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TEACHERS COPING WITH CHANGES: INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN MAINSTREAM CLASSES: AN INTERNATIONAL VIEW

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The study was designed to examine and compare British and Israeli teachers' perceptions, expectations, and needs regarding the inclusion process. In both countries, the inclusion movements support the rights of children to have their special educational needs identified and met through education legislation and the right of individuals with disabilities to equal opportunities. The sample consisted of 116 Israeli teachers and 140 British teachers in mainstream classes. The teachers' questionnaire consisted of seven open-ended questions dealing with the theoretical concept of inclusion, the advantages and disadvantages of the ideal model of inclusion, and indicators of the teachers' current situation in their classrooms. The results pointed to similarities and differences in the teachers' assessments of the factors that facilitate and hamper the inclusion process. While British teachers focused on non-disabled students, teachers and the educational system as facilitating inclusion, Israeli teachers emphasized the role of included students and of teachers, as those who impede the process. Most teachers in both countries preferred that students receive academic support outside of their classrooms. British teachers emphasized the advantages of inclusion for the entire class, and disadvantages to the students with LD; Israeli teachers focused on advantages to teachers and noted more disadvantages for non-disabled students and for teachers. These findings suggest that although the teachers evaluated the inclusion process in different ways and tended to implement it differently, most of the teachers, in both countries, support inclusion.

The inclusion of individuals with disabilities in mainstream educational, occupational and societal frameworks has become an accepted concept in western countries in the last two decades. In the UK, as in Israel, similar legislation mandated the inclusion of students with special needs into mainstream classes (Leyser, Kapperman, & Keller, 1994; Priestley & Rabiee, 2002). In both countries, the inclusion movements support the rights of children to have their special educational needs identified and met through education legislation and the right of individuals with disabilities to equal opportunities, and aim to eliminate unjustified discrimination and to develop and support facilities and services for individuals with special needs (Disability Rights Task Force Final Report, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2004).

In 1999, the Disability Rights Task Force (2004) published its final report *From Exclusion to Inclusion* which contained recommendations on various aspects of the lives of individuals with disabilities, on qualifications of teachers and on establishing effective partnerships between special and mainstream teachers in mainstream settings. In 2002, the inclusion law was updated and strengthened the rights of parents of children with statements of SEN to a mainstream placement, unless they want a special school and a mainstream school would not meet the needs of the child or the wishes of either the parent or child, and as long as the placement did not interfere with the learning process of the classmate. Acknowledging the obstacles to full inclusion, the UK Government suggested to promote flexible inclusion in the least restrictive environment, and to enable more students to have more opportunities to enroll in their local schools.

The Israeli Special Education Law (1988) supports the inclusion of students with special needs in regular classes, within the general education system. The Law specifies who is a candidate for inclusion, the services provided and the training required for teachers in inclusive systems. Students can be included in mainstream classes based on a multidimensional diagnosis including psychological and educational tests. The students usually receive additional academic support from a special education teacher in their regular classrooms or in a resource room.
One of the results of the placement process in mainstream classes relates to changes in the composition of the student population in the school and in the classroom as a result of the inclusive education movement: the numbers of students with disabilities in general education classrooms increased in both countries (Avissar & Leyser, 2000; Wertheim & Leyser, 2002). The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE, 2004) noted that the percentage of students in special schools across England declined from 1.39% in 1997 to 1.32% in 2001, and the percentage of students with SEN statements in special schools decreased from 41% in 1997 to 36% in 2001. A similar trend was observed in Israel: Ministry of Education reports show that after 1995, due to the inclusion policy, the number of students in special schools or in self-contained classes in regular schools declined (from 3.7% students in special schools in 1985 to 2.2% in 2000). In Recent years, the inclusion program has provided academic support for 8% of the entire Israeli student population from kindergarten to the 9th grade (aged 5 to 15) and about 80% of the students with specific learning disabilities are included in mainstream classes (Ministry of Education, 2004).

The inclusion policy specified attendance at mainstreamed schools and also dealt with different models of implementing the inclusion and with teachers' needs in terms of practical and theoretical training. Research has described the many positive effects of placement in inclusive classes and the different benefits for students with disabilities; studies that investigated teachers' attitudes in general education schools show that teachers welcome the academic, social, and emotional progress of students with disabilities, and note that students without disabilities benefit from the inclusive practices (Allen & Burns, 1998; Hudson & Glomb, 1997; Hunt & Goetz, 1997; Idol, 1997; Katz & Mirenda, 2002; Kauffman & Hallenbeck, 1996; Talmor, Erlich & Eldar, 1999).

Despite the apparent benefits of inclusion, and regardless of the teachers' commitment and positive attitudes; and notwithstanding their having the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the educational needs of diverse students with disabilities, teachers were concerned about the academic, social, and behavioral adjustment of the students with disabilities in inclusive classes. Some teachers felt that inclusion would bring little benefit to students with disabilities and, consequently, they questioned the advantages of inclusion (Heiman, 2002; Priestley & Rabiee, 2002). Other teachers stressed their concern that as more students are included, teachers would need additional tools and skills for coping with the social and emotional

problems that accompany inclusive schooling (Idol, 1997). Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slusher & Samuell (1996) mentioned several aspects which might cause teachers to raise objections to inclusion, such as the large number of students in the class, budget shortages, the teachers' work load, difficulties in standardized evaluation. Others pointed to the lack of teamwork, or asked for guidance in dealing with students with special needs (Danne & Beirne-Smith, 2000). Some of the mainstream teachers claimed that they had chosen to teach a specific discipline and not special education, and the inclusion policy forced them to enter areas they were unsure about or not interested in it (Vaughn, et al., 1996). Mock and Kauffman (2002) described the *catch* in which teachers were trapped: on one hand, teachers cannot be prepared to answer the unique educational needs of every student with special needs, and, on the other hand, teachers in included classes teaching students with special needs, might function beyond their training and their specialization.

A recent study (Salisbury & McGregor, 2002) suggests that the school principals have an essential role in improving the school environment and in implementing educational policy. The researchers demonstrate the complex relationships between the school staff and the school climate, and emphasize the importance of the principal's awareness of the role of the staff in implementing the inclusion successfully. When most of the teachers share in an open dynamic discussion group regarding their beliefs, difficulties, different aspects of teaching and ways of coping with dilemmas, this encourages them to find better coping solutions and support in their difficulties with the inclusion process. In addition, when the school principal shares the decision making process with the school staff, this contributes to more educational accountability and responsibility.

As the success of the inclusion movement depends, to a large extent, on the willingness and ability of teachers to make accommodations for individual needs (Bender, Vail, & Scott, 1995), the purposes of this study were to expand the knowledge on teachers' awareness, expectations, and attitudes regarding students with specific learning disabilities included in their classes and to offer an international perspective by comparing Israeli and UK mainstream teachers. In this study, we examined the following hypotheses:

1. Most of the teachers are aware of the inclusion policy and therefore can define the pragmatic meaning of inclusion.
2. Most of the teachers will concur that the inclusion program is important, but will find it difficult to apply. We assume that most of them will agree that inclusion has advantages but will point to the factors that hamper inclusion.
3. Regarding the inclusion policy, we expected inconsistent results, with some of the teachers claiming that it is the best solution and others that it is not.
4. Regarding the teachers' preferred model of inclusion, we expect that most of the teachers will prefer the students to receive academic support outside their classes from a special teacher.
5. Regarding the process of student evaluation, decisions on inclusion and continuing teachers' guidance and needs, teachers will expect experts in this field to decide and follow up the decision.

Method

Participants

The data for this study were obtained from a survey of 116 teachers in twelve middle schools located in a central urban district in Israel and 140 teachers in ten middle schools in upper-middle class neighborhoods in London.

Israeli sample: Each of the schools participated in a regional program to upgrade teachers' awareness regarding the practical implementation of the inclusion policy.

All of the teachers (104 female and 12 male) volunteered to participate in the study and none were special education teachers nor had they taken more than one elective course in special education. At the time of the study, all were teaching classes that included students with specific learning problems. The participants had from 2 to 33 years of teaching experience (M = 11.79, S.D. = 7.96).

British sample: The sample included 120 female and 20 male teachers from ten middle schools. All of the participants were general education classroom teachers and taught mainstream classes and had between 1 and 20 years of teaching experience (M = 10.21, S.D. = 6.6). Similar to the Israeli sample, all were teaching in classes that included students with learning disabilities, but none were special education teachers. The decision rule for including schools in the sample was the tendency of the school principal to implement inclusion in the school and the willingness of the principal to take part in the study. Thus, of 15 schools approached in Britain, 10 schools agreed to participate.

Table 1 shows the teachers' educational background, including the highest degree held, teaching area, and years of experience. Most of the teachers who participated in this study had a bachelor's degree and the others had either teachers college certification or a master's degree. In both countries, most of the teachers taught a subject in the humanities (e.g., literature, history), others taught a foreign language, mathematics, science or a subject in technology.

Table 1
Teachers' background

Teachers' Background	Israel N = 116		Great Britain N = 140	
	n	Percentage	*n*	Percentage
Sex				
Male	12	10.3	20	14.3
Female	104	89.7	120	85.7
Highest degree held				
Teachers college	28	24.2	40	28.5
Bachelors degree	73	62.9	90	64.3
Masters degree	15	12.9	10	7.1
Teaching areas				
Humanities	63	54.3	72	51.43
Language	24	20.7	30	21.4
Science	12	10.3	20	14.3
Technology	3	2.6	10	7.1
Educational counselors	10	11.2	8	5.7
Unreported	1	0.9	0	0
Years of experience				
1 to 5	38	32.7	50	35.7
6 to 10	17	14.6	22	15.71
11 to 15	20	17.3	28	20
16 to 20	26	22.2	37	26.43
21+	15	13.2	3	2.14

Chi-squared analyses did not reveal significant differences between groups for degree, teaching field or years of experience. In Israel, most of the teachers (n = 77, 67%) had not taken any special education courses; the others (n = 38, 33%) had taken at most one or two courses in special education. In Britain, few teachers had taken special education courses (n=10, 7.14%), and the rest were mainstream and had not taken special education courses (n = 130, 92.86%).

Instrument and Procedure

The purpose of the questionnaire used in the current study was to collect information on the educators' perceptions of inclusive schooling and their needs when teaching inclusive classes. The questionnaire was designed by Heiman (2002). Data was collected through written responses to seven open-ended questions. Questions 1, 2 and 3 asked the teachers about aspects of their knowledge about inclusion, including their theoretical concept of inclusion and the advantages and disadvantages of their ideal model of inclusion. Questions 4, 5 and 6 were intended to provide a specific indicator of the teachers' current situation in their classroom or school. The last question asked about teachers' needs. The questionnaire was validated in a previous study (Heiman, 2002) and was found to be reliable (for questions, see Appendix 1). The questionnaires were distributed to the teachers during school time and were collected from the teachers at their convenience. In some cases, teachers returned the completed questionnaires via mail.

Data analysis

Upon receiving the completed questionnaires, the researchers listed the teachers' responses in order to identify the essential concept that emerged from them. Using coding techniques recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990), the researchers discussed the resulting essential concept and developed similar categories to those used in the previous study (Heiman, 2002) regarding positive and negative definitions of inclusion, factors that facilitate and factors that impede inclusion, different models of inclusion, advantages and disadvantages of inclusion, teachers' difficulties and apprehensions, decision-making regarding students' inclusion and views regarding guidance, support and assistance for teachers. Discussion among researchers led to inter-rater agreement of 93.6%. Note that in the summary of results shown in Table 2, in some cases, the sum of the percentages exceeds 100% because teachers had the option to choose several answers or solutions; in other cases, the sum did not reach 100%, as some teachers did not answer all the questions.

Results

1. Definition of Inclusion

Teachers' definitions of inclusion were divided into four sub-categories: positive, negative, mixed and non-judgmental definitions. Positive definitions obtained from both the Israeli and the British sample included remarks regarding learning achievements: *inclusion can help students with learning disabilities attain higher academic achievements*; social adjustment: *students with learning disabilities can learn better social skills with inclusion*; the teachers' contribution: *the aim of the teaching staff is to provide differentiated teaching and support within the classroom* and human rights: *providing equal opportunities for learning*.

Negative definitions included comments such as *there is no such thing as inclusion*, *inclusion is bad, merely technical*, *it is artificial, this is not real inclusion* or *a foolish policy of mixing pupils with very different and often incompatible abilities*.

Mixed answers emphasized the importance of inclusion but added that it could succeed only if there were more teaching and/or preparation hours, smaller classes, fewer students with disabilities in a class, more support, and adequate teaching tools; for example, *inclusion is that a child with a disability is educated in a mainstream school class but with appropriate support and assistance given to enable him/her to access the curriculum*.

The fourth sub-category, the non-judgmental response, referred to an exact definition of inclusion. This included responses such as *inclusion is when students with learning and behavior difficulties*

Table 2
Differences between samples regarding inclusion

	Israeli Sample (N = 116)		British Sample (N = 140)		Chi-squared (df=1)
	n	%	*n*	%	
1. Definition of inclusion					
Positive	52	44.8	50	35.7	2.20
Negative	57	49.1	20	14.3	36.64***
Mixed	16	13.8	10	7.1	3.07
Non-judgmental definition	37	31.9	60	42.85	3.24
2a. Facilitate Inclusion					
The non-disabled peers	6	5.2	30	21.4	13.87***
Teachers/ the educational system	10	8.62	100	71.4	102.12***
Family of the included student	10	8.62	10	7.1	.19
2b. Hampering Inclusion					
The included student	42	36.2	30	21.4	6.85***
The non-disabled peers	20	17.8	20	14.3	.42
Teachers/the educational system	37	31.9	12	8.57	22.3***
3. Model of Inclusion					
In-and-out	40	34.5	80	57.1	13.08**
Two-teachers	31	26.7	10	7.1	18.08***
Full inclusion	6	5.2	10	7.1	.43
Rejection of inclusion	17	14.7	30	21.4	1.94
4a. Advantage					
The included student	67	57.8	60	42.9	5.63*
The non-disabled peers	9	7.8	70	50	53.05***
Teachers/ the educational system	25	21.6	10	7.1	11.16***
No advantage	14	12.1	20	14.3	.27
4b. Disadvantage					
The included student	10	8.62	60	42.8	37.43***
The non-disabled peers	61	52.6	50	35.7	7.35**
Teachers/ the educational system	55	47.4	10	7.1	54.31***
No disadvantage	10	8.62	20	14.3	1.97
5. Teachers' difficulties and apprehension					
All students' academic achievements	43	37.1	90	64.3	18.83***
Supporting the needs of the included student	10	8.62	30	21.4	7.89**
Social adjustment of the included student	25	21.6	10	7.1	11.16***
Lack of supportive system	10	8.62	100	71.4	115.68***
Teachers workload	11	9.5	10	7.1	.46
Insufficient knowledge and skills	32	27.6	10	7.1	19.33***
6. Decisions on including students					
Educational committee	51	43.9	110	78.6	32.52***
Special education professional	27	23.3	70	50	19.25***
School principle	16	13.8	10	7.1	3.07
Parents	16	13.8	10	7.1	3.07
The included student	8	6.9	20	14.3	3.55*
General Teachers	10	8.62	60	42.9	37.43***
Learning supported teacher	10	8.62	30	21.4	7.89**
7. Teachers' needs					
Personally directed guidance	78	67.2	10	7.1	101.57***
Help of a specialist	63	54.3	110	78.6	17.04***
Consultation with peers	34	29.3	10	7.1	21.9***
Awareness by the school principal	19	16.4	30	21.4	1.05
Support from parents	3	2.6	10	7.1	2.73*

are taught in mainstream classes, *inclusion is when students with specific learning problems study with non-disabled peers in the same class*, *having a pupil with quite severe specific learning difficulties in the main classroom and lesson*, and *teaching all students in a classroom irrespective of ability or attainment*. Chi square analysis revealed that Israeli teachers expressed significantly more negative definitions toward inclusion than did British teachers (see Table 2).

2. Factors Facilitating or Hampering Inclusion

Each of the answers regarding the factors facilitating or hampering inclusion were divided into the following sub-categories: included students, non-disabled peers, the teachers and the educational system, and the family of the student with disabilities.

Regarding the facilitating factors, a higher percentage of teachers in the UK thought that that non-disabled peers can serve as a facilitators in the inclusion process. These teachers thought that the social openness and the acceptance of non-disabled peers, as well as the positive and constructive atmosphere from classmates would facilitate inclusion. In addition, significantly more teachers in the UK emphasized the awareness and the intensive support of their colleagues as well as the contribution of the school principal to implementing inclusion in their classes, than teachers in Israel. Few teachers in either country mentioned the need for cooperation between the teacher and the student's family.

Comparing teachers' views on factors that might hamper inclusion, significant differences were found between countries. In Israel, one third of the teachers felt that learning difficulties (especially in mathematics and foreign languages) or social and behavioral difficulties might limit the extent of successful inclusion. Other teachers mentioned the possibility that students with disabilities would disrupt the positive social atmosphere in the class. In Israel, as well as in England, some teachers noted that non-disabled peers might hamper inclusion, because their negative attitudes or prejudices toward the students with disabilities could preclude their successful inclusion or because of a non-supportive atmosphere in the class.

Teachers' orientation: Teachers in both countries mentioned various aspects which might hamper the process. They were especially concerned about two major issues: (a) insufficient teachers training and lack of adequate facilities and (b) lack of additional help in the classroom, and the large classes. In addition, they expressed the belief that supportive systems were crucial factors for a successful inclusion process.

Israeli teachers were concerned about being inadequately trained and thus unprepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities within the general classroom, and they favored smaller classes and proposed reducing number of disabled students in the class, noting that *small group work is important, the fewer the included students, the better the chances for successful inclusion*, and suggested teaching easier subjects.

3. Model of Inclusion

Four different possible models of inclusion were suggested by the teachers: *in-and-out*, *two-teachers*, *full inclusion* and *rejection of inclusion*. As shown in Table 2, most of the teachers in both countries thought that an *in-and-out* model would be more effective for the students with learning disabilities. These teachers believed that this would enable students with disabilities to benefit from two worlds: the special instruction they needed together with regular lessons and interactions with their peers in regular settings.

The *two-teacher* model was somewhat popular in Israel and less so in Britain. According to this model, two teachers teach simultaneously in the classroom with one of them, who has had training in special education, concentrating on the students with disabilities. Small percentages of teachers in both countries thought that full inclusion is the right model to apply within the regular classroom. They thought that with additional support and cooperation between teachers and with the services of the educational system, full inclusion could succeed and be the most beneficial for all. Some teachers in both countries rejected inclusion completely. The teachers in this group thought that it would be better for students with disabilities to study in separate classes, according to special programs, so they could progress at their own pace. They felt that such model is more effective since students would remain outsiders in regular classes, would always be uneasy, and would never be able to reach the academic level of the mainstream. Chi-square analysis revealed significant differences between the countries only for the first two models of inclusion, *in-and-out* and *two-teachers*.

Calculation of the total positive responses by teachers indicated that 66.4% of the teachers in Israel and 71.3% of the teachers in Britain favored inclusion, while 14.7% of the teachers in Israel and 21.4% of the teachers in Britain opposed it.

4. Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusion

The teachers' answers were divided into four categories: social, academic and emotional advantages for the included student; advantages for non-disabled peers; advantages for teachers; and no advantage or no disadvantage.

Advantages: In Israel, most of the teachers mentioned advantages for included students, such as *a good opportunity to be equals*, *removes the exceptional label*, *improves their self-esteem, and promotes their learning*. In the UK, teachers emphasized advantages such as *they don't feel different from the other pupils*, *they develop relationship with their peers*, or *it's good for the child's self esteem, his or her confidence, and they do not feel excluded*.

Regarding advantage for non-disabled classmates, only a few Israeli teachers noted the advantages of inclusion for the entire class. In contrast, half of the British teachers emphasized the advantages of inclusion for the entire class, *all the children can benefit from inclusion – they can inspire and support each other* or *inclusion creates a more communal type atmosphere, children learn to respect different types of people*. Significant differences were obtained also regarding the third category: In Israel, teachers believed that inclusion encouraged non-disabled students to learn to accept those who are different; they emphasized the challenge and the satisfaction they felt from their work with students with disabilities; while fewer British teachers mentioned benefits for the teachers. In addition, some teachers in both countries felt that inclusion had no advantages at all.

Disadvantages: The same four sub-categories were used in the analysis of disadvantages. Results revealed significant differences with British teachers expressing more disadvantages for the included students than the Israeli sample. They claimed that *the child is given a completely inappropriate educational curriculum* and *inclusion can often result in children being less able and more isolated in comparison with their able peers*. Many teachers in Israel described the negative effects of inclusion on able peers in an inclusive class, such as *the lack of time for providing advanced materials for the higher-level students*, and noted an *increase in social and disciplinary problems*. British teachers said *the bright children get bored, frustrated and misbehave" and "it slows overall pace, hinders progress of the majority*.

Disadvantages for the teachers: Significantly more Israeli teachers emphasized the disadvantages of inclusion on the teacher's work. They mentioned the additional workload, the lack of adequate

assistance and facilities, the absence of reward for their extra efforts and the negative stigma attached to working with students with disabilities. Some teachers in Britain thought that *inclusion can put teachers under enormous pressure and can be very disruptive*. No significant differences were obtained between the samples for the sub-category *no disadvantages* in the inclusion process.

5. Difficulties and Apprehensions

The British teachers were significantly more concerned about the academic achievements of all of the students in inclusive classes and their ability to support the students with disabilities and give them what they need, and noted the lack of a supportive system accompanying the inclusion process.

Another concern that was raised particularly by Israeli teachers, related to the social adjustment of included students: Some of them felt they these students would remain isolated, unpopular or excluded from their classmates and *consequently, the social maladjustment might lead to academic, behavioral, or emotional difficulties*. In addition, more Israeli teachers noted that their inappropriate knowledge and insufficient teaching methods skills for dealing with inclusion might negatively affect the quality of their teaching. No significant differences were found between the groups of teachers in concerns about their additional workload or lack of time; their inability to answer everyone's needs (including the students, school principal, parents); fear that the quality of their teaching quality would be negatively affected.

6. Decisions on Students with Disabilities

Most teachers believed that decisions regarding inclusion should be made by a large educational committee including a school psychologist or educational counselor, a special-education professional, the school principal, and the direct general teacher; in addition, the child's parent should take part in meetings or be aware of the decisions made. Some British teachers thought that decisions about the child should be made by a special education professional, the general teachers, and the learning support teacher. An interesting response was that of some British teachers who thought that the students themselves should be allowed to take part in these decisions. Significant differences were found for all the above sub-categories.

Some teachers noted that the decision must be made only by the school principal or by the parents. No significant differences were found between groups for theses sub-categories.

7. Teachers' needs

Regarding teachers' needs, the following results were obtained: the majority of the teachers in Israel asked for personal guidance suited to their class needs; other Israeli teachers believed that consultation with their colleagues could help them with their students' learning and behavioral problems by suggesting efficient methods and strategies. Significantly more British teachers asked for the help of a specialist in the area (e.g., special education teacher, an educational counselor, or an educational psychologist) in constructing lesson plans; the rest suggested to get help from a tutor in the class, and they expected to receive support from parents. Both groups expected deeper understanding and greater consideration by the school principal and more openness and a greater awareness from other teachers, and anticipated the cooperation of the included student.

Discussion

A large number of studies have investigated teachers' views regarding the inclusion process and teachers' coping with students with disabilities in their classes. Far fewer have examined the different perceptions and expectations of teachers by comparing samples from different countries.

Although the inclusion policy has been implemented for about twenty years, many teachers, in both countries, still had difficulties defining its goals or the policy itself. As expected, many teachers defined the inclusion process in a pragmatic and judgmental way - positive, negative or mixed opinions. These answers were consistent with previous findings that the responses of teachers of included classes are inconclusive (Heiman, 2002). We can assume that the Israeli sample expressed more negative feelings regarding the inclusion process as they felt they were less prepared and had insufficient skills to deal with the various problems of students with disabilities, as compared to British teachers.

Another theme that emerged from the study was the discrepancy between teachers' assessments of the factors that facilitate and hamper the inclusion process. While British teachers focused on the non-disabled students, on the teachers, and on the educational system, which encourage and can assist inclusion, Israeli teachers emphasized the role of the teachers and the educational system, and the included students themselves, who might impede the process.

As was assumed, most of the teachers in both countries preferred the *in-and-out* model, in which the students would receive academic support in a different class. In addition, more of the Israeli teachers preferred additional support in their classes than the British group. These findings support the assumption that while teachers in both countries favor inclusion, they expected to implement it using different teaching methods.

The teachers differed in their perceptions of the advantages and the disadvantages of inclusion. While the teachers in the UK saw more advantages for the entire class compared to Israeli teachers, and disadvantages of the of inclusion to the included students; the Israeli teachers focused on teachers, and noted that the inclusion was more disadvantageous for the non-disabled students and for the teachers. These findings suggested that the teachers viewed the inclusion process in different ways, and that more Israeli than British teachers emphasized the educational system's point of view.

Furthermore, the findings suggested that the British teachers saw their difficulties in terms of enhancing academic achievement of the entire class as well as supporting the needs of the students with disabilities; the Israeli teachers emphasized the social-emotional aspects as critical for the successful adjustment; and emphasized their insufficient skills to deal with various problems. Similar findings were found in previous studies of general education teachers in the United States (Schumm, Vaughn, Gordon, & Rothlein, 1994; Schumm & Vaughn, 1991; Scott, Vitale, & Masten, 1998) and in Israel (Leyser & Ben Yehuda, 1999), who expressed a desire to make adaptations directed toward all students. In order to achieve these adaptations, teachers asked for help from different sources: guidance that was more specific, training, and support from the school principal, peers, and parents. In this study as well, the Israeli teachers expressed their need to be personally guided in the classroom by a psychologist, special education teacher, or an educational counselor, and pointed to the importance of consulting with school colleagues; the British teachers emphasized the importance of being given help in teaching methods from a specialist, help in class by an assistant, and support from parents.

As was found in a previous study (Salisbury & McGregor, 2002), participants in this study expected to share their ideas or their concerns, to receive support from their colleagues, and to take part in the decision-making process. It appears that, as Salisbury and McGregor mentioned, the teachers might be more favorable toward the inclusion policy if they participated in the decision on the inclusion of students in their own classes.

In the British educational system, a multidisciplinary forum (including a specialist in special education, general teachers, support teachers, the included student) takes decisions on various educational process; in Israel such a body does not exist and the teachers were not completely certain which forum should decide on inclusion.

The results of the current study suggested a number of directions for further study. First, there is a need to use varied instruments including Likert-scales and classroom observations to refine the results. Second, it is important to investigate teachers' views as a function of the severity and the variance of students' disabilities. In this study, we did not differentiate between the academic, social, or behavioral characteristics of the students. Further research might examine whether teachers' approaches change with the unique characteristics of the students or the severity of the disability.

This study points to the importance of defining the process of inclusion, determining the decision-making process, and describing teachers' perceptions and expectations. The results indicate insufficient or inadequate training programs, in both countries, for mainstream teachers. Thus, it is important to develop specific programs for strategic learning to improve teachers' understanding and self-confidence in dealing with students with LD. Finally, the findings of this study indicate that although significant differences were obtained between groups, it appears that both samples expressed similar concerns, advantages, and needs regarding the successful process of inclusion.

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Appendix 1

The questions used in this study were:

1. How do you define "inclusion"?
2. In your opinion, which factors facilitate inclusion and which hamper it?
3. In your opinion, what is the preferred model of inclusion?
4. In your view, what are the advantages and disadvantages of inclusion?
5. What are the possible difficulties encountered in the inclusive class, and of what are you most apprehensive?
6. In your school, who should decide about the inclusion of students with specific learning problems in regular classes?
7. What kind of needs in inclusive classes do you have, and from whom do you expect to receive assistance?