



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

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Abstract

Although special needs schools (schools for the blind and deaf) have existed in the MENA region since the 19th century, special needs education has only recently been introduced in the Gulf region due to the novelty of public education itself. Recently, GCC member nation Ministries of Education are embracing a broader policy view of 'inclusive education' which seeks to provide opportunities for all learners. Although fully inclusive classrooms, in which services for differently-abled pupils are integrated into the normative curricula and classroom, are not the norm internationally, many countries are grappling with attempts to achieve this ideal. The GCC represents a particularly interesting case, since, as M. Ghaly has argued, disability has only recently received adequate attention in Islamic theology. Therefore both the theoretical and philosophical framework of inclusive education, in addition to the practical considerations, remains a challenging arena for policy planners and educators in the GCC.

Key Words: Inclusive education, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman.