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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
POLICY, PRACTICE AND PROGRESS:
A TRANSFORMATIVE ANALYSIS OF MIDDLE
EAST COUNTRIES

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Abstract

Access to an inclusive education for children who are disabled is internationally agreed to be a basic human right. As such, it has been enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Governments of all countries in the Middle East have signed the convention and committed to ensuring this right as soon as possible. As they incorporate these obligations into relevant education legislation and policy, there remains concern that multiple factors which persist in marginalising children who are disabled will impede progress and effective implementation of policy.

This study reviewed a sample of three countries in the Middle East; Bahrain, Iraq and Jordan. Replicating the ‘Pathways to Inclusion’ Toolkit used in Europe, data were gathered through questionnaires and interviews and aligned with the requirements set out in the United Nations Convention. An analysis framework applied a rating to *policy*, *practice* and *progress* to indicate how supportive they were of the progressive realisation of inclusive education.

Some alignment was found between the complex realities of the three countries and the expectations of the Convention. However, this study took a unique strengths approach in order to inspire the interest of policy makers. Some of the strengths noted were the traditional and religious responses to those with impairments, the tenacity of interdependence within communities and the parental preference for inclusion. These strengths were situated alongside the widespread drive towards modernisation, developing technology, and participating in the global community. Conducted through a transformative lens, the intention of this research was that the identification of these strengths would shift thinking forward to empower political and civil processes in their ongoing bid to implement the expectations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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