

**EXAMINING COLLABORATION AND CONSTRAINS ON COLLABORATION BETWEEN
SPECIAL AND GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN
JORDAN**

Mayada Al-Natour

Muna Amr

The University of Jordan

Eman Al-Zboon

The Hashemite University

Hatem Alkhamra

Qatar University

This paper examines collaboration between general and special education teachers in mainstream schools in Jordan from their own points of view. It explores the extent to which teachers work collaboratively throughout the different stages of the special educational programs of students with special needs (i.e. referral, assessment, planning, and implementing the educational program stages). It also looks at constrains that may hinder this collaboration. The study adopts a mixed method design, where teachers' views on collaboration and constrains on collaboration were first surveyed and then further examined through a series of semi-structured interviews. Both survey and interview results showed that teachers collaborate at a low level throughout the different stages of the student's special educational program. Results also showed that collaboration is constrained by different factors including: teachers' large workload; high numbers of students in the classroom; lack of awareness of the importance of collaboration; lack of pre- and in-service training in the area of inclusive education; general education teachers' negative attitudes toward working with students with special needs; and lack of support from schools administration and students' families. The results are discussed in relation to the study context: inclusive education was only recently introduced to the education system in Jordan and has therefore not yet been fully adopted or understood by the different educational parties. Also, general and special teachers education programs at both pre-service and in-service level have not updated their programs so to prepare teachers to work in inclusive educational settings and be able to collaborate with each other.

Since the declaration of Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education in 1994, many countries have been striving to improve the quality of their education systems by adopting inclusive practices to achieve equality among learners with diverse needs. Nonetheless, developing an inclusive education system requires extensive changes in the educational practices such as the encouragement of general and special education teachers to work collaboratively together (Thousand, Nevin & Villa, 2007).

Literature in inclusive education has repeatedly documented the positive impact of collaboration on the implementation of inclusion (Carter et al., 2009; Cook & Friend, 2006; Naraian, 2010; Spencer, 2005). Yeung (2012) reported that inclusive education can be successful when granted strong leadership, promoting collaborative school culture, fostering professional partnerships, and facilitating students' learning.

Teachers collaboration was broadly defined as *a style of direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal* (Cook & Friend, 1992, 5). Collaboration is also perceived as sharing information among experts; ideally, the involved parties should communicate openly, demonstrate mutual respect for one another, and work together toward the common goal of a child's educational program (Murata & Tan, 2009).

The ultimate goal of collaboration is to increase students' achievement; teachers are required to work collaboratively within inclusive settings to strengthen academic performance of children with special needs, so to close the gap between high and low achieving students (Smith & Leonard, 2005). This goal can be achieved through different models of collaboration such as collaboration consultation, co-teaching, peer coaching and Collaborative problem solving (Lingo, Barton-Arwood, & Jolivet, 2011). For instance, Thomson (2013) reported that applying collaborative problem-solving model in New Zealand has the potential to assist schools and teachers to develop and maintain inclusive classrooms, through this model of collaboration, mainstream teachers were able to learn new skills and strategies from the resource teachers, and incorporate these strategies into their teaching repertoire when consultation was faded.

In theory, collaboration between general and special education teachers is grounded in the idea that each teacher has a unique knowledge base and expertise (Cook & Friend, 2006; Garderen et al., 2009), combining both expertise would result in a successful process of collaboration. This process is not simply achieved when two people working together, liking each other or spending time on a joint activity, it rather requires effort, diligence, training (Robinson & Buly, 2007) and sharing; resources, decision-making and responsibility of the outcomes (Carter et al., 2009).

Collaboration is an on going process where teachers become involved in various educational phases that together facilitate the progress of the student with special needs. For instance, Lingo, Barton-Arwood and Jolivet (2011) recommended six steps through which collaboration between special and regular teachers can take place: (1) defining the student's behaviour to be monitored, (2) determining method for measuring progress, (3) designing data collection form, (4) determining roles, (5) collecting data, (6) analyzing data. The authors argue that if collaboration is achieved during the previous steps, decisions regarding the appropriate instructional methods can be made which leads to positive students' outcomes.

The idea of collaboration is highly recognized and valued, however, reality check seems to tell a different story. Collaboration faces various challenges and constrains that limit the implementation of a successful inclusive programs. For example, Eldar, Talmor, and Wolf-Zukerman (2010) reported that one of the different barriers toward successful inclusion was the issue of collaboration, which included imperfect relationships among professionals, lack of cooperation and disagreement among them regarding best strategies and forms of action. Similarly, Smith and Leonard (2005) reported that general and special education teachers experience intrapersonal and interpersonal value conflicts when collaborating together. Another constraint on collaboration between special and general teachers, in relation to lesson planning and instruction, is the depth of content knowledge for special education teachers. McHatton and Daniel (2008) noted that while many special education teachers in the United States are certified for K-12 grades, their preparation programs predominately focus on elementary stage. Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2013) highlighted further challenges to collaboration, including: the struggle of power within the classroom dynamics, lack of school recognition for collaboration, schedule and time allocated for collaboration and failure to share responsibility.

One logical assumption that can be drawn from research on collaboration is the necessity to prepare future teachers to embrace the idea of inclusive education and guide future teachers to act in a collaborative manner. However, teacher preparation programs are often blamed for insufficient training in collaboration skills for educators (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009; Laframboise et al., 2004; McKenzie, 2009; Otis-Wilborn et al., 2005). Teacher preparation programs are sometimes responsible for validating segregation phenomena; special and general education programs usually prepare teachers to fulfil their disciplinary roles and responsibilities within isolated practices prior to entering the teaching field (McKenzie, 2009), consequently, special and general education teachers become overwhelmed with the demands of collaboration later on. Some research findings supported this issue, for example, Conderman and Johnston-Rodriguez (2009) reported that general education teachers felt less prepared in areas related to curriculum and assessment, such as making accommodation and modifications to the curriculum, using individualized assessment and monitoring student progress; Meanwhile, special education teachers felt more prepared than general education teachers in areas associated with planning

instruction, pacing lessons, evaluating assignments, adapting course content, monitoring student progress, providing individualizing instruction, having appropriate expectations of students and participating in a team.

Relevant research in the Arab region shows similar concern. For instance, Bradshaw (2009) suggested that regular education teachers in the United Arab Emirates need pre and in-service training in order to foster inclusive education for students with special needs. He also called for the necessity to elucidate the innovation of Inclusion for them. Also, Khochen and Radford (2012) pointed out that inclusive education in Lebanon faces various challenges such as limited training, availability of qualified specialist teachers and the high cost of supporting inclusion. In Jordan, a review of teachers' pre-service education programs showed that these programs do not provide appropriate training on skills that are needed to work in inclusive settings (Amr, 2011).

The Current Study: Context and Rationale

The world wide movement toward inclusive education has been reflected on the educational policies of special education in Jordan. The movement toward inclusive education in Jordan was originally enforced by passing *The rights of persons with disability Act* in 1993 and renewed later in 2007. This legislation had a great impact on embracing the new ideology of inclusion. Within this law, article (2) defines inclusion as: *measures, programs, plans and policies aimed at achieving full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life without discrimination and on equal basis with other*. Furthermore, Article (4) within this law insures the right to public education, vocational education and higher education to all persons with disability through inclusive means (The Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities, 2007).

Despite the fact that the above law puts a great emphasis on full inclusion, The Ministry of Education adopted the supportive resource program model in order to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools in Jordan. Within this model, students with special needs receive specialized instruction for short periods of time in the resource room while they spend the majority of their time in general education classes. In this model of service delivery, collaboration between special and general education teachers is essential. Idol (2006) emphasizes that both teachers are required to collaborate in order to design the content of the individualized educational program, and to insure that special education programs support general education program. Good collaboration skills can insure that the resource room program truly supports the general education program, and is likely to help support students to transfer what they have learned in the resource room to the general education classroom.

Unfortunately, scientific data on the extent and aspects of collaboration, if existed, between general and special educators in Jordan is limited; few reports highlighted the lack of collaboration among general and special education teachers in a general manner (Al-Natour, 2008; McBride, 2007). However, these reports neither thoroughly examined the nature of collaboration nor did specify the constrains that obstruct such collaboration. Therefore, this study intends to provide some insights on the nature of collaboration in Jordan and the constrains that are limiting it.

Methodology:

Purpose of the Study

This study aims at exploring the extent of collaboration between the general education (GE) and special education (SE) teachers in Jordan. It also aims at investigating the different constrains that impede this collaboration between these teachers in mainstream schools.

Research Design

This research employed a mixed methods design where qualitative and quantitative methods were utilised. The research design encompassed two phases; the quantitative phase, which took place firstly, where quantitative data were collected with the use of a survey technique. This survey examined teachers' views of the extent and different practices of collaboration among general and special education teachers in mainstream schools. The collected data helped drawing a large picture on how collaboration is being practiced.

The qualitative part was implemented in the second phase, where the aim was to carry out an in-depth investigation of teachers' views on collaboration and its practices and constrains. To enable that, a series of individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with general and special education teachers.

Research Questions:

This research was set to answer the following questions:

- 1- To what extent do general and special education teachers in mainstream schools collaborate together?
- 2- What are the constrains that encounter regular and special education teachers to perform collaborative practices?

Participants

For the purpose of this study, three samples of teachers were selected to participate in the study's quantitative and qualitative phases. The first sample was stratified random sample of 250 special education teachers (SE) whom were selected from the original population, which consisted of 520 teachers working at The Ministry of Education's public school in the three regions of Jordan (North, middle, and south region).

The second sample was purposive and consisted of 250 general education teachers (GE). Teachers in this sample were matched with the above sample and the criterion of their selection was that both teachers teach the same student with special needs.

The final number of returning questionnaires was 368, which represent 74% of the total sample, divided equally between SE and GE teachers. The sample contained 102 males and 266 females, most participants held a bachelor degree and had more than 10 years of experience, see (Table1).

The third sample was a convenient and drawn from the original sample pool of teachers who responded earlier to the survey. A total number of 24 GE teachers and 19 SE teachers were finally individually interviewed in their schools.

Table 1. Demographic Data of the Sample

	Special education teachers N (%)	Regular education teachers N (%)
Gender		
Males	48(26.1)	54 (29.3)
Females	136(73.9)	130 (70.7)
Education level		
Diploma	13(7.2)	25(13.8)
Bachelor	99(55.0)	133(73.5)
Graduate studies	68(37.8)	23(12.7)
Years of experience		
1-2	17(9.5)	11(6.0)
3-5	41(22.9)	29(15.8)
6-10	59(33)	56(30.4)
More than 10	62(34.6)	88(47.8)
Number of students		
Less than 10	22(12.8)	11(6.0)
10-20	59(34.3)	16(8.8)
21-30	79(45.9)	72(39.6)
More than 30	12(7.0)	83(45.6)

*Instrument**Survey*

The researchers developed a survey instrument based on an extensive review of relevant literature of collaboration and its domains. This step was crucial due to the lack of guiding research in Jordan on collaboration and the need for a starting point to explore the international perspectives on the current collaboration practices and constrains.

The survey instrument consisted of three parts: The first part involved demographic data of the respondents (i.e. gender, educational qualification and teaching workload). The second part consisted of

43-items exploring collaborative practices among teachers. Participant teachers, in this part, were asked to rate each item according to a five point Likert-type scale (5=Always, 4=often, 3=usually, 2=rarely, 1=Never), where higher scores obtained represent higher level of collaboration between both general and special teachers. Previous items were grouped into four categories: 1) Collaboration in pre-referral and referral phase 2) Collaboration in evaluation and diagnosis 3) Collaboration in program planning and 4) Collaboration in program implementation. The third part of the instrument consisted of 12 items reflecting constrains to successful collaboration between special and regular education teachers. Items were rated on a two-point scale reflecting the applicability or none applicability of the item according to teachers.

To establish face validity for the instrument, a pilot version was sent to ten faculty members from the departments of; Counselling and Special Education, Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Psychology at the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the University of Jordan. Feedback was provided and comments were taken into consideration in designing the final version of the instrument. Furthermore, the instrument was piloted on a convenient sample of general and special education teachers (n=30) working in schools. Their feedback was also incorporated into the final version of the instrument. This sample was excluded from the study sample.

The reliability of the instrument was determined by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The coefficient alpha statistics for the second and third part were 0.96, 0.87 respectively, reflecting good levels of internal consistency.

Semi Structured Interview

Researchers developed a semi structured interview schedule based on seven guided open ended questions. The focus of those questions varied to include: teachers' perceptions on collaboration, how teachers collaborate throughout the different stages of the student's educational program, and their views on collaboration constrains. Interviews took an average time of 40 minutes for each, and took place in schools.

Procedures

In the first phase of the study, we contacted all directories of education, requesting that each provide a list of all SE teachers working within its area. This eventually enabled compiling a list of 520 teachers, from which 250 teachers were randomly selected to form the SE sample.

To solicit the participation of general and special education teachers, packets containing a cover letter, two surveys and consents were distributed to the selected sample of teachers. The cover letter addressed the purpose of the study and instruction to filling in the instrument. Teachers were assured that the study is for academic purposes only and thus their responses would be confidential. Teachers also were encouraged to respond to all items to the best of their knowledge. A total number of 195 packets were received; however, eleven packets were excluded. Therefore, a final number of 184 packets (368 surveys) were included in the final data analysis.

In the second phase, the researchers invited a sample of 24 general education teachers and 22 special education teachers for a face-to-face semi structured interview. Each teacher was interviewed in his/her school for about an hour. All interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed. Teachers' identities are kept anonyms; therefore each teacher was given a number instead of his/her real name.

Results and Preliminary Discussion

The Extent and Domains of Collaboration

Results of survey data indicated an average level of collaboration between GE and SE teachers. The scale used to measure teachers' responses was divided into three categories; Low collaboration with a range of (1-2.33), average collaboration ranged (2.34-3.66) and high collaboration ranging (3.67-5.00). Teachers' views on collaboration, according to this scale, fell within the lower average range, where GE and SE teachers obtained an average of 2.38 (SD=0.54) and 2.40 (SD=0.48) respectively.

To further examining the extent of collaboration between SE and GE teachers, teachers' means in each domain of collaboration was calculated. The collaboration domains included: pre-referral and referral, evaluation and diagnosis, program planning and program implementation. See Table (2).

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Practices of Collaboration's Four Domains

Special Education teachers M (SD)	Regular Education teachers M (SD)	Domains
2.55(0.53)	2.54(0.59)	Pre-referral and referral
2.35(0.51)	2.31(0.58)	Evaluation and diagnosis.
2.23(0.56)	2.28(0.58)	Program planning.
2.48(0.60)	2.38(0.62)	Program implementation

The above results show that the lowest domain attained by both GE and SE teachers was the program planning domain. However, the means for remaining domains reflects a low average of collaboration between both groups of teachers.

Despite the salient indication that above results revealed on the limitedness of collaboration between teachers, the results do not show how and why this collaboration is limited. Therefore, semi structured interviews were later conducted with a sample from both groups of teachers to provide further understanding of the extent and nature of collaboration between them.

Collaboration, is it Happening? General and Special Education Teachers' Views on Collaboration

This qualitative section presents teachers views on collaboration and the extent to which they are practicing it in the different areas of their teaching job. It also aims at triangulating the above survey results and hence provides validation to the quantitative data. SE and GE teachers' views on collaboration were analysed under two main themes: first, teachers' views on the extent to which they generally work collaboratively. Second, teachers' views on collaboration's practices they undertake throughout the different educational stages (i.e. pre referral and referral, evaluation and assessment, planning and implementing the educational program).

First: The Extent of Collaboration

The results from the teachers' interviews in general support the above quantitative results of the first questions and confirmed that collaboration between both groups of teachers is limited in scope and frequency. Most teachers, when broadly asked whether they collaborate with other teachers, said that collaboration is very limited and happens at a low level. Teachers expressed their unsatisfactory with frequency and size of this collaboration describing it as insufficient and needing to be improved. For example, Special Education teacher 7 (SE7) said: 'yes there is collaboration, but it is limited'. SET6 added: 'there is very little instances of collaboration which are not sufficient at all'. Similarly, General Education Teacher 8 (GET 8) argued: 'I think collaboration happens at a satisfactory level and it needs to be improved'. GET11 also suggested: 'there is collaboration but not to a good level'.

Few teachers, on the other hand, expressed that collaboration occurs between them to a good level; however, the in-depth examination of their answers shows that their understanding of collaboration is simplistic and partial. For them, exchanging morning greetings, setting together in school's break or sending students to resource room are forms of collaboration. For example, SE14 said: 'I have a good relationship with the classroom teacher, we sometimes have coffee together at our breaks, and so we might talk about our students and their problems'. GE21 also argued: 'Of course I collaborate with the special education teacher, I always send my struggling students to her'.

Finding that collaboration is generally happening at a limited level encouraged us to further ask about the specific educational stages that teachers need to collaborate at. We thought this would show the variance (as high and low) of their collaboration level across those stages and later help providing recommendation on the stages where collaboration needs to be improved.

Second: Stages of Collaboration

This section explores the stages that expose the highest and lowest levels of collaboration. Teachers, here, were asked about how they collaborate in the following particular stages of students with special needs' educational process: the pre-referral and referral, evaluation and diagnosis, program planning and program implementation. Data related to this question were analysed at two levels: first, the macro level where we looked across all the above stages in order to determine which ones expose the highest and lowest levels of collaboration. Second, the micro level where we examined each stage separately to see what practices, from the teachers' views, are constituted as collaborative practices.

The macro level analysis shows that most teachers suggested they mostly collaborate at the pre-referral and referral stage. Their level of collaboration, nonetheless, declines after this stage as it becomes less at the diagnosis stage and even lesser at the program planning and implementation stage. This result is expected as the nature of the referral stage requires that both GE and SE teachers communicate with each other in order to identify those students who are in need to benefit from the resource room's educational services. Once the referral of the student is made, it becomes more challenging for the SE teacher to stay in contact with her/his GE teacher counterpart as the student's diagnosis, programme planning and implementing is mainly considered her/his sole responsibility.

At the micro level of analysis, we looked at what are the actual acts that teachers suggested to be reflecting their collaboration practices. The aim here was to understand what constitute as collaboration, from the teachers' views, since its notion may exposes different meanings for them and hence different practices. Teachers' views on collaboration for each stage are presented in the following subsections:

Pre-Referral and Referral

In this stage, teachers described the collaboration procedures through which they identify students whom need to be referred to the resource room. Teachers suggested different procedures that included: 1) carrying out a screening test for Arabic language and maths skills, administered usually by the general teacher, at the beginning of the school year, 2) the general educator's nomination for the students with low achievement, 3) conducting meetings between the GE and special SE teachers to discuss the case of the referred student, 4) classroom observation (this procedure was mentioned only by two SE teachers). All the above procedures are illustrated in the following teachers' quotes.

SE1: The classroom teacher carries out a screening test at the beginning of the academic year upon which she identifies those students who have academic weakness. Those students then are referred to me at the resource room for further assessment.

SE6: I meet with the classroom teacher to ask her if there are students with low achievement in her class. If there are, I visit the classroom to observe and then decide if they need to be referred to the resource room.

GE10: I collate a nomination list of the students who need to be referred to the resource room based on my observations of their poor achievement.

GE14: I carry out math and Arabic language screening tests for the entire classroom at the beginning of the year upon which I identify those students who are very weak in these two subjects.

To this end, teachers seemed to be undertaken various procedures to refer students to the resource room. However, it is of this study interest to examine the level of collaboration teachers expose when carrying out the above procedures. Therefore, we also examined whether or whether not the different procedures described above display or imply collaborative or interactive work. The results showed that, in most cases, teacher, in either group, choose and undertake the referral procedures alone with limited participation from the encounter teacher in the other group as the teachers' following quotes illustrates:

Interviewer: Do you meet with the classroom teacher to discuss the process of referring students to the resource room?

SE15: Not really, I usually give the classroom teacher a referral form where she writes down the names of students with academic difficulties and describe their problems.

Interviewer: do you discuss the problems of these students with her?

SE15: I would if I need it, but usually I just invite those students to the resource room for further assessment.

GE12: I observe the student in the classroom and review his academic records and if I conclude that s/he has academic problems I refer her/him to the resource room.

Interviewer: Do you discuss this referral procedure with the resource room teacher?

GE12: There is no need to; based on my experience this procedure has been approved to be the most convenient.

Interviewer: Do you discuss with her the student's problems and the need to refer her/him to the resource room?

GE12: I do it sometimes when I am not certain if the student is eligible to benefit from the resource room.

The above result was also evident through the little reference teachers made of each other as they were describing their referral procedures. As the above teachers' quotes show, teachers often used the singular pronoun 'I' rather than the plural 'we' when explaining how they refer students to the resource room. This indicates that the referral process is perceived as a single act rather than a teamwork job requiring collaborative effort. Nonetheless, the sole interaction that could be seen between the SE and GE teachers in this stage is, in fact, the exchange of names of those students whom need to be referred to the resource room and some information that is relevant to their problems.

The Evaluation and Assessment:

Traditionally, this phase in Jordanian schools aims at identifying students' academic difficulties in the areas of Arabic language and maths. This stage is very crucial as the information collected about students and their problems sets the foundations for the planning of their individual educational plan and any decisions relevant to their program.

In order to understand how teachers collaborate at this stage, we asked them first about the procedures they undertake when assessing students. SE teachers suggested the following procedures: 'review of the student's academic records in Arabic language and maths', (SE18), 'carrying out a case study', (SE3), 'implementing a formal Arabic language and maths test', (SE13), 'implementing curriculum based test in Arabic language and maths subjects', (SE19). Two teachers also added classroom observation as a supplementary procedure.

Nonetheless, when we asked these teachers about the role of the GE teachers in undertaking these procedures, all of them asserted that the assessment of the student is their responsibility and the role of GE teacher ends at the referral phase as they lack the knowledge and expertise in how to assess students with learning difficulties.

SE5: I assess them alone; the classroom teacher's role ends after she refers the student to me.

Interviewer: why?

SE5: because she does not know how to diagnose students with learning difficulties.

The GE teachers, in their turn, confirmed the above result. They asserted that they do not participate in the assessment of the student's difficulty whose, once referred to the recourse room, becomes the responsibility of the SE teacher as GE7 denoted 'I do not collaborate with the special education teacher at this stage because it is her job to diagnose the student.

In summary, teachers in both groups seem to have low level of communication and collaboration at this stage, because they perceive the assessment of the student as the sole responsibility of the SE teacher and a knowledge that is beyond the expertise of GE teachers. Indeed this result denotes inaccurate perceptions of those teachers about the ability of GE teachers to assess student's difficulties, which, as a matter of fact, are mostly academic and thus require a form of academic evaluation, which, indeed, is not a skill that general teachers do not or cannot possess.

Planning and Implementing the Educational Program

Traditionally, this stage aims at planning and delivering the special educational program that tackles the needs of student who has joined the resource room. In this stage, we are looking at how GE and SE teachers are collaborating in order to serve the student's best interest.

Teachers in both groups asserted that they do not collaborate at this stage because the planning of student's individual plan is again a sole responsibility of the SE teacher. For example SE6 also suggested: 'there is no collaboration in planning the student's educational program'. This teacher also added: 'In fact, the planning and implementation of the student program, is a responsibility that is taken from the classroom teacher and moved to the resource room teacher'. Similarly, GE7 said: 'I do not help with the design of the student's educational plan because this is the duty of the resource room teacher'.

Nevertheless, few teachers from both groups suggested that there is some collaboration between them, but limited to planning student's lessons schedule at the resource room in order not to contradict with classroom schedule. For example, SE5 said 'we meet together to put the student's weekly lessons schedule at the resource room so it does not contradict with his Arabic and maths lessons at the classroom'. Also, GE14 'I collaborate in putting the student' lessons schedule to ensure that it does not contradict with his classroom schedule'. SE18 sees collaboration in this phase as informing the GET teachers of student's weaknesses. This teacher said: 'I explain to the classroom teacher the student's weaknesses and strengths, so she may take them into consideration while teaching the student'.

As for the implementation of the educational program, ST teachers vary in their views regarding their collaboration at this stage. About half of them suggested not having any form of collaboration with GE teachers because implementing student's program is again their responsibility. For instance, SE6 said: 'I implement the student program alone at the resource room'. Similarly, SE8 argued: 'the program implementation is individual and only carried out by the resource room teacher'.

As for the other half of the SE teachers, they argued that they collaborate with GE teachers. As they were asked to specify how and in what actions this collaboration is exhibiting, they suggested the following: following up the student in the classroom, adapting the classroom curriculum, attending some lessons at the classroom, informing the GET about the student's progress at the resource room and advising them on the best teaching strategies to use with the student.

Nonetheless, a closer scrutiny to those actions, someone could infer that they do not necessarily reflect a collaborative work. Teachers' descriptions of the above actions, though exhibiting some involvement of the GE teacher, reflect rather single actions undertaken merely by the SE teachers.

SE4: yes, I collaborate with the classroom teacher in implementing the student's educational program. I usually visit the classroom to follow up the student in some lessons. In return, I allow the classroom teacher to view the student's profile at the resource room where she can learn about his progress.

The interviewer: in case you noticed, while following up the student in the classroom, that he is not progressing or that the classroom teacher is not giving them enough attention or using appropriate teaching strategies, what do you do?

SE4: I may advise her to give him more attention or use certain strategy.

The interviewer: would she take your advice?

SE4: sometimes! It depends whether she would value my advice or she is willing to change her teaching style to accommodate the student's needs.

The interviewers: does she exchange with you any information about the strategies she thinks also useful with that student?

SE4: maybe if I ask her, but she would not usually do that voluntarily.

Clearly, teachers above fall short to demonstrate having a real collaboration with the GE teachers, but rather displayed having some contact with them represented in visiting the classroom sometimes to follow up on the student or provide information/advice regarding her/his preferable learning strategies.

As for GE teachers, most of them suggested not having collaboration with SE teachers in implementing the students' educational program. They asserted that their most contribution to this stage is following sometimes up the student in the classroom. For example, GE15 said: 'I do not help the resource room

teacher in implementing the student's program as it takes place at the resource room. I only help the student with the lessons and subjects I teach in my classroom'.

Few GE teachers, on the other hand, pointed out collaborating with the SE teachers, but only in few aspects such as: 'viewing the student's profile so to learn about his weaknesses' (GE10), 'attending some of the student's lessons at the resource room to follow up on her progress' (GE14), 'following up the student's individual learning objectives in the classroom', (GE17) and 'designate a small part of the lesson to support the students with learning difficulties in the classroom and give them some extra help and attention'(GE20).

As the discussion above revealed; collaboration between GE and SE teachers in this stage is hardly happening. Though some teachers from both groups suggested having collaboration with each other, the actions they suggested as examples of their collaboration, when closely examined, do not involve both of them working together and therefore can hardly be considered as collaboration.

To this end, SE and GE teachers explained their views on the nature and level of their collaboration at the different stages. Results showed that the occurrence of collaboration between them is either very limited to few instances or actions or is not happening at all. This result is consistent with the result obtained by the teachers' questionnaire where the quantitative data showed that teachers' collaboration is happening at a low level. Indeed, there are various constraints that underlie the weakness of this collaboration as the next section will reveal.

Constraints and Barriers to Collaboration

The second question of this research was set to examine constraints underlying the lack of collaboration between GE and SE teachers. Percentages for teacher ratings were calculated and presented in (Table 3). Results showed that teachers in both groups were inclined to suggest that the given constraints are applicable to them. In more details, teachers agreed that the enormous work load assigned to teachers and lack of time allocated for collaboration are respectively the biggest constraints toward achieving collaboration, while negative attitudes towards collaboration and lack of administrative support within the school system were the least

Furthermore, differences in responses were seen between both groups of teachers, for example, the item (Negative attitudes of general education teachers toward students with special needs) was considered applicable as a constraint by around three quarters of SE teachers compared to less than half of the GE teachers.

Constraints of collaboration between both groups of teachers were further examined qualitatively in the next section.

Special and General Educators' Views on Constraints to Collaboration in Mainstream Schools

In order to understand why collaboration between both groups of teachers is limited, teachers were asked about the constraints that stand in their way to collaborate more affectively and frequently. Teachers, in both groups listed different constraints which we grouped under the following five factors:

First factor; teachers' large teaching and administrative workload: Teachers pointed out that their school day schedule is busy and fully occupied with teaching and administrative duties, which does not allow allocating time to schedule regular meetings with each other:

SE3: we are loaded with teaching schedule. We have many classes everyday to teach in addition to other duties like administrative works.

GE9: I cannot collaborate with the resource teacher because of the big amount of work that each of us needs to do. She is usually required, in addition to her work in the resource room, to do some other administrative work, which makes their school day schedule full. This of course does not allow us to have time to meet with each other.

Since the high number of classes allocated daily to each teacher seems to be a big obstacle that hinders collaboration between them, we asked teachers why they have this heavy teaching workload. Not to our surprise, the reason, as they said, is 'the dense and lengthy curriculum, which must be fully covered as requested by the Ministry of Education' GE7.

Table 3. Percentages of Teachers Rating of Constrains

Item Number	Constrains	General Education Teachers N=184		Special Education Teachers N=184	
		Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable
	The enormous work load (i.e. paper work, routine work) on both general and special education teachers	79.8	20.2	71.6	28.4
	Lack of time allocated for collaboration.	78.8	21.2	68.5	31.5
	Lack of in-service training fostering collaboration	70.1	29.9	66.5	33.5
	Lack of pre-service training (university programs) regarding collaboration among teachers	68.5	31.5	62.0	38.0
	Absence of policies and regulations enforcing collaboration	67.8	32.2	58.4	41.6
	Disagreement among teachers in terms of responsibilities and roles regarding teaching students with special needs	52.2	47.8	53.3	46.7
	Lack of effective educational supervision to enforce inclusion through effective collaboration among teachers	50.5	49.5	55.1	44.9
	Lack of experience in team work and collaborative activities	47.5	52.5	43.7	56.3
	Beliefs among general education teachers that students with special needs are the sole responsibility of SPED teachers	46.4	35.6	58.2	41.8
	Negative attitudes of general education Teachers toward students with special needs	46.2	53.8	67.4	32.6
	Lack of administrative support for collaboration within the school system	39.9	60.1	35.1	64.9

Second factor; the large number of students in general classrooms: This number exceeds sometimes 50 students. Teachers' time, thus, is hardly enough to follow up on all those students. Therefore, designating time to work with students with special needs is hardly possible for those teachers:

GET24: the number of students per classroom in my school usually ranges between 40-50, which disenables me from following all the students up, and give the required attention to those students who need extra or individual help. This also disenables me from having time to collaborate with the resource room teacher in order to help the student\s with learning difficulties in my class.

Third factor; the GET teachers' characteristics, personality and attitude factor: This factor has been suggested by the SE teachers only and seems to be crucial in understanding the limited collaboration between both groups of teachers. In general, SE teachers described the attitude of the GE teachers toward collaborating with them as being negative. The reasons behind such attitude vary as SE teachers offered numerous reasons. One common reason is the students with special needs who show slow progress and insignificant improvement over time, which discourage GE teachers investing time and effort to help those students as they see more value spending time helping other students or doing other issues. Accordingly, GE teachers are reluctant to spend time collaborating with SE teachers in order to help students' with special needs.

SE7: the classroom teacher does not have the motivation to work with the students with learning difficulties because of the repeated bad experience she has with them. As you know these students do not show reasonable progress in a reasonable time which makes the classroom teacher think that they do not improve at all and they need a lot of time and effort. Of course this generates feelings of disappointment and makes the teacher hesitant to work with the student and with me.

Another reason within the attitude factor is the GE teacher's mood and relationship with SE teacher. For example, the teacher SE8 asserted: 'there is sometimes collaboration between us but it actually depends on the GE teacher's mood to collaborate, if she is in a good mood then she is more encouraged to communicate and work with me'. SE6 added that the collaboration with GET teachers 'depends to great extent on the nature of the relationship between us; if this relationship is positive, we may collaborate then'.

Another teacher argued also that collaboration with the GE teacher is influenced with how this teacher is perceiving her and her knowledge, this teacher explained: 'the extent to which we collaborate depends on the classroom teacher, some of them make me feel that I am less knowledgeable and skilful than them, and therefore it is a waste of time to work with me', (SET5).

Fourth factor; lack of awareness among GE teachers on the importance of collaboration: SE teachers explained that some GE teachers are not aware of the importance of collaboration and unable to see how it is beneficial to the students and their progress. For instance, SE9 asserted: 'classroom teachers are unaware of the importance of collaboration. They just do not understand how collaborating with me would actually help them and help the progress of their student'.

Fifth factor; the lack of support from school administration and families: Some GE and SE teachers hold the blame on student's families and school administration for their insufficient support to the teachers and their job requirements.

SE8: the school administration forms a big obstacle for us from being able to collaborate. For example, it does not arrange any official meetings for us to discuss issues related to our work. Also, the school head teacher and the administrative staff are not aware of the job roles [in relation to special education students and his program] for each of us, and that one of the things we should do is to collaborate together in order to become more effective teachers.

GE19: the students' families are neither supportive to their children nor to us. I think our effort will become more effective if families made more effort to follow up their children at home and communicate their problems to us.

In sum, teachers in both groups suggest that collaboration is constrained by different factors such as their large workload, GE teachers' personality and attitude, GE teachers lack of awareness of collaboration importance and the lack of support received from school administration and families. These constraints do not seem to be restricting the relationship between teachers but also adversely affecting the students whom their needs can not be met without the collaboration of their GE and SE teachers.

Conclusions

To conclude, the above results showed that collaboration is arbitrary, limited and happening at a low level. Teachers perceive the concept of collaboration between each other as working separately with the same student with special needs in mainstream schools. Indeed, collaboration here is not seen as a continuous process that involve them both working interactively together in order to meet the student's special educational needs. To great extent, teachers still do not understand how to collaborate and what are the roles that each should play in this process. Moreover, collaboration encounters different constraints, as this study revealed, which included teachers large teaching and administrative workload, large number of students per classroom, teachers lack of awareness and negative attitude toward students with special needs and the lack of appropriate support from both school administration and families.

This result should be discussed within the Jordanian context where inclusive education has been recently introduced to the educational system. Accordingly, the philosophy and concept, of inclusive education have not yet been fully comprehended by all parties involved in the educational sector; consequently its aspects and skills are not effectively implemented. For instance, the Ministry of Education has not

translated the adapted philosophy of inclusion into clear and formal regulations and practices, or prepared the required educational environment for such initiative. Indeed, this rendered all educators working in inclusive settings not understanding exactly their duties and expectations when working with students with special needs in mainstream schools. This has also resulted in a lack of support from school administration in fostering a successful collaboration between teachers. Collaboration, therefore, is still seen as an individual and personal decision that a teacher may opt to make rather than a fundamental requirement.

Furthermore, despite that the educational system has moved to adopt an inclusive practice, teacher preparation programs at university level has not updated their programs to meet the requirements of this new inclusive initiative, including the concept of collaboration. Similarly, in-service preparation programs do not provide training related to how to work collaboratively in inclusive settings (Amr, 2011). This is rendered teachers lacking the necessary knowledge, pedagogies and attitudes that allow them to collaborate together and overcome any potential constraints they may face at work.

In a wider context, constraints surrounding collaboration are not unique. Literature shows that cultures, where inclusion has been long adopted, its educational system still face various problems when it comes to implementing the inclusion philosophy and pedagogies including collaboration among teachers. Collaboration, similar to Jordan, suffers several constraints including: insufficient training for both general and special education teachers (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009; Laframboise et al., 2004; McKenzie, 2009; Otis-Wilborn, 2005). Lack of school support for collaboration, insufficient time allocated for collaboration, power tension between teachers within the classroom and failure to share responsibilities (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2013).

Recommendations

As the results above unfold a lack of collaboration between teachers, which comes as a result of the ongoing struggle within the educational system in understanding, defining and planning the policies and agendas of the inclusive education, several recommendations can be suggested based on the results reported by this research and the researchers first hand field experience. Firstly, discussing and disseminating the Ministry of Education inclusive education agenda among the different parties involved in the educational system to enable reaching a mutual understanding of collaboration and its practices. Secondly, clarifying the different roles and responsibilities of educators working in inclusive schools. Thirdly, providing appropriate pre and in-service training to both general and special education teachers in the area of inclusive education in general, and collaboration in particular. Fourthly, improving school environment to enable teachers collaborate together. For example, reducing teachers' teaching and administrative workload, reducing the number of students per classroom and providing more support from school administration.

References

- The Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities. (2007). *Law on the Rights of Persons with Disability*. Amman: Jordan
- Al-Natour, M. (2008). *Final Report Special Needs Education, Program Development / Learning Disabilities*. Prepared for the Ministry of Education, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, ERFKI 1 Project.
- Amr, M. (2011). Teacher education for inclusive education in the Arab world: The case of Jordan. *Prospects*, 41(3), 399-413.
- Bradshaw, K. (2009). Teachers' Attitudes and Concerns Towards Integrating Students with Special Needs in Regular Classrooms: A United Arab Emirates Perspective. *The Journal of the International Association of Special Education*, 49.
- Carter, N., Prater, M. A., Jackson, A., & Marchant, M. (2009). Educators' perceptions of collaborative planning processes for students with disabilities. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 54(1), 60-70.
- Conderman, G., & Johnston-Rodriguez, S. (2009). Beginning teachers' views of their collaborative roles. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 53(4), 235-244.
- Friend, M., & Cook, L. (1992). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals*. Longman Publishing Group, 95 Church Street, White Plains, NY 10601.
- Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2006). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals*. 5th ed., Allyn & Bacon, NY
- Eldar, E., Talmor, R., & Wolf-Zukerman, T. (2010). Successes and difficulties in the individual inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the eyes of their coordinators. *International Journal*

of Inclusive Education, 14(1), 97-114.

Garderen, D. V., Scheuermann, A., Jackson, C., & Hampton, D. (2009). Supporting the collaboration of special educators and general educators to teach students who struggle with mathematics: An overview of the research. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46(1), 56-78.

Hamilton-Jones, B., & Vail, C. O. (2013). Preparing Special Educators for Collaboration in the Classroom: Pre-Service Teachers' Beliefs and Perspectives. *International Journal of Special Education*, 28(1), 56-68.

Idol, L. (2006). Toward inclusion of special education students in general education a program evaluation of eight schools. *Remedial and Special Education*, 27(2), 77-94.

Laframboise, K. L., Epanchin, B., Colucci, K., & Hocutt, A. (2004). Working together: Emerging roles of special and general education teachers in inclusive settings. *Action in Teacher Education*, 26(3), 29-43.

Lingo, A. S., Barton-Arwood, S. M., & Jolivet, K. (2011). Teachers working together. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 43(3), 6-13.

McBride, S. (2007). *Final Report Review of Special Education – Grades 1-12*. Prepared for Ministry of Education, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, ERFKI 1 Project.

McHatton, P. A., & Daniel, P. L. (2008). Co-teaching at the pre-service level: Special education majors collaborate with English education majors. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, 31(2), 118-131.

McKenzie, R. G. (2009). A national survey of pre-service preparation for collaboration. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, 32(4), 379-393.

Murata, N. M., & Tan, C. A. (2009). Collaborative teaching of motor skills for preschoolers with developmental delays. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 36(6), 483-489.

Naraian, S. (2010). Refiguring professional identities in a collaboratively taught classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(8), 1677-1686.

Otis-Wilborn, A., Winn, J., Griffin, C., & Kilgore, K. (2005). Beginning special educators' forays into general education. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, 28(3-4), 143-152.

Robinson, L., & Buly, M. R. (2007). Breaking the language barrier: Promoting collaboration between general and special educators. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 83-94.

Smith, R., & Leonard, P. (2005). Collaboration for inclusion: Practitioner perspectives. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 38(4), 269-279.

Spencer, S. A. (2005). Lynne Cook and June Downing. *Intervention in school and clinic*, 40(5), 296-300.

Thomson, C. (2013). Collaborative consultation to promote inclusion: voices from the classroom. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 17(8), 882-894.

Thousand, J. S., Nevin, A. I., & Villa, R. A. (2007). Collaborative teaching: Critique of the scientific evidence. *The SAGE Handbook of Special Education*, 417-428.

Yeung, A. S. (2012). Exploring organisational perspectives on implementing educational inclusion in mainstream schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(7), 675-690.