD teachers did indicate a relationship between regular and LD teachers. Finally, 100% of parents noted that LD teachers called them to inform them of their student with LD's diagnosis and laid out an education plan for those students, indicating some form of relationship between parents and teachers. However, while students saw their family as extremely involved, and parents also assessed themselves as immersed in the LD programme and process, the LD teachers did not view families as collaborative.

7.10 The Role of Parents

Similar to the impact of the perceptions of parents on the resource room, Somaily et al. (2012) assess parents' attitudes toward the establishment of resource rooms for the children with SEN. The findings of the research show that parents are significantly satisfied with the resource room's facilities, and there is no statistical variation reported with respect to the gender, age, income, or family size of these parents. The findings of this study both undermined and reinforced

the current literature. However, 20 out of the 21 parents preferred their child to learn in the regular classroom, but they added that support for their child in the regular classroom would be required. That finding meant that parents did not have as positive a view of the resource room as they did of the regular classroom. Conversely, parents in this study acknowledged the panoply of benefits accrued by the resource room. Parents were particularly grateful for the extra attention and different teaching styles that were provided in the resource room. Eleven discussed how their children received more and more personalized attention.

In addition to the role of parental perception, academics discuss additional roles that parents should play to help their students with LD. Al-Qaryouti and Kilani (2013) identify four practices of parents that contribute to the development of literacy skills of their children. These practices involve the availability of materials at home, the availability of activities at home, parents' attitudes, and visits to the classroom of their child. Samson (2011) suggests that children with LD who study in the resource room might not be successful if their parents did not support them at home (e.g., assisting them with homework, checking their log books and communicating with teaching staff). Moreover, Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2016) argue that parents are generally aware of the importance of their involvement in their children's education. Moreover, parents believe that they should be involved not only in home activities, but also in school-based activities. However, despite the awareness and the belief, parents have limited parental involvement in their children's studies of English language.

Within the context of this study, the findings generally reinforced the current literature. Parents reported their role in four different ways: helping with homework and studies, talking with their children, discussing with LD teachers/the school, and observing their children in school. All parents noted that their role involved at least two of these facets. Some included three ways they are involved in the LD programme (resource room). Nine parents said that they helped with their child's homework, while six said that they talked with their child to assess their progress. Seven parents noted that they observed their child at school, and 11 were in communication with their child's LD teacher or the school. However, the LD teachers had a different view of the relationship of the parents with the school. Overall, the teachers felt that parents had a low level of engagement with the school. All 10 of the teachers (100%) said that most families were not collaborative at all, while two of those 10 (20%) said that some families were involved with the progress.

The results of this study also corroborated findings of previous researchers who link the school/family relationship to the stigma and isolation associated with a student's being categorized as LD. In a recent review of the literature, Hammer (2012) notes that parents of

children who are diagnosed with dyslexia are often relieved by the reassurance that the LD is not the child's or the parents' fault, and they are often grateful for the allocation of additional support that the diagnosis facilitates. However, Hammer cites evidence that parents themselves might begin to stigmatize the child by perceiving the child as afflicted by a neurological defect. The present study provided evidence that this parental ambivalence occurred in the Omani context, as parents expressed gratitude for the additional resources and individual attention that were made available to their children in the resource room, while frequently using catch-all pejoratives, such as "feeble", to describe their children.

The relationship between the family and the school also influence the LD child's success in relating to other children in the school. Sowards (2015) suggests that classifying a child as LD should be a last resort, and when the classification is unavoidable, parents and educators need to be firm advocates for the child and provide the child not only with academic support, but with abundant social and emotional support. Without this support, both at school and at home, the LD child is far more likely to suffer adverse social consequences, including isolation and stigmatization.

The results of the present study indicated that Omani parents' relationships with the school and involvement in their children's education was insufficient to prevent the isolation and stigmatization that Sowards (2015) described. The mothers who were interviewed had not participated in the development of their children's personal plans, and none described themselves as active advocates for their children. Teachers' and children's perceptions confirmed that parents were minimally concerned as participants or advocates in their children's education, with children describing their parents' involvement as limited to assistance with homework, and with teachers describing the parents as uninvolved.

Xhaferri (2015) cites three strategies that have been used to mitigate or eliminate the stigma associated with a student's LD classification: education of stakeholders, cooperative contact between LD and non-LD children (i.e., an inclusion classroom), and advocacy activities designed to counter negative perceptions of LD children. While acknowledging that further research is needed, Xhaferri indicates that advocacy and educational initiatives could be conducted with the cooperation of family, but that these efforts might be directed more fruitfully toward the families of LD children, as a means of reducing stigmatization of the child by family members and increasing family participation in the child's education. The findings in the present study confirmed that advocacy targeting the families of LD children might be needed in an Omani context as a means of educating family members and securing parents' full participation in the

education of LD children. A recommendation corresponding to this finding is presented in Chapter 8.

7.11 Conclusion

Social theory posits that the environment plays an important role in the learning of students (McIntyre et al. 2010). Specifically, the social and cultural interaction of children through their environment can either enhance or hinder the process of learning (McIntyre et al. 2010). In addition, the perceptions of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors regarding inclusion can provide insights into their practices regarding the use of resource rooms to address the educational needs of children with LD. Inclusion, either partial or full, gives students with learning disabilities and LD the opportunity to be integrated in mainstream classrooms with other students who do not have SEN (Kugelmass 2004). The perceptions of stakeholders can have a positive impact on the success of resource rooms (Ryndak et al. 2011; Swanson et al. 2012; Werts et al. 2014).

The majority of the findings of this study coincided with the current literature on inclusion and resource rooms. These findings were essential because, in the Middle East, special education is a new concept in the education system. Because the conceptual and rational framework of inclusive education remains challenging for policy makers and educators in the GCC, the findings of the study could not only help to reinforce the current literature, but also could help to shape policy and guidelines for Oman.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

This chapter discusses the conclusions drawn from the research findings based on the research evidence and describe their contribution to knowledge and theory. This chapter puts forward recommendations for the education regulatory authorities and education stakeholders for schools in Oman to improve the use of resource room techniques and their applications for schools.

8.1 Answer to Research Questions

The research questions posed within this study explored two different but intrinsically related research strands, namely the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders associated with the resource room and the education environment created in the resource room. The findings, collected through the literature review, interviews, and participant observation, support the use of a resource room for students with LD.

In relation to the first research question, the education environment of the resource room was different for each school and teacher. However, all teachers relied on innovative and a diverse range of teaching methods to help their students learn, as well as consistent assessment of student learning. There were no specific assessment protocols to gauge the effectiveness of the LD teachers, the head of the Department of Special Education. The school inspectors noted that there were assessments of the teachers and their classrooms to help maintain the programme. Nine out of the 10 teachers evaluated their students on a daily basis to make sure that they reached their educational targets, which are based on IEPs. In addition, LD teachers created an individualized learning environment by diversifying and personalizing their methods of instruction and teaching strategies. All the teachers used at least two different teaching styles, including learn-by-playing, multiple-senses, modelling, and drama. The LD teachers were clear that they believed that the resource room helped students gain self-confidence and eradicate shyness and uncertainty. In turn, the teachers contended that students could form better social relationships and become more active members of the school.

In relation to the second research question, participants contended that the resource room was a valuable educational tool that helped to support LD students with additional and intensive individualized support. Parents and teachers also discussed their experiences of innovative teaching methods, which they said helped the learning of students with LD, and gave them self-confidence. Students' experiences were also overwhelmingly positive in the resource

room, with the majority saying that they preferred their resource room teacher to their general education teacher. In fact, none of the students with LD said that they had any issues with the resource room. While parents, LD teachers, a headteacher, and one school inspector said there could be the drawback of missing classes or all pointed to the possible problem of lost classes or periods, for the majority of parents, there were no drawbacks to the resource room. Eighteen out of 21 parents said that there were no problems with the resource room, which corresponded with how their children with LD felt about the class.

8.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

To monitor the quality of services provided to students with SEN, the Department of Special Education in the MoE focuses on providing students with the best available programmes, educational services, training and guidance. The objective is to equip these students with the necessary skills to become effective and productive members of society, capable of dealing with the challenges of today's world.

The results of this study could be used to meet these objectives. More specifically, the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders within the LD programme (resource room) should be used to develop a systemic, universal, and integrated approach to the resource room services. This approach would mean that there should be formal policies and guidelines for LD programmes that every school in every district follows. The following recommendations are based on the responses and experiences of the participants in this study.

8.2.1 Formalized Assessment Plan for Diagnosing LD

In Oman, the concept of LD is often defined and understood in terms of the Western concept of LD and the Western education system. While there is a concept of LD in Oman, it is only used to identify difficulties in students. In Oman, there are no clear guidelines about how to address students with specific LD (MoE 2014). Although the term comes from a Western approach, regulation of the definitions of learning terms in Oman is essential. In Oman, there is currently no regulation of the definitions of learning terms, which can create confusion in the diagnosis of the SEN. Because there is no regulation of learning terms in Oman, the approach applied to supporting children with LD may be affected (MoE 2014). Moreover, Kakabaraee et al. (2012) determine the awareness of teachers in the identification of LD, concluding that more than 50% of the teachers in the study have adequate knowledge of LD but more than 90% of the LD teachers do not have adequate capability to identify students with LD.

The participants in this study confirmed that the current diagnostic tests were not adequate. Four school inspectors, a headteacher, seven LD teachers, in addition to the researcher, through observation, recommended a new diagnostic tool. Two school inspectors and an LD teacher described the current diagnostic test as “not real”, and LDT1 said that there was a “lack of legitimacy” with the diagnostic exam. LDT2, LDT3, and LDT9 agreed, saying that the exam results “lack credibility”. Inappropriate diagnostic practices and procedures have contributed to misclassification of individuals and questionable incidence rates of LD. Such practices and procedures have resulted in erroneously including individuals whose learning and behavioural problems were not attributable to LD, thereby excluding individuals whose deficits were manifestations of specific learning disabilities. Thus, the following considerations should be made when crafting a diagnostic and assessment test:

1. Intellectual limitations, sensory deficiencies, and emotional, social, and environmental disorders may be the primary cause of *low achievement* and should not be confused with LD.
2. Documentation of *underachievement* is a necessary but insufficient criterion for the diagnosis of LD.
3. Diagnosis of LD should be based on an analysis of the individual’s strengths as well as weaknesses.
4. Linguistic and cultural differences, inadequate instruction, and/or social-emotional deficiency do not disqualify the possibility that an individual also has LD.
5. Diagnostic judgments should not depend solely on test results. Such a practice can cause over-reliance on test scores, inadequate consideration of individual behavioural and social characteristics, and insufficient integration of other assessment information.
6. Scores on intelligence tests (IQ) are not the only reflection of intellectual ability. Diagnostic criteria based exclusively on IQ disregard intra-individual differences in skills and performance.
7. Manifestations of LD, such as language impairment, can reduce performance on intelligence tests. Therefore, selection of tests and interpretation of results should acknowledge the influence of specific learning disabilities on intelligence measures (Ldonline.org, 2016).

8.2.2 Additional Funding for the Learning Difficulties Programme

Two school inspectors, four LD teachers, and four headteachers all advocated for more funding for the LD programme (resource room). In order to develop the programme, including the

creation of a new diagnostic exam, there should be a greater allocation of funds to the programme. This funding would go toward the necessary books, tools, and educational materials needed by teachers, as well as the required furniture and technology – such as computers and smart boards. While the MoE is supposed to provide the furniture for certain parts of the LD class, often there is a shortage. In addition, while the MoE does provide technology, this frequently stays in the package because the computers are not activated and the MoE does not install other educational devices. One LD teacher said that they “purchase such materials at my own expenses” because “the budget devoted to purchasing educational materials is too low” (LDT4). Hence, the MoE should allocate additional funds for the LD programme (resource room), and such funds should be earmarked for specific needs: technology, books and educational tools, training and professional development, and furniture and equipment.

8.2.3 Increased Training and Professional Development for Learning Difficulties Teachers (Resource Room Teachers) and Regular Classroom Teachers

Emam and Kazem (2015) recommend further training and professional development programmes for all teachers in order to increase their awareness and understanding of LD. Particularly given that emotional and behavioural difficulty was found as not synonymous with having an LD, there should be an increase in training and professional development requirements and opportunities for LD teachers. Faculty members could benefit from professional development sessions in which they learn to diagnose, evaluate, and help support students with LD and policies. Moreover, such training and development should inform teachers of the support services available to students with difficulties. Further, they might benefit from workshops that address the removal of attitudinal and physical barriers for students with LD. Because school inspectors noted that too much training is unrealistic and theoretical, future training should be practical and hands-on, including role-play and real-life situations. Effective, research-based professional development should be the focus when planning activities for practising teachers. In addition, as the head of the Department of Special Education noted, this training and professional development should be for both LD teachers (resource room teachers) and regular classroom teachers. Professional development opportunities should be provided for general and special education teachers to attend together and to learn techniques used in an inclusion programme.

8.2.4 Resources and Cooperative Sharing for Families and Teachers between Regular and Learning Difficulties Classrooms

Parent/family involvement significantly contributes, in a variety of ways, to improved student outcomes related to learning and school success. The effectiveness of families, schools,

and communities working together is documented in several studies (Christenson and Christenson, 1998; Jordan, Orozco, and Averett, 2001; Sanders and Epstein, 2000). To promote these comprehensive partnerships, schools must provide a variety of opportunities for schools, families, and communities to work together (Rutherford and Billing, 1995). These programmes must be based upon “mutual respect and interdependence of home, school, and community” (McAfee, 1993). It cannot be assumed that parents instinctively know how to involve themselves in their children’s education. In fact, many parents feel inadequate in teaching roles. Effective programmes have taught parents how to create a home environment that encourages learning and how to provide support and encouragement that is appropriate for their children’s development level (Quigley, 2000; Simmons, Stevenson, and Strnad, 1993). Moreover, professional and in-service training for teachers that focuses on working with families should be widely available; preservice programmes should offer training for future teachers in the development of school-family relationships (Kessler-Sklar and Baker, 2000).

8.2.5 Education of Parents

In the Omani context, parents may be discouraged or prevented by deficits in their own education from participating fully in the development and implementation of their children’s personal plan. Thus, a prerequisite of effective cooperation between schools and families of LD children may be educational outreach initiatives, in which school personnel furnish parents of LD children with sufficient information about LD and the resource room environment to enable the parents to proceed to make informed decisions about the support that their children will receive. Education of parents should include efforts to mitigate the potential for families to stigmatize children with LD, and should also address the benefits of family participation in the planning and implementation of an SEN programme.

For a programme of parental education to be effective, it will be necessary first for the MoE to develop a systemic policy for the application of resource rooms that establishes goals and clearly defines the roles of all stakeholders. Once this is achieved, the MoE should develop a standardized protocol for conducting parental education, such that parents will routinely receive the information most conducive to their effective and informed participation in their LD children’s educational support. Through coordination between the MoE and principals, teachers of LD students should be trained to instruct parents and given adequate time and resources to do so. When parents have been instructed, they should be assisted in providing their intimate and detailed knowledge of their child’s strengths and needs in discussions with LD teachers, who will, in turn, provide the parents with their intimate and detailed knowledge of the student’s school performance and of the available supports. LD teachers and parents can then collaborate in

developing a personal plan that is both feasible (given the available resources) and tailored to the child's support needs.

8.2.6 Reduction of Stigma

Programmes involving peer mentoring can assist in reducing the stigma faced by students with LD in schools. Such programmes can facilitate the interaction between students with and without SEN as well as offer support during the transition from primary school to university. The SEN service office can develop informational media, explaining "hidden disabilities/difficulties" and how individuals can be affected by these difficulties. Presentations on the topic should be developed and offered at different venues, such as at faculty meetings and to residence hall directors and students. This development should be essential, given that this study found that LD teachers, as well as students, were concerned about the problem of stigmas associated with LD students in the regular classrooms.

8.3 Research Contribution

This study explored the ways in which resource rooms provide an educational environment in the FCBE in Muscat for supporting children with LD. This exploration was done by investigating the perceptions and experiences of children with LD, teachers, parents, headteachers, and school inspectors in both inclusion and resource room programmes regarding the resource room initiative in Oman. This study provided a deeper understanding of the services and outcomes of the resource room, the overall need for correct diagnosis and support, and sufficient assistance from educators and parents for children with LD. The results of this study could provide educators with an understanding of how best to teach children with LD, while informing the development of approaches for assessing children with LD. Finally, the conclusions of this research might be of interest to several domestic and foreign education agencies that work for the welfare and wellbeing of children with LD, helping them become familiar with the practice of using the resource room and the implications for FCBE in Oman.

8.4 Implications of the Research

This research should assist the MoE in Oman to adopt more defined concepts concerning the application of the resource room programme for children with LD. Moreover, the management of schools in Oman could now identify areas where improvements to the resource room programme could be made. The inclusion model, applied in Oman, could provide new information about resource rooms, a typology of inclusion, and an opportunity for LD teachers to

give specialized attention to students with LD without completely removing them from the mainstream classrooms (Auclair et al. 2008; Pavey et al. 2013).

This research concluded that there were no unified or consistent policies or guidelines for LD programmes. As a result, there was confusion and ambiguity about roles of the stakeholders, procedures for assessment of students and of the LD programme itself, and the benefits of the resource room. The most significant implication of this study was that these experiences and the educational environment created by these experiences varied for student, teacher, and parent. Given the disparities in experiences, a more consistent and uniform policy for LD classrooms (resource rooms) is necessary.

8.5 Limitations of the Research

This study carried out data collection in seven resource rooms in Omani state-funded schools across Muscat; thus, the results could not be generalised to all resource rooms. The study could not be generalized to all resource rooms because of the unique sociocultural context of Oman, which might not be applicable to other countries with different laws, policies, cultures, and beliefs. Moreover, time and resource constraints placed limitations on the research. The research was conducted over a short period of time; therefore, the results of this study could not examine the changes and longitudinal effects of the resource room on parents, students, and teachers.

8.6 Further Research

Based on this study, several recommendations are addressed for future researchers.

1. Research should investigate resource rooms according to specific variables, such as class size, school climate, curriculum, and instructional technologies and materials. This would strengthen special education in Oman by helping to isolate factors that contribute to the success and barriers of resource rooms.
2. Future researchers should focus on teachers' attitudes towards the specific LD of children. These may include autism, emotional or behaviourally problems, or dyslexia. This would enable LD and mainstream classroom teachers who work with these pupils with needs to update their knowledge and improve their skills in teaching in resource rooms.
3. Future studies should investigate teachers' attitudes toward the education of pupils with LD, and examine other variables such as pupils' academic achievements, pupils' behaviour, classroom ratio, and curricula, such as mathematics and literacy.

4. The researcher also recommends a longitudinal study to investigate the impact of resource rooms on students in Oman. This could be accomplished by examining their attitudes before and after participating in a resource room for at least three years, and could include the influence on students, parents, and teachers.
5. Future research should be designed to investigate the influence of Oman's culture in attitudes toward the education of pupils with LD. This will aid in combating the stigma against those students, and could help in galvanizing the community and the government to channel more resources toward LD programmes.

Appendices

Appendix A Interview Questions

Interview questions for all groups of participants

Interview questions for teachers of learning difficulties resource room:

Name of teacher:

Name of school:

Date of interview:

Qualification:

Years of experience in teaching:

Years of teaching children with learning difficulties:

Number of children with learning difficulties you teach:

Number of courses you have taken on learning difficulties:

1. In your opinion what are the intended objectives and benefits of using the resource room to support children with learning difficulties?
2. From your experience how can the resource room play a role in improving the social skills and behaviours of the children with learning difficulties?
3. From your experience how can the resource room improve children' academic skills and performance?
4. What are the benefits to general teachers and non-learning-difficulties children of the use of the resource room?
5. What do you think are the disadvantages of a resource room for children with learning difficulties?

Appendix A

6. What teaching strategies do you use in the resource room to improve children' reading and writing skills?
7. How much time do you feel is adequate for children with learning difficulties to meet their academic needs and improve their performance in the resource room and why? And is the time children have in the resource room currently sufficient?
8. How do you assist the progress of children with learning difficulties?
9. How often do you assess the progression of children with learning difficulties?
10. Do you follow the progress of children with learning difficulties in the regular classroom?
How?
11. How many children do you have in your resource room in each session and are the staffing numbers sufficient to control the number of children in the resource room?
12. What suggestions can you give to improve teaching strategies of children with learning difficulties?
13. What would you suggest for further improvements for the resource room?
14. What are the drawbacks of inclusion and the resource room for non-learning-difficulties children and children with learning difficulties?
15. What are the benefits of inclusion and the resource room for non-learning-difficulties children and children with learning difficulties?
16. What are the drawbacks of inclusion and the resource room for general teachers?
17. What are the benefits of inclusion and the resource for general teachers?
18. What do you thinks the roles played by parents in the resource room are?
19. What methods are used to ensure children with learning difficulties are supported in their education at home?
20. How does the level of support at home from parents of children with learning difficulties impact on their child's education?

Interview questions for headteachers of schools that implement the resource room programme:

Name of headteachers:

Name of school:

Date of interview:

Years of implemented resource room programme:

1. What is the role of school administration toward inclusion and the resource room programme?
2. What are the benefits of inclusion and the resource room for the school in general?
3. What are the drawbacks of implementing inclusion and the resource room programme?
4. What is the role of the school in coordination with the committee of the learning difficulties programme in the Ministry of Education in developing the resource room programme and learning difficulties services as a whole?
5. How does the school work with parents to improve the academic and social performance of children with learning difficulties?
6. What are your recommendations and suggestions to improve the resource room, the inclusion and learning difficulties services in your school and on a national level?
7. How do you evaluate the resource room programme and inclusion in your school?
8. How do you assess the children with learning difficulties' needs with parents?
9. What are the administrative methods to gain feedback from parents on their child's needs?

Interview questions for school inspectors of the resource room programme:

Name of supervisor:

Date of interview:

Qualification:

years of experience in resource room programme:

1. Could you please describe your role as a member of the learning difficulties committee?
2. What are the strategies used to identify and diagnose children with learning difficulties and disabilities?
3. What is your role in writing the Individualized education programme of a child with learning difficulties?
4. What is your role in the resource room programme and inclusion?
5. How do you evaluate teachers in the resource room programme? Could you please describe the criteria that are used to evaluate the teacher?
6. How do you evaluate the application of the resource room programme and inclusion?
7. From your experience in the resource room programme and inclusion, to what extent the can the resource room programme and inclusion be beneficial for children with learning difficulties and non-learning-difficulty children, the school and the staff?
8. In your experience what are the drawbacks of the resource room programme and can inclusion be a drawback for children with learning difficulties and non-learning-difficulties children, the school and the staff?
9. Please can you suggest changes to improve the resource room programme and inclusion?
10. What are your recommendations for improving teaching skills for the resource room teachers?
11. In regard to inclusion, what are your recommendations for improving teaching skills for general teachers to teach children with learning difficulties?
- 12.

Interview questions for parents of children with learning difficulties:

Name of parent:

Name of child with learning difficulties:

Date of interview:

Qualification:

Children number:

1. How do you follow your child's progress in reading and writing in his/her school?
2. What do you know about your child's support at school with learning difficulties?
3. How does the school provide you with feedback on your child's progress and educational support? How regularly are you provided with feedback from your child's school on their education?
4. How do you cooperate with the school to improve your child's educational skills?
5. What do you feel are the advantages of your child being taught in a classroom with only children with learning difficulties or on their own (the resource room)?
6. What do you feel are the drawbacks of your child being taught in a classroom with only children with learning difficulties or on their own (the resource room)?
7. What do you feel are the advantages of your child being taught in a classroom with non-learning-difficulties children (inclusion)?
8. What do you feel are the drawbacks of your child being taught in a classroom with non-learning-difficulties children (inclusion)?
9. Do you prefer your child to be taught in a standard classroom where non-learning-difficulties children are also taught (inclusion and the resource room) or separately in a classroom of only children with learning difficulties and why?
10. What do you recommend to improve the support your child receives at school?

Interview questions for children with learning difficulties:

Child name:

Grade:

Name of school:

Name of resource room teacher:

Age:

Gender:

These questions may be modified to enable to child to comprehend what is asked of them and help them to answer the questions.

1. Please can you draw me a picture of you in the resource room with your teacher?
2. Can you tell me about how you feel in the resource room?
3. What makes you feel like that in the resource room?
4. Please can you draw me a picture of you, your friends and your teacher in your classroom
(general classroom, this may have a name - for example red room, if that is the case this name will be used here)?
5. Can you tell me about how you feel in the classroom?
6. Please can you draw me a picture of what you would like your perfect day at school to look like?
7. *Researcher will ask the child about what they have drawn and why they have drawn it.*
This will be a discussion between the child and the researcher.
8. When you go home does mummy or daddy help you with your homework?

Appendix B Observation Sheet

The resource room observation sheet

Name of School:

Name of teacher class: Name of child:

Academic year:

Date of observation:

No. of observation:

Child age:

Grade level:

Lesson/subject:

Duration of observation:

Appendix B

No.	Themes	Sub-themes and Checklist	Researcher's notes	Additional notes
1	Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The resource room location is good in relation to the services such as playfields and restroom • The resource room is easily accessible for children and teachers • Power doors and windows • Having specialised tools and materials such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology tools • Computers • Special toys • Different books • Visual aids • Audios • Safety • Other/different equipment 		
		Sub-themes and Checklist	Researcher's notes (a teacher)	Additional notes
2	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test • Quizzes • Direct and clear feedback • Assignments/homework 		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other 			
		Sub-themes and Checklist	Researcher's notes (a teacher)	Researcher's notes (a child)	Additional notes
3	Classroom Organization and Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable chairs • Comfortable tables • Comfortable furniture • Appropriate lighting • Good ventilation • Well organized • Teaching corners • Well organized book shelves • Flexibility movement • Others 			
		Sub-themes and Checklist	Researcher's notes (a teacher)	Additional notes	
4	Curriculum/ Method of Instruction/ Teaching Strategies	<p>Vision of reception:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom seating • Auditory/multisensory (earphones, presentation, textbooks, test, tapes) prompts. • Adjusted evaluation measures, assignments, test (may have handwriting or spelling errors). 			

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer with voice synthesiser • Buddy system <p>Processing attention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher prompts • Preferential seating • Small-group setting • Individual setting • Behaviour contract • Multisensory prompts • Computers • Teacher notes • Smaller tasks <p>Expressive oral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear instructions • Specific instructions • Extra time for responding • Written answers • Buddy system for reports • Ask questions that children are capable of answering <p>Using of Individual Educational Plan (Individualized Education Programme)</p> <p>Teacher plans (check with 3 developing plans:</p>		
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		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preplanning 2. Planning 3. Plan review <p>lesson plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear objectives • Useful materials • Clear procedures • Checking children's understanding • Practice guideline • Assessing children's performance and homework • Independent practice • Ending the lesson (closure) <p>Teaching strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of reading list and materials • Provision of recorded materials to children to integrate listening and reading skills • Reviews and summaries of what was done in previous lessons • Explanation of complex terminology and unknown words • Use of interactive presentation to highlight the main ideas and context of the lesson 		
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Appendix B

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods of limiting audio and visual distractions in the classroom • Data presentation using visual and graphical means • Teachers balance of oral and written practice 			
		Sub-themes and Checklist	Researcher's notes (a teacher)	Researcher's notes (a child)	Additional notes
5	Communication and social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using eye contact when responding or talking • Participating in group talk • Asking teacher questions (for help, assistance, other) • Leading conversations • Participating and taking turns appropriately in conversations • Building on what others say • Speaking clearly and audibly • Using comprehensible speech • Listening when other/teacher speaks • Demonstrating understanding of oral directions • Explaining how to do or make 			

		<p>something</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating knowledge of punctuation • Writing sentences in appropriate grammatical form • Expressing interest in specific story, book, other • Establishing social relationship in the resource room • Having different social activity in the resource room • Participating in other social activity outside the resource room 			
		Sub-themes and Checklist	Researcher's notes (a teacher)	Researcher's notes (a child)	Additional notes
6	Behaviour Management and Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher action toward inappropriate behaviours in the resource room • Child commitment to teacher instructions and rules • Children's behaviour reinforcements toward accepted behaviour • Teacher's acceptance of children's ideas and thoughts • Allowing children to ask and express their ideas freely 			

Appendix B

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline in the resource room • Implementing the resource room regulations. 			
7	Reflection (other aspects that effected teaching and helping children with learning difficulties in resource room and other expectations about resource room)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective observation of child • Reflective observation of teaching and planning • Reflective observation of teacher • Reflective observation of communication and behaviours • Reflective observation of classroom organization and classroom climate 			

Appendix C Informed Consent Forms

FOR “parents of children with learning difficulties” CONSENT FORM

Study title: “Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with Learning Difficulties in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman”

Researcher name : Khawla Hilal Al-Mamari / **Student number:** 24893536

Ethics reference: 10832

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (22.09.2014 v3) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

☐

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be recorded and used for the purpose of this study.

☐

I understand that my responses, and those of my child, will be anonymised in reports of the research.

☐

I understand my participation is voluntary and I and my child may withdraw at any time without our legal rights being affected.

☐

I agree for my child to take part in the interview.

☐

I agree for my child to take part in the classroom observations

☐

Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password-protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Name of participant (print name):

Signature of participant:.....

Date:.....

FOR “teachers of children with learning difficulties” CONSENT FORM

Study title: “Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with Learning Difficulties in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman”

Researcher name : Khawla Hilal Al-Mamari / **Student number:** 24893536

Ethics reference: 10832

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (22.09.2014 v3) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

☐

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be recorded and used for the purpose of this study.

☐

I understand that my responses will be anonymised in reports of the research.

☐

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected.

☐

Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password-protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Name of participant (print name):

Signature of participant:.....

Date:.....

FOR SUPERVISORS/INSPECTORS CONSENT FORM

Study title: "Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with Learning Difficulties in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman"

Researcher name : Khawla Hilal Al-Mamari / **Student number:** 24893536

Ethics reference: 10832

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (22.09.2014 v3) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

☐

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be recorded and used for the purpose of this study

☐

I understand that my responses will be anonymised in reports of the research

☐

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected

☐

Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password-protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Name of participant (print name):

Signature of participant:.....

Date:.....

**HEADTEACHERS CONSENT FORM FOR THE SCHOOL TO TAKE PART IN INTERVIEWS AND
OBSERVATIONS**

Study title: "Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with Learning Difficulties in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman"

Researcher name : Khawla Hilal Al-Mamari / **Student number:** 24893536

Ethics reference: 10832

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (22.09.2014 v3) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

☐

I agree to for my school to take part in this research project and agree for the data collected in interviews to be recorded and for what is observed in the resource room to be annotated, for used for the purpose of this study.

☐

I understand that my responses and what is observed will be anonymised in reports of the research.

☐

I understand the participation of my school is voluntary and I may withdraw my school from the study at any time without my legal rights being affected.

☐

Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password-protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Name of participant (print name):

Signature of participant:.....

Date:.....

HEADTEACHERS CONSENT FORM

Study title: "Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with Learning Difficulties in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman"

Researcher name : Khawla Hilal Al-Mamari / **Student number:** 24893536

Ethics reference: 10832

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (22.09.2014 v3) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

☐

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be recorded and used for the purpose of this study.

☐

I understand that my responses will be anonymised in reports of the research.

☐

I agree for my school to take part in the research, which includes classroom (resource room) observations and interviews of myself, my staff (resource room teachers) and the children with learning difficulties.

☐

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected.

☐

Data Protection






I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password-protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Name of participant (print name):


Signature of participant:.....

Date:.....

Assent form for children

Do you want to take part in this project?			☺ Yes	☹ No
1.		I have read the information sheet about this project.		
2.		I have had time to think about the information.		
3.		I understand that I am volunteering to be involved and I can leave the project at any time without giving a reason.		
4.		I understand that the views that I give in this project will be shared with others but no one outside of the group will know who said what.		
5.		I agree to take part in the project.		

Appendix C

6	 <small>© Can Stock Photo - csp11250588</small>	I will share the interview with others but no one outside of the group will know who said what.		
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(Please Print Your Full Name)

(Please Sign Your Name)

Date




Thank you for your time in reading and completing this form

Khawla Hilal Al Mamari

The University of Southampton



kham1e12@soton.ac.uk

 00968 99887735- 0044 7474353531

Appendix D Participants' Information Sheet

Headteachers' school observation information sheet

Study Title:

Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with Learning Difficulties in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman.

Researcher: Khawla Hilal Al-Mamari

Ethics Number: 10832

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

I am a research student at the University of Southampton. The aim of this study is to explore how resource rooms are used to support children with learning difficulties in the First Cycle of Education in Muscat. This study will also look at teachers', headteachers', supervisors', pupils' and parents' attitudes toward the inclusion of children with learning difficulties and the resource room programme.

The researcher will observe the teaching strategies that are used in the resource room and all interactions that happen in the resource room.

The following are my main research questions:

1. In what ways are resource rooms used in the First Cycle of Basic Education in Muscat to support children with learning difficulties?
2. What are the general perceptions of children with learning difficulties, teachers, parents, principals and supervisors toward inclusion and the resource room program initiative?

Why have I been chosen?

As this research is complex and requires the opinions of senior school teachers/ headteachers to understand the issues faced by children with learning difficulties and the faculty, you have been selected to facilitate the information collection about the teaching practices and their outcomes. Furthermore, your participation will provide first-hand information about children with learning difficulties who use the resource room and how these resource rooms are managed in Muscat, Oman. This will help the researcher to develop and explore how the resource room can support children with learning difficulties. In addition, your perspective about the inclusion of children with learning difficulties in mainstream schools will assist in the analysis of problems of inclusion specific to your school.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will not be included in the observation; however, you will be informed about this study and observations.

The observation will be conducted in the resource room at your school. The observation will concentrate on what happens in the resource room used by the resource room's teachers and children with learning difficulties. If you agree that the observations can be undertaken at your school, the researcher will be very grateful. The observer will take one lesson (45 minutes) three times on different dates in the resource room during reading/writing lessons. During the observations, the researcher will watch what happens in the resource room and all the interactions in the resource room and she will take notes.

The observation timings will be discussed and arranged with resource room teachers. The researcher would like to emphasise that you are not obliged to agree that the observations can take place at your school.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

The benefits may not be direct, but your participation would help the researcher to examine the main issues of this study and this might help improve services that are provided to children with learning difficulties in Oman. In addition, the results of this study may prove useful to teacher educators of children with learning difficulties who are looking to improve inclusion and the resource room programme in Omani schools. Currently there is very little research that explores the experiences and perceptions of children, teachers and leaders involved in the resource room programme. Therefore by taking part in this research, you may help the voices of children with learning difficulties, parents of children with learning difficulties and teachers of children with learning difficulties to be heard in academic research in Oman and internationally.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no real risks involved in this research as the researcher will be undertaking observations of the resource room at your school, which is part of the everyday context of your work. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point and your data will not be used.

Will my participation be confidential?

Confidentiality is very important in this research; therefore any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored safely and later destroyed. The recording of your interview will be stored on a password-protected computer so that only the researcher has access to the information you provide. In addition, the resource room information will not be used or made available for any purpose other than for this research. Information will be kept safe in line with UK laws (the Data Protection Act) and University of Southampton policy. Pseudonyms will be used for all phases of data analysis and in all research reports and presentations.

What happens if I change my mind?

Appendix D

Participation in this study is completely voluntary; therefore you will have the right to withdraw at any time and this will not have an effect on any of your rights and there will not be any negative consequences.

What happens if something goes wrong?

If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research is conducted or how you have been dealt with during the study, you may contact:

Head of Research Governance

University of Southampton

Building 32

Southampton

SO17 1BJ

United Kingdom

Telephone: 02380 595058

Email: rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?

If you would like further information about the research, please contact me at:

Khawla Hilal Al Mamari

University of Southampton

Telephone: 07474353531

kham1e12@soton.ac.uk

Thank you for your time and consideration

Participant Information Sheet

(Headteachers' interviews)

Study Title:

Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with Learning Difficulties in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman.

Researcher: Khawla Hilal Al-Mamari

Ethics Number: 10832

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

I am a research student at the University of Southampton. The aim of this study is to explore how resource rooms are used to support children with learning difficulties in the First Cycle of Education in Muscat. This study will also look at teachers', headteachers', supervisors', pupils' and parents' attitudes toward the inclusion of children with learning difficulties and the resource room programme.

I will interview you, all teachers of children with learning difficulties at your school and all children who are taught in the resource room at your school with their parent/s.

The following are my main research questions:

1. In what ways are resource rooms used in the First Cycle of Basic Education in Muscat to support children with learning difficulties?
2. What are the general perceptions of children with learning difficulties, teachers, parents, principals and supervisors toward inclusion and the resource room program initiative?

Why have I been chosen?

Appendix D

As this research is complex and requires the opinions of senior school teachers/ headteachers to understand the issues faced by the disabled children and their teachers, you have been selected to facilitate the information collection about teaching practices and their outcomes. Furthermore, your participation will provide first-hand information about children with learning difficulties who use the resource room and how these resource rooms are managed in Muscat, Oman. This will help the researcher to develop and explore how the resource room can support children with learning difficulties. In addition, your perspective about the inclusion of children with learning difficulties in mainstream schools will assist in the analysis of problems of inclusion specific to your school which will benefit your school as recommendations will be given for the issues identified through the research.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will be highly appreciated. The researcher will arrange to meet at a time that is convenient to you at the school in which you work. At this meeting, the researcher will have a detailed discussion with you about the study, when you can ask any questions and chat about any concerns you may have. If you are still happy to take part, the researcher will ask you to sign the consent form. This will take about half an hour. Another meeting will then be arranged, again at a time convenient to you, and the researcher will come to your school. This meeting will be for the researcher to conduct her interview with you. The interview will take 1 hour and no more than 2 hours.

The researcher would like to emphasise that you are still free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or any hard feelings.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

The benefits may not be direct, but your participation would help the researcher to examine the main issues of this study and this might help improve services that are provided to children with learning difficulties in Oman. In addition, the results of this study may prove useful to teacher

educators of children with learning difficulties who are looking to improve inclusion and the resource room programme in Omani schools. Currently there is very little research that explores the experiences and perceptions of children, teachers and leaders involved in the resource room programme. Therefore by taking part in this research, you may help the voices of children with learning difficulties, parents of children with learning disabilities and teachers of children with learning difficulties to be heard in academic research in Oman and internationally.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no real risks involved in this research as the researcher will be only interviewing you about resource rooms and inclusion in mainstream schools, which is part of the everyday context of your work. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point and your data will not be used.

Will my participation be confidential?

Confidentiality is very important in this research; therefore any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored safely and later be destroyed. The recording of your interview will be stored on a password-protected computer so that only the researcher has access to the information you provide. In addition, your information will not be used or made available for any purpose other than for this research. Information will be kept safe in line with UK laws (the Data Protection Act) and University of Southampton policy. Pseudonyms will be used for all phases of data analysis and in all research reports and presentations.

What happens if I change my mind?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary; therefore you will have the right to withdraw at any time and this will not have an effect on any of your rights and there will not be any negative consequences.

What happens if something goes wrong?

If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research is conducted or how you have been dealt with during the study, you may contact:

Head of Research Governance

University of Southampton

Building 32

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SO17 1BJ

United Kingdom

Telephone: 02380 595058

Email: rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?

If you would like further information about the research, please contact me at:

Khawla Hilal Al Mamari

University of Southampton

Telephone: 07474353531

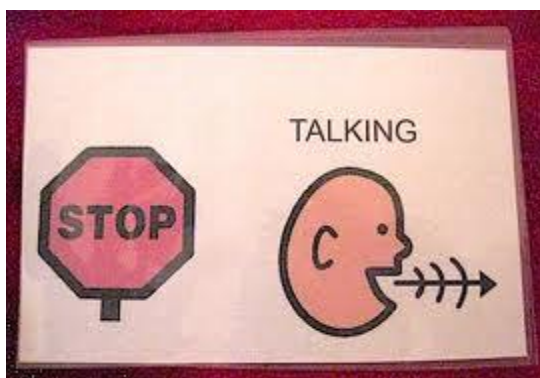
kham1e12@soton.ac.uk

Thank you for your time and consideration

Participant Information Sheet for Children

Hello, my name is Khawla. I am a student from the University of Southampton in England. I have come to your school to watch how children learn in the resource room. You have been chosen to come and chat with me about your life in the resource room.

Our chat will be at your school in a quiet room. Your mummy or daddy, or both, will be with you the whole time we are chatting. We will keep making sure that you are happy to help me and chat with me. If you do not enjoy our chat or do not want to answer any questions I ask you, feel free to stop our meeting or we can skip the question. It is absolutely fine to do this and you won't get into any trouble.



Are you happy to record our chat?



Appendix D

I will be recording our chat so that I can remember what you said. What you tell me will help me to understand your life in the resource room.



If you get tired during our chat please just tell me and we can have a little break or carry on our chat another day.



Do you agree to participate in this fun activity, please tick in the following box:



Yes



No

Your Name: _____

Class:-----

Thank you for your help and please talk with daddy and mummy about this.



Participant Information Sheet for parents

(Child's interview and observation)

Study Title:

Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with Learning Difficulties in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman.

Researcher: Khawla Hilal Al-Mamari

Ethics Number: 10832

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

I am a research student at the University of Southampton. The aim of this study is to explore how resource rooms are used to support children with learning difficulties in the First Cycle of Education in Muscat. This study will also look at teachers', headteachers', supervisors', pupils' and parents' attitudes toward the inclusion of children with learning difficulties and the resource room programme.

The researcher will interview and observe your child.

The following are my main research questions:

1. In what ways are resource rooms used in the First Cycle of Basic Education in Muscat to support children with learning difficulties?
2. What are the general perceptions of children with learning difficulties, teachers, parents, principals and supervisors toward inclusion and the resource room programme initiative?

Why have I been chosen?

You have been approached about this research because your child attends the resource room at school. The researcher is particularly interested in finding out more about their experiences of the resource room and is seeking your permission to include them in this research. Furthermore, the opinions of your child can contribute to exploring the use of the resource rooms. The participants will also give opinions about the role played by parents and teachers in assisting children with learning difficulties.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Your participation as a parent to present with the child during interview is also requested as your child's participation in this study will be highly appreciated. The researcher will arrange to meet at a time that is convenient to you and your child at your child's school. At this meeting the researcher will have a detailed discussion with you about the study, when you can ask any questions and chat about any concerns you may have. In this meeting the researcher will ask you if you are still happy for your child to take part in the study. The researcher will ask you to sign a consent form at the time of interview to agree to your, and your child's participation. The researcher will then interview your child about the resource room programme and inclusion and his/her ideas about the services provided to your child in her/his school. This interview will be recorded and will take approximately 1 hour and no more than 2 hours.

In this interview you must be present at all times as your child is a minor. With you there, your child will also feel more comfortable. The interview will also take place in a quiet room in your child's school and should take around an hour. The purpose of this interview is to see how satisfied your child is with the resource room services and support, and to hear about their feelings toward the resource room. This interview will be more like a conversation. Before we start the interview, the researcher will chat to your child and make them feel comfortable. The researcher will show them a copy of the participant information sheet for children, which outlines what I am doing. Then we can proceed to the interview regarding the resource room.

Appendix D

The researcher will also be carrying out a classroom observation involving the resource room your child uses. In this observation, the researcher will simply sit back and quietly observe the teaching and learning that is going on in the classroom. She will be doing this to gain an understanding of how the resource room works.

The researcher would like to emphasise that you and your child are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or any hard feelings. It is important that you understand that the information you and your child provide in the interviews and information gained in the classroom observation will be completely confidential and will not be shared with anyone.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

The benefits may not be direct, but your child's participation would help the researcher to examine the main issues of this study and this might help improve services that are provided to children with learning difficulties in Oman. In addition, the results of this study may prove useful to teacher educators of children with learning difficulties who are looking to improve inclusion and the resource room programme in Omani schools. Currently there is very little research that explores the experiences and perceptions of children, parents, teachers and leaders involved in the resource room programme. Therefore by taking part in this research, you may help the voices of children with learning difficulties, parents of children with learning difficulties and teachers of children with learning difficulties to be heard in academic research in Oman and internationally.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no real risks involved in this research as the researcher will be only interviewing your child about resource rooms and inclusion in mainstream schools. You and your child are also free to withdraw from the study at any point and your data will not be used.

Will my participation be confidential?

Confidentiality is very important in this research; therefore any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored safely and later be destroyed. The recording of your child's interview will be stored on a password-protected computer so that only the researcher has access to the information you provide. In addition, your child's information will not be used or made available for any purpose other than for this research. Information will be kept safe in line with UK laws (the Data Protection Act) and University of Southampton policy. Your child's name will not be used/ quoted in any documents related to the research; instead a pseudonym (code name) will be used for all phases of data analysis and in all research reports and presentations.

What happens if I change my mind?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary; therefore you and your child will have the right to withdraw at any time and this will not have an effect on any of your rights and there will not be any negative consequences.

What happens if something goes wrong?

If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research is conducted or how you have been dealt with during the study, you may contact:

Head of Research Governance

University of Southampton

Building 32

Southampton

SO17 1BJ

United Kingdom

Telephone: 02380 595058

Email: rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?

If you would like further information about the research, please contact me at:

Khawla Hilal Al Mamari

University of Southampton

Telephone: 07474353531

kham1e12@soton.ac.uk

Thank you for your time and consideration

Participant Information Sheet for Parents

(Parents' interview)

Study Title:

Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with Learning Difficulties in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman.

Researcher: Khawla Hilal Al-Mamari

Ethics Number : 10832

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

I am a research student at the University of Southampton. The aim of this study is to explore how resource rooms are used to support children with learning difficulties in the First Cycle of Education in Muscat. This study will also look at teachers', headteachers', supervisors', pupils' and parents' attitudes toward the inclusion of children with learning difficulties and the resource room programme.

The researcher will interview you.

The following are my main research questions:

1. In what ways are resource rooms used in the First Cycle of Basic Education in Muscat to support children with learning difficulties?
2. What are the general perceptions of children with learning difficulties, teachers, parents, principals and supervisors toward inclusion and the resource room program initiative?

Why have I been chosen?

Appendix D

You have been approached about this research because your child attends the resource room at school. The researcher is particularly interested in finding out more about your experiences related to your child in the resource room. Furthermore, you can contribute to the exploration of using the resource rooms and the role played by teachers in assisting the children with learning difficulties. You are also selected due to direct influence/ impact on the children with learning difficulties and the outcomes of the activities performed in the resource room on their inclusion in the common society/ social network and their academic performances.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Your active participation will be highly appreciated in this study. We will arrange to meet at a time that is convenient to you at your child's school. At this meeting we will have a detailed discussion about the study, when you can ask any questions and chat about any concerns you may have. This meeting will take about half an hour. Another meeting will then be arranged, again at a time convenient to you, and the researcher will come to your child's school to meet your child in your presence. In this meeting the researcher will ask you if you are still happy to take part in the study and, if you are, the researcher will ask you to sign the consent form for the child. The researcher will then interview you on the resource room programme and inclusion and your ideas about the services provided to your child in her/his school. This interview will be recorded and will take approximately 1 hour and no more than 2 hours.

The researcher would like to emphasise that you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or any hard feelings. It is important that you understand that the information you provide in the interviews and information gained in the classroom observation will be completely confidential and will not be shared with anyone.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

The benefits may not be direct, but your participation would help the researcher to examine the main issues of this study and this might help improve services that are provided to children with

learning difficulties in Oman. In addition, the results of this study may prove useful to teacher educators of children with learning difficulties who are looking to improve inclusion and the resource room programme in Omani schools. Currently there is very little research that explores the experiences and perceptions of children, parents, teachers and leaders involved in the resource room programme. Therefore by taking part in this research, you may help the voices of children with learning difficulties, parents of children with learning difficulties and teachers of children with learning difficulties to be heard in academic research in Oman and internationally.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no real risks involved in this research as the researcher will be only interviewing you about the resource room and inclusion in mainstream schools. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point and your data will not be used.

Will my participation be confidential?

Confidentiality is very important in this research; therefore any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored safely and later destroyed. The recording of your interview will be stored on a password-protected computer so that only the researcher has access to the information you provide. In addition, your name will not be used or made available for any purpose other than for this research. Information will be kept safe in line with UK laws (the Data Protection Act) and University of Southampton policy. Your name will not be named in any documents related to the research; instead a pseudonym will be used for all phases of data analysis and in all research reports and presentations.

What happens if I change my mind?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary; therefore you will have the right to withdraw at any time and this will not have an effect on any of your rights and there will not be any negative consequences.

What happens if something goes wrong?

If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research is conducted or how you have been dealt with during the study, you may contact:

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Where can I get more information?

If you would like further information about the research, please contact me at:

Khawla Hilal Al Mamari

University of Southampton

Telephone: 07474353531

kham1e12@soton.ac.uk

Thank you for your time and consideration

Participant Information Sheet for school inspectors

(School inspectors interview)

Study Title:

Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with Learning Difficulties in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman.

Researcher: Khawla Hilal Al-Mamari

Ethics Number : 10832

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

I am a research student at the University of Southampton. The aim of this study is to explore how resource rooms are used to support children with learning difficulties in the First Cycle of Education in Muscat. This study will also look at teachers', headteachers', supervisors', pupils' and parents' attitudes toward the inclusion of children with learning difficulties and the resource room programme.

The researcher will interview you.

The following are my main research questions:

1. In what ways are resource rooms used in the First Cycle of Basic Education in Muscat to support children with learning difficulties?
2. What are the general perceptions of children with learning difficulties, teachers, parents, principals and supervisors toward inclusion and the resource room programme initiative?

Why have I been chosen?

Appendix D

As this research is complex and requires opinions of resource room supervisors to understand the issues faced by the disabled children in these mainstream schools, you have been selected to facilitate the information collection about the supervised children's activities and their outcomes. Furthermore, your participation will provide first-hand information about children with learning difficulties who use the resource room and how these resource rooms are managed in Muscat, Oman. This will help the researcher to develop and explore how the resource room facilities can support children with learning difficulties. In addition, your perspective about the inclusion of children with learning difficulties in mainstream schools will assist in the analysis of problems of inclusion specific in the school.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will be highly appreciated. We will arrange to meet at a time that is convenient to your place of work, the Ministry of Education.

At this meeting we will have a detailed discussion about the study, when you can ask any questions and chat about any concerns you may have. This meeting will take about half an hour. In this meeting the researcher will ask you if you are still happy to take part in the study. If you are, then the researcher will arrange another time convenient to you, when she will interview you on your perception of the resource room programme and inclusion. On the day of the interview, the researcher will ask you if you are still happy to take part in the study, and if you are she will ask you to sign the consent form. This interview will be recorded and will take approximately 1 hour and no more than 2 hours.

The researcher would like to emphasise that you will still be free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or any hard feelings. It is important that you understand that the personal information you provide in the interviews will be completely confidential and will not be shared with anyone.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

The benefits may not be direct, but your participation would help the researcher to examine the main issues of this study and this might help improve services that are provided to children with learning difficulties in Oman. In addition, the results of this study may prove useful to teacher educators of children with learning difficulties who are looking to improve inclusion and the resource room programme in Omani schools. Currently there is very little research that explores the experiences and perceptions of children, teachers and leaders involved in the resource room programme. Therefore by taking part in this research, you may help the voices of children with learning difficulties, parents of children with learning difficulties and teachers of children with learning difficulties to be heard in academic research in Oman and internationally.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no real risks involved in this research as the researcher will be only interviewing you about resource room and inclusion in mainstream schools, which is part of the everyday context of your work. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point and your data will not be used.

Will my participation be confidential?

Confidentiality is very important in this research; therefore any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored safely and later destroyed. The recording of your interview will be stored on a password-protected computer so that only the researcher has access to the information you provide. In addition, your information will not be used or made available for any purpose other than for this research. Information will be kept safe in line with UK laws (the Data Protection Act) and University of Southampton policy. Pseudonyms will be used for all phases of data analysis and in all research reports and presentations.

What happens if I change my mind?

Appendix D

Participation in this study is completely voluntary; therefore you will have the right to withdraw at any time and this will not have an effect on any of your rights and there will not be any negative consequences.

What happens if something goes wrong?

If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research is conducted or how you have been dealt with during the study, you may contact:

Head of Research Governance

University of Southampton

Building 32

Southampton

SO17 1BJ

United Kingdom

Telephone: 02380 595058

Email: rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?

If you would like further information about the research, please contact me at:

Khawla Hilal Al Mamari

University of Southampton

Telephone: 07474353531

kham1e12@soton.ac.uk

Thank you for your time and consideration

Participant Information Sheet for Teachers

(Resource Room Observations and Teacher Interview)

Study Title:

Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with learning Difficulties in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman.

Researcher: Khawla Hilal Al-Mamari

Ethics Number : 10832

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

I am a research student at the University of Southampton. The aim of this study is to explore how resource rooms are used to support children with learning difficulties in the First Cycle of Education in Muscat. This study will also look at teachers', headteachers', supervisors', pupils' and parents' attitudes toward the inclusion of children with learning difficulties and the resource room programme.

I will interview you and I will observe you at your school.

The following are my main research questions:

1. In what ways are resource rooms used in the First Cycle of Basic Education in Muscat to support children with learning difficulties?
2. What are the general perceptions of children with learning difficulties, teachers, parents, principals and supervisors toward inclusion and the resource room program initiative?

Why have I been chosen?

As this research is complex and requires the opinions of senior school teachers/ headteachers to understand the issues faced by the disabled children and the faculty, you have been selected to

Appendix D

facilitate the information collection about teaching practices and their outcomes. Furthermore, your participation will provide first-hand information about children with learning difficulties who use the resource room and about how these resource rooms are managed in Muscat, Oman. This will help the researcher to develop and explore how the resource room can support children with learning difficulties. In addition, your perspective about the inclusion of children with learning difficulties in mainstream schools will assist in the analysis of problems of inclusion specific to your school.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will be highly appreciated. We will arrange to meet at a time that is convenient to you at the school in which you work. At this meeting we will have a detailed discussion about the study, when you can ask any questions and chat about any concerns you may have. This meeting will take about half an hour. Another meeting will then be arranged again at a time convenient to you and the researcher will come to your school. In this meeting the researcher will ask you if you are still happy to take part in the study, and if you are, the researcher will ask you to sign the consent form. The researcher will then interview you on the resource room programme and inclusion and your teaching strategies used in the resource room and inclusion programme. This interview will be recorded and will take approximately 1 hour and no more than 2 hours. The researcher would like to emphasise that you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or any hard feelings.

Once the interview has finished, the researcher will ask you to make 3 more appointments when she will observe your lessons in the resource room. These 3 classroom observations are not to judge or critique your teaching, but for the researcher to gain deeper understanding into teaching children with learning difficulties in the resource room.

It is important that you understand that the information you provide in the interview and anything observed in the resource room will be completely confidential and will not be shared with anyone; this includes the staff and headteacher at your school.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

The benefits may not be direct, but your participation would help the researcher to examine the main issues of this study and this might help improve services that are provided to children with learning difficulties in Oman. In addition, the results of this study may prove useful to teacher educators of children with learning difficulties who are looking to improve inclusion and the resource room programme in Omani schools. Currently there is very little research that explores the experiences and perceptions of children, teachers and leaders involved in the resource room programme. Therefore by taking part in this research, you may help the voices of children with learning difficulties, parents of children with learning difficulties and teachers of children with learning difficulties to be heard in academic research in Oman and internationally.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no real risks involved in this research as the researcher will be only interviewing you about resource room and inclusion in mainstream schools, and observing the teaching in the resource room, which are parts of the everyday context of your work. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point and your data will not be used.

Will my participation be confidential?

Confidentiality is very important in this research; therefore any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored safely and later destroyed. The recording of your interview will be stored on a password-protected computer so that only the researcher has access to the information you provide. In addition, your information will not be used or made available for any purpose other than for this research. Information will be kept safe in line with UK laws (the Data Protection Act) and University of Southampton policy. Pseudonyms will be used for all phases of data analysis and in all research reports and presentations.

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Khawla Hilal Al Mamari

University of Southampton

Telephone: 07474353531

kham1e12@soton.ac.uk

Thank you for your time and consideration

Appendix E Ethics Committee Approval Letter

7/12/2016

Ethics ID:10832 has been reviewed and approved by your supervisor

Ethics ID:10832 has been reviewed and approved by your supervisor

ERGO [ergo@soton.ac.uk]

Sent: 22 September 2014 17:16

To: Al Mamari K.H.

Submission Number: 10832

Submission Name: Resource Rooms as One of the Alternatives in Supporting Children with Reading and Writing Disabilities in First Cycle in the Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman

This is email is to let you know your submission has been reviewed and approved by your supervisor.

It has now been sent to the Ethics committee for review.

Comments

None

[Click here to view your submission](#)

ERGO : Ethics and Research Governance Online

<http://www.ergo.soton.ac.uk>

DO NOT REPLY TO THIS EMAIL

<https://www.outlook.soton.ac.uk/owa/?ae=Item&t=IPM.Note&id=RgAAAADIVRHhFOksT4N3eTeOE9JbBwAxV01eA8VyQYqmmqhgnJ4nAAAAjLILAAxV0...> 1/1

Appendix F Codebook

Code	Description	Example
Accessibility	How the classroom is physically/mentally accessible for children with LD	The schools did not seem to consider the physical and dynamic abilities of the children when designing the doors and windows. The doors were heavy and bulky, with hefty knobs that made it difficult for students to open; none of the doors were automatic, and the large windows had no curtains. thought, "Well, I could answer that," and "I can answer that," and pretty soon I was involved.
Assessment	How the LDT assesses the progress of a children with LD in terms of assessments, presentations, social skills, and academic knowledge.	"Through watching periods with learning difficulties teacher, two or three times, in the term, or according to my timetable for school visits during the term, because we have 40 schools in Muscat province."
Classroom organisation and classroom climate	How the classroom is an appropriate educational environment for children with LD in terms of sitting arrangement, learning tools	"Some children suffer from severe distraction, so they are provided with an environment free of visual or audio distractions in the LD class. The children in the regular classes are of bigger numbers and less productivity in contrast to the conditions in the LD class, in which their numbers are fewer and productivity is much better..."

	provision, ambience, and physical environment.	
Curriculum/Method of Instruction/Teaching Strategies	The LDT teaching strategies and learning style to the children with LD in terms of provided material, teaching techniques, communication, and self-presentation of LDT.	multiple-senses strategy; learning-by-playing; modelling; drama; cards; peer-to-peer
Communication and Social Skills	The social environment of the classroom and how the LDT and children with LD communicate with each other, and how the children with LD communicate with each other	“Through interacting in the LD class, the child manages to gain self-confidence...This is also reflected in his/her sustainable social skills, ability to frame new social relationships and earning positive social behaviours, not just in the LD class, but all over the school and home.”
Behaviour Management and Discipline	How LDTs manage the inappropriate behaviour of the children with LD. The rules and regulation set out by LDT	“The smaller the number of children in the class is, the more the teacher can care, notice and modify the child's behaviour in the class.”
Role of the Participant	How the participant sees him/herself within the structure of the LD	“My role is to follow up the programme application progress and follow up the teaching process for the LD teacher. Providing aid and assistance to the teacher, and making

	programme; duties, responsibilities	sure of providing the appropriate class for LD at school....”
Relationship between School and Families	How parents and teachers view their interactions with one another; how they assist and communicate with each other	“The parents do not collaborate with us to follow up their children's level of achievement in the school. They play no role, when we inform them of their child's academic progress in the LD class.”
Benefits of Inclusion	Perceived benefits of students with LD being in a mainstream classroom	“The child gains and learns some social skills and behaviours from his/her peers and mates in the regular class. The child participates with his/her peers and mates in the different school activities.”
Benefits of the Resource Room	Perceived benefits of students with LD being in the resource room	“We learn in exciting ways and the teacher is close to us and exerts efforts to deliver the information.”
Drawbacks of Inclusion	Perceived downsides of students with LD being in a mainstream classroom	“My son does not find enough care in the regular class. The teacher is keen on the categories of high and average level [ability], and she is not keen on children with low level [ability] due to the large numbers My son is semi-neglected in the regular class.”
Drawbacks of the resource room	Perceived downsides of students with LD	“In my point of view the most negative thing is only some of lessons and homework which my

being in the resource son misses upon going to LD class”
room

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