

Action Plan for an Inclusive Education Policy for the State of Qatar



Action Plan for an Inclusive Education Policy for the State of Qatar

Dr. Asmaa Al Fadala

Professor Nidhi Singal

Dr. Camilla Hadi Chaudhary

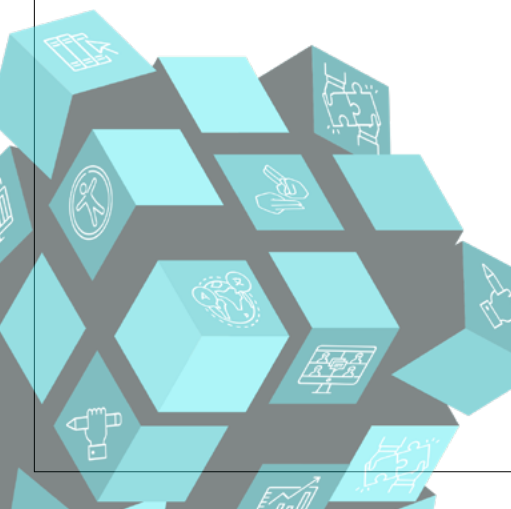
Reem Al Sulaiti

Warda ElKhalifa

Mashail Mehanna Al-Naimi

Table of Contents

FOREWORD	04
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	06
1. INTRODUCTION	10
1.1 Significance and Aim of this Report	11
1.2 What is Disability?	12
1.3 The Inclusion Imperative	14
2. THE CONTEXT OF QATAR	16
2.1 Students with Disabilities	18
2.2 Opportunities for Students	19
3. RESEARCH APPROACH	21
3.1 Phase I: Comparative Critical Policy Analysis	23
3.2 Phase II: Engagement with Key Informants	23
Semi-Structured Group Discussion	23
Semi-Structured Individual Interviews	24
3.3 Phase III: Generating Collective Action	25
4. FINDINGS	26
4.1 Policy Analysis	27
4.2 Key Informant Interviews of Stakeholders in Qatar	35
4.2.1 Status of Educational Inclusion in Qatar	35
4.2.2 The Status of Employment Inclusion in Qatar	45
4.2.3 Elements for An Action Plan	47
5. MAPPING THE WAY FORWARD	53
6. APPENDICES	59
6.1 List of Policies from Kingdom of Jordan	60
6.2 List of Policies from the United Arab Emirates	63
7. ABOUT THE AUTHORS	68
8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	72
9. BIBLIOGRAPHY	74



Foreword



I am pleased to welcome the report, *“Action Plan for Implementing the Inclusive Education Policy in the State of Qatar”*, prepared by WISE. This initiative highlights WISE’s commitment to advancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in both education and employment in Qatar. The report serves as a crucial step forward, encouraging further research and practical exploration in the areas of experimental and systematic studies on disability issues within the country.

We greatly value the objectives of this report, which aim to provide a comprehensive and in-depth perspective on inclusive education and employment for persons with disabilities in Qatar. By reviewing current policies and laws, and conducting a comparative analysis of similar policies in Arab countries, the report offers valuable insights. Additionally, it actively engages key stakeholders in Qatar’s education sector, fostering collaboration between policymakers and those directly impacted by these policies to align their visions and drive meaningful progress.

It is undeniable that achieving inclusive education and employment for persons with disabilities is a vital component of the Ministry of Social Development and Family’s overarching goals. These objectives align with Qatar’s national policies and are deeply rooted in the Qatar National Vision 2030 on disability. The Ministry is committed to promoting full social integration through a comprehensive structural and social framework, aimed at eliminating all barriers that hinder equal and inclusive access for persons with disabilities.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family actively collaborates with national, regional, and international partners to advance equality for persons with disabilities. These efforts align with both our national commitments and international obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as the broader strategies and vision of the State of Qatar.

We hope this report serves as a valuable tool for policymakers in advancing the implementation of the inclusive education policy in the State of Qatar. This initiative comes at a time when Qatar is embracing a more inclusive future, working to eliminate the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, fulfilling their aspirations for a dignified life, and ensuring their full participation in society without barriers.

Additionally, we hope this work will inspire various sectors and national institutions to undertake further research on disability from diverse perspectives. Comparative studies will enrich our understanding and highlight the progress made by Qatar in this field, solidifying its leadership at both regional and international levels. Moreover, Qatar’s hosting of the Fourth World Disability Summit in Doha in 2028 will be a significant opportunity to coordinate regional and global efforts, fostering new plans and strategies rooted in scientific research.

Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser Al Misnad
*Minister of Social Development and Family
in the State of Qatar*

Executive Summary



This report proposes a comprehensive framework for a national roadmap to enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities in education and employment in Qatar. The significance of this study lies in addressing the current gap in empirical and systematic research on disability issues within the country. It is the first of its kind in Qatar, offering a unique and essential perspective on advancing inclusive education and employment policies.

Context and Background

Qatar has made substantial progress in recognizing and supporting people with disabilities. The country has embraced international initiatives such as the «Education for All» initiative from the Dakar Framework of Action in 2000 and has committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDG) 4.3. Qatar ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008 and 2015 and adopted Law No. 2 for 2004, which specifically addresses the rights of persons with disabilities. Despite these advancements, the impact of these policies has been mixed, reflecting a global trend where inclusive education models vary significantly. In Qatar, some children with disabilities attend regular classrooms, while others are placed in special settings tailored to specific disabilities, particularly those with learning disabilities who often find themselves in special schools. Furthermore, there is lack of awareness amongst school staff and employers on the possibilities of including students and persons with disabilities into mainstream schools and workplaces.

Objective and Methodology

The report aims to provide a detailed overview of inclusive education and employment for persons with disabilities in Qatar. It reviews existing policies and laws and includes a comparative analysis of similar policies in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. The study involves key educational

stakeholders- teachers, policymakers and educational researchers- in Qatar through a policy engagement forum and semi-structured individual interviews, ensuring the proposed framework is based on practical insights from those directly involved in and affected by these policies.

The final stage of data collection took place in an interactive session titled *Reflections for an Action Plan: Supporting The Development of An Inclusive Education and Employment Policy for Qatar*, at the WISE 11 Summit in Doha, hosted by Qatar Foundation in November 2023. The key findings from comparative policy analysis and key informant interviews were presented to an audience comprising practitioners, researchers, and other stakeholders. The findings were developed into action points. The participants were invited, in groups, to compose written responses to the following questions:

1. What are your reflections on the action points: do you agree; would you propose something different; what is missing?
2. What should be prioritized in an Action Plan to address Inclusive Education and Employment?

Findings and Analysis

The report presents a portrait of the education and employment landscape for persons with disabilities in Qatar. It outlines the country's ongoing process of school reform, noting a clear intention of «inclusivity» in these domains. Qatar has endorsed international standards for supporting persons with disabilities through various global initiatives, especially through the United Nations SDG process and Qatar's national plans and initiatives. However, the report reveals gaps between merely adopting, endorsing, and ratifying such standards, and the successful identification and effective implementation of needed policies in education and employment for persons with disabilities.

The analysis revealed several key findings:

- 1. Policy Landscape:** Qatar has a robust legal and policy framework supporting persons with disabilities. However, the implementation of these policies often results in varied models of inclusion, highlighting the need for a more standardized approach. Furthermore, policies must imbibe two related perspectives: firstly, they must disaggregate disabilities to identify the diversity of experiences across type of disabilities e.g., visible vs invisible, physical vs. cognitive etc. Secondly, policies must be comprehensive i.e. address the needs of all types of disabilities within their foci so that no one is left out of their impact. Finally, policy dissemination must be broad-based, transparent, and monitored so that stakeholders e.g., educators and employers, are both aware of the policies and able to implement them.

Comparative Insights: The comparative analysis with Jordan and the UAE provides valuable lessons. Both countries have implemented innovative practices that could inform Qatar's strategy. For instance, Jordan has made significant strides in community-based rehabilitation, while the UAE has developed comprehensive vocational training programs for persons with disabilities. This highlights the need to forefront educational and professional inclusion of persons with disabilities in Qatar in wider efforts.

- 2. Stakeholder Perspectives:** The policy engagement forum highlighted several critical issues. Stakeholders emphasized the need for greater collaboration between different sectors, improved teacher training, and increased public awareness about the capabilities and rights of persons with disabilities. There was also a call for more inclusive infrastructure and technology in educational institutions. This was complemented by the need for stronger implementational oversight so the gap between policy assertions and implementation is reduced.

The report draws on a diversity of voices, collected through interviews and focus group discussions, from different stakeholders in Qatar, including persons with disabilities, their families, educators, administrators, researchers, policymakers, and government officials. Analysis of these interviews reflects a variety of experiences and perspectives highlighting key systemic issues and challenges. These include a common focus on more visible forms of disability, suggesting a lack of adequate knowledge and awareness of the diverse capacities and needs of persons with disabilities. There is a clear lack of alternative academic tracks, such as appropriate vocational training. Most significantly, the administrative and bureaucratic «silo effect» breeds confusion resulting from overlapping ministry mandates and lack of clarity in the application of policies across Qatar's dual system of public and private schools. This dynamic favors nationals over expatriate or immigrant residents and results in a lack of access to financial assistance for many families. Efforts by stakeholders have produced less than coherent, consistent, and effective outcomes—particularly regarding women, girls, minorities, and other marginalized groups. Overall, the research finds that a serious lack of engagement and interest in identifying core issues around disability has resulted in a failure to unite and engage all stakeholders toward common goals and improved outcomes.

Recommendations

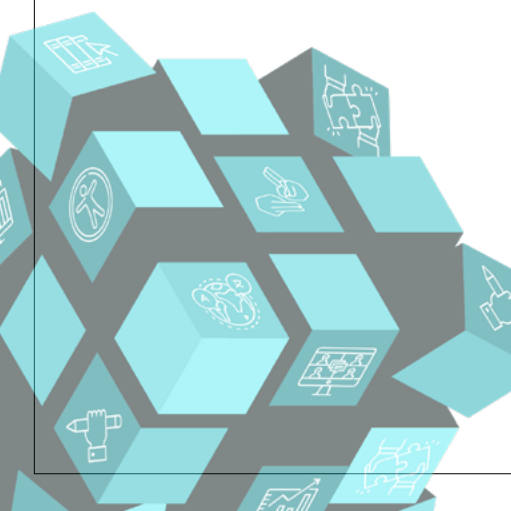
Based on these findings, the report outlines several strategic recommendations:

- 1. Policy Harmonization:** Develop a cohesive and unified national policy on inclusive education and employment that aligns with international standards and best practices.
- 2. Capacity Building:** Invest in the training and professional development of educators and practitioners to ensure they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to support inclusive education effectively.

3. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch nationwide campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of inclusive education and the potential of persons with disabilities, aiming to change societal attitudes and reduce stigma.
4. **Infrastructure and Technology:** Enhance the accessibility of educational facilities and integrate assistive technologies to support the learning and development of students with disabilities.
5. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track the implementation and impact of inclusive education policies, allowing for continuous improvement based on data-driven insights.

Conclusion

The report concludes on a note of optimism amongst stakeholders in Qatar, acknowledging recent accomplishments. Yet tempered with awareness of ongoing challenges for persons with disabilities and their families, including economic costs of stasis and insufficiently targeted, ineffective investment. The authors highlight several overarching, fundamental concerns: the urgent need for greater awareness around persons with disabilities; more comprehensive, detailed data collection efforts on disability issues; and the development of a comprehensive disability portal and other family support networks. These interrelated measures are vital for developing effective education and training programs and creating meaningful, sustainable life opportunities for persons with disabilities over the long term.



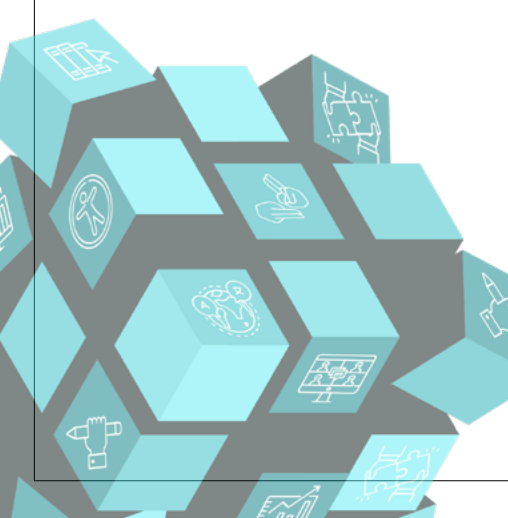
1. Introduction



1.1 Significance and Aim of this Report

Qatar has made important strides in recognising and supporting people with disabilities. The country has adopted the six recommendations of the ‘Education for All’ initiative that emerged from the Dakar Framework of Action in 2000. Most recently, Qatar has emphasized its commitment to the UN SDG 4.3. Earlier, it ratified the UN Convention in 2008 and April 2015, and adopted the law on persons with disabilities (Law No. 2, 2004). Despite these important steps, as in many countries, policies have had mixed impact. For example, it has resulted in the emergence of mixed models of inclusion where some children with disabilities attend regular classrooms, while others have access only to special settings catering to specific disabilities. Such examples are more pronounced for children with learning disabilities who are very often taught in special schools. This report aims to provide an overview of the current situation of inclusion in education, through various consultation processes, outlines some pathways for moving forward. Furthermore, it also provides an overarching view of inclusion in employment for persons with disabilities. Data indicates persons with disabilities experience exclusion from and within workplaces due to limited understanding of the varied nature of disabilities and how to implement reasonable accommodations. Furthermore, given that many of Qatar’s initiatives towards inclusion for persons with disabilities are relatively recent, there is limited literature and robust data available on employment of persons with disabilities. Thus, not surprisingly this report is primarily focused on pathways for educational inclusion. Doing so also enables a stronger foundation to be in place for efforts towards building inclusive employment practices.

Drawing on available policies, laws, and other official documents that oversee the inclusion of persons with disabilities into education and employment in Qatar, we map the current policy scenario. This is followed by a comparative analysis of policies in the regions by drawing on a critical comparative analysis of policies in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. We then conducted a policy engagement forum with key stakeholder groups in Qatar -policymakers, educators and practitioners,



1.2 What is Disability?

researchers, and persons with disabilities- in group and individual settings to draw out some salient points to provide reflections on the proposed framework. Finally, we presented this framework at the 2023 WISE Summit in Doha, inviting greater dialogue and critical reflection.

Building on the findings of this tiered data collection and critical engagement with key stakeholder groups, this report raises questions around the purposes of education, the kind of teacher training that is required, the level of human resourcing needed, and other contextualised areas of needed policy reform. The report helps envisage the type of systemic changes required to put in place effective education and employment policies, and other reform efforts, to help support pathways for increased civic engagement, education, and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The report is organised in the as follows: a contextual overview of Qatar is followed by an outline of the research approach adopted. This is followed by the findings of the comparative policy analysis and engagement with key stakeholders. The report concludes with a section on reflections on the findings and outlines proposed priorities for an inclusive education policy in Qatar.

This study proposes a framework for a national road map for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in education and employment in Qatar. Given the current lack of empirical and systematic research on disability issues in Qatar, this project to the best of our knowledge is the first of its kind.

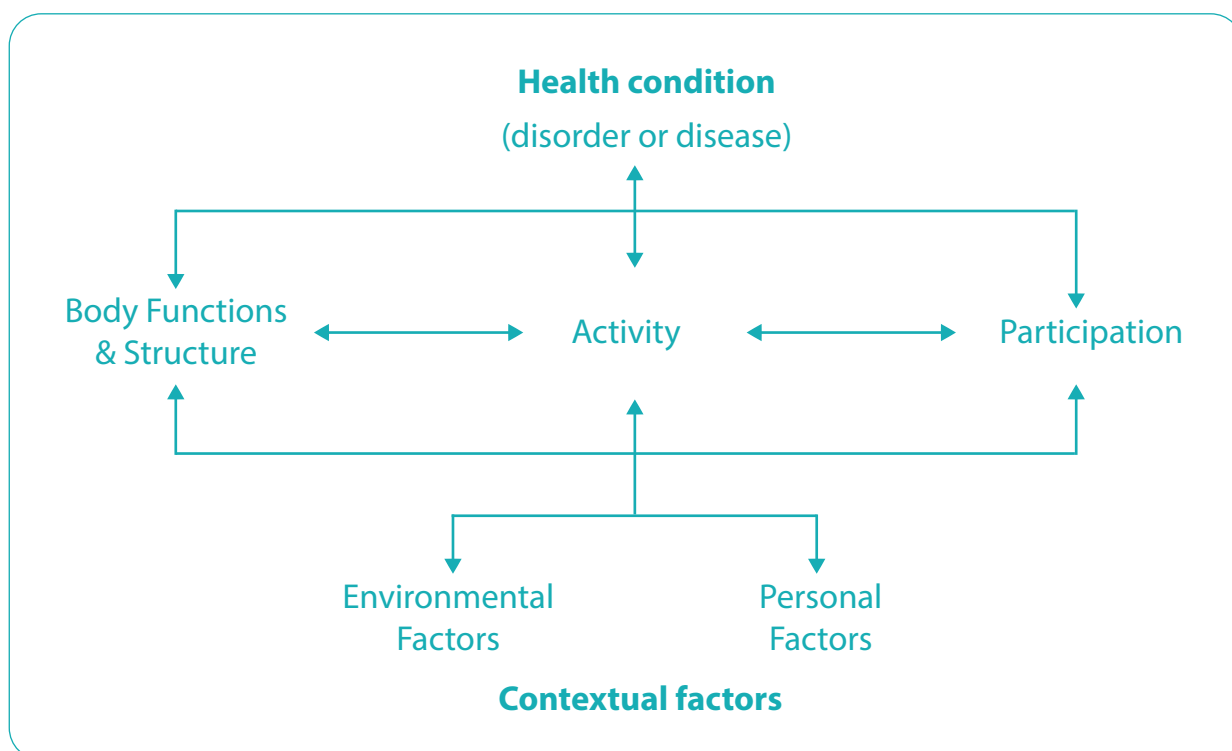
Concepts of disability have evolved over the course of the last few decades. "Historically, the most prevalent way of conceptualizing disability, the medical model, relies on the distinction between that which is 'normal' and that which is 'pathological'" (Singal et al., 2017 citing Wade et. al, 2006). Such understandings ignored the stigma and loss of dignity faced by persons with disabilities when navigating physical spaces and encountering social practices that were not inclusive. Rather, the fault was seen as lying within the disabled individual- their inability to function, rather than society's inability to make necessary

accommodations. In such scenarios, the focus is on fixing the disabled person, providing them with expert help in special settings which are made for them, for example, special schools, residential settings, etc.

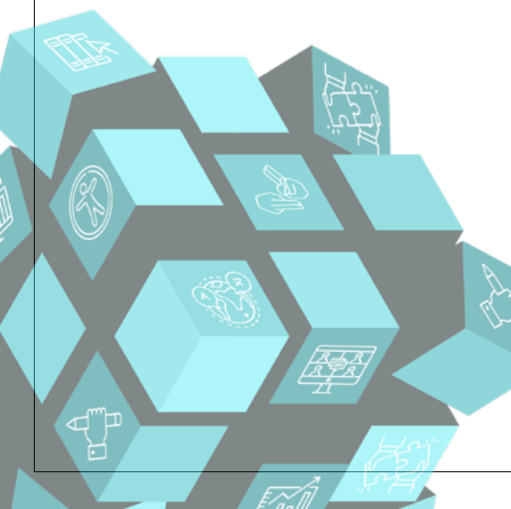
A shift in thinking has emerged, driven by disability advocacy over recent years, toward the view that disability is largely defined and reflected through the lens of the failure of societies themselves to adequately cater to the needs of individuals with diverse needs. Such thinking is primarily referred to as the social model of disability. As Singhal writes, "it was not the individual who was 'deviant', rather, the problem was located in societal oppression" (Singal et al., 2017). In this view, the focus is on removing the physical and social barriers that disabled people face, such as replacing stairs with ramps, rather than excluding them from spaces.

More recent thinking on disability acknowledges the validity of both medical and social interpretations proposing that the reality in fact is a bio-psycho-social model that encompasses the various facets of disability experiences. The World Health Organisation notes that a disability is an "outcome of interactions between health conditions (diseases, disorders and injuries) and contextual factors." These include "external environmental factors (for example, social attitudes, legal and social structures, natural and built environment, products and technology); and internal personal factors, which include gender, age, coping styles, social background, education, profession, past and current experience, motivation and self-esteem all of which can influence how much a person participates in society" (Singal et al., 2017 citing WHO 2002). Such an understanding of disability takes a holistic view of disabilities that creates the space for both medical, social, economic, and legislative innovations to create inclusive pathways for comprehensive social inclusion from a life-cycle perspective. Singal et al. (2017) represented this model visually (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: ICF model of disability (WHO, 2002, p. 9 from Singal et. al. 2017)



1.3 The Inclusion Imperative



In undertaking this report, we drew on the bio-psycho-social model of thinking about disability, acknowledging that efforts to develop an inclusive society need to consider changes at multiple levels.

Additionally, it is important to point out that we use ‘person first’ language concerning disability, that is- in this report: we refer to ‘persons with disabilities’, rather than disabled persons. This is in line with how disability is mentioned in documents and in common usage in Qatar.

As policymakers face competing demands among priorities all requiring the commitment of resources, arguments for inclusive policies need to be made explicit. Here, we draw on the rationale outlined in the report commissioned by Qatar Foundation in 2017, *Inclusive Quality Education for Children with Disabilities*.

The Individual's Right to Inclusion

As the right to education is highlighted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), so too is the right to be included fully in society with dignity and the ability to fulfil one's individual potential. Thus, from a social rights and justice argument, every individual has the right to full immersion in society over their lifespan from education to employment. Such thinking is embedded within the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, in which Goal 4 relates to educational inclusion, and Goal 8 relates to employment inclusion. Furthermore, multiple international agreements exist for equitable and rights-based inclusion of children with disabilities into education, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) that decrees every child's right to education. Similarly, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) underlines, in Article 3, the right for “full and effective participation and inclusion in society” (Singal et al., 2017, p. 4).

In outlining the rights-based argument for inclusion, the distinction between equality and equity must be made. Equality signifies outcomes in which every member of society, regardless of

ability, has equal access and opportunity. In contrast, for communities of persons with disabilities (and their advocates), progress toward inclusion requires a particular focus on equitable measures that support and empower persons with disabilities to pursue their personal goals on an equal footing with society at large. Equity-based approaches are, therefore, inherently driven by a justice agenda.

An Economic Rationale

The economic rationale for inclusion of persons with disabilities is twofold. The first relates to the intersectionality of disability and poverty in many societies. The lack of inclusive opportunities means that persons with disabilities often become mired in cycles of poverty with no escape; disability and poverty become mutually reinforcing. Household data from various countries indicate strong correlations between poverty and disability.

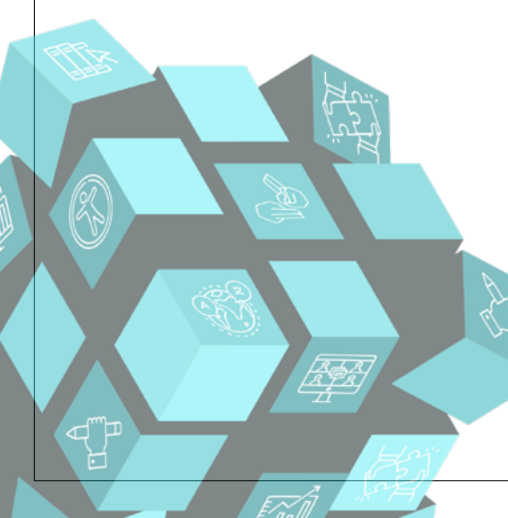
The potential economic loss to society is a further, powerful rationale for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Substantial additional costs are imposed on society at large when the contribution of this community to household and national incomes is limited by their lack of access and inclusion. This economic reality strongly supports the argument for public investment in inclusive special-services, education, training, and employment.

A Focus on Inclusion Leads to the Development of Better Systems Overall

Promoting inclusion in schools and the workplace has a positive spill-over impact on the experiences of all students and the wider workplace culture. Inclusion of persons with disabilities creates an atmosphere of inclusion for all forms of human diversity, creating experiences of care and worth within each environment. It shifts the viewing of members of the community from an ableist, hierarchal categorisation, to one where diversity is valued and included. An inclusive approach to learning pivots around the idea that every child is different, and that this diversity is a source of learning. Thus, the process of learning must be multi-sensory, engaging the diverse abilities and manners of learning of all children as a norm. For the process to be inclusive, resources and teacher training must be appropriate for this purpose.

This has societal implications for the pluralistic inclusion of various ethnicities, genders, races, and social classes. Incorporating an inclusive culture into school communities imparts values of care, tolerance, and empathy to all the students, permeating their broader interactions in their communities. Similar approaches apply to the work environment, where inclusive approaches to employment -such as physically accessible spaces, technological support, and changing of attitudes towards persons with diverse abilities in the workplace- foster attitudes of care and equal involvement for all members of society. Thus, the imperative for including persons with disabilities in education and employment is very strong.

The next section presents the context of Qatar and efforts towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities.



2.The Context of Qatar



Qatar, a small country on the Arabian Gulf, has been on a remarkable journey to leverage its natural resources --oil and gas-- to improve the quality of education, and align its formal education system with international standards (Brewer, et al., 2007). If we dive deep into the historical development of the educational system in Qatar, we can link it with the discovery of oil; there wasn't any formal system present before this. Once the trade in this commodity began, those involved began the spread of education. Education was provided by traveling educators known as 'kuttab,' who taught Arabic and the Qur'an. The first ever school was set up in Qatar in 1948, exclusively for boys. The Ministry of Education (Wizarat Al-Maarif) was established in the mid-1950s (Alkater, 2016).

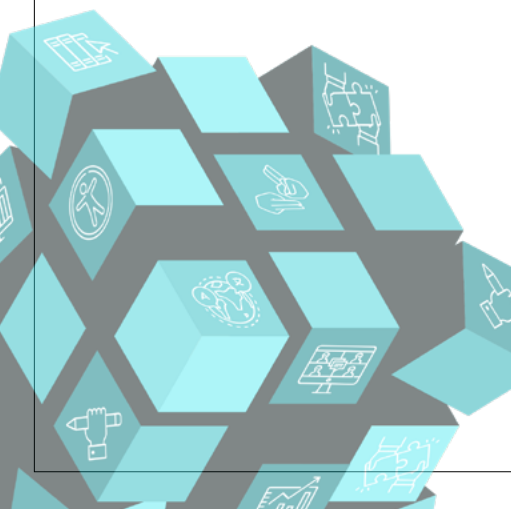
In its early stages, Qatar's education system was adopted from Egyptian and Kuwaiti models (Alfadala, Yiannouka, & Zaki, 2021). Qatar's educational system has traditionally been gender-segregated; the first school for girls opened eight years after the boy's school in 1956 (Al-Banai & Nasser, 2015). Schooling is obligatory for all children from age six; gender segregation remains standard. The educational sector (K-12) comprises three divisions: primary (grades 1–6), preparatory (grades 7–9), and secondary (grades 10–12).

Educational reform efforts are central to the Qatari story, as the leadership fully grasped the importance of quality education in diversifying the Country's economy. With the surge in oil and gas resources, more youngsters were incorporated into the domain, and knowledge was further fostered (Al-Hendawi, Khair, & Keller, 2017). This increase in revenue led to a rise in the total number of students attending schools (Al-Hendawi, Khair, & Keller, 2017). The statistics given by the Planning and Statistics Authority show a rise from 317,000 students in the academic year 2015/2016 to 373,000 in 2020/2021. While in the same academic year 2020/2021, the schools also increased from 135 in 2015/2016 to 199 (PSA, 2022). "According to the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, in 2019, the number of children with disabilities between the ages of five and 14 years, was 6,288. There are currently 66 schools that include students with disabilities. In the education ecosystem, there are effectively four types of schools children with disabilities can attend, depending on their needs and the severity of their disabilities. These are (1) mainstream public schools, (2) mainstream private schools, (3) special schools, and (4) specialized centres. From the 1990s, several specialized centres were established to cater to children with disabilities, some providing both schooling and therapy, while others provide just therapy sessions" (Singal, N., et al., 2021, pp. 18–19).

2.1 Students with Disabilities

The number of individuals with disabilities in Qatar makes up less than 0.50% of the total population. Qataris with disabilities exceed the number of non-Qataris due to the fact that most expatriate workers are medically fit. A higher percentage of men is recorded as persons with disabilities than women. Congenital factors and disease are the most common causes for disabilities (Qatar Census 2020, n.d.). Just over one percent of children are diagnosed with autism according to some estimates (QBRI Insights: Autism Spectrum Disorder, 2021) with boys comprising 81.3% of those tested (Guldborg et al., 2017). Other studies conducted by Hamad bin Khalifa University show greater prevalence of ASD amongst boys than girls (one out of 56 boys versus one out of 230 girls). This rate is higher than the world averages of 0.6 - one percent reported by the WHO (Bowles & Bowles, 2022).

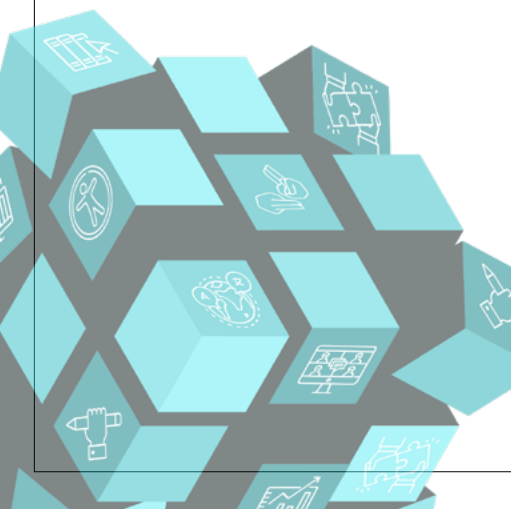
In Qatar, 59% of students attend private sector institutions (Clayton & Shafique, 2023). A report by the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) estimated that around 60 million children and young students have autism globally; one-third of them do not have any access to education in public schools (Munir, Helm, Thompson, Prestt, & Azeem, 2016). While these children face hurdles due to their disabilities, inclusive education practices have helped them out of this trauma and have established their due rights (UN, 2008). For children with disabilities, Ravet (2011) highlighted the contradictory standpoints of the domains of rights-based and needs-based perspectives that have been incorporated to exclude autistic children from education. She proposed an 'integrative inclusionist model' for disabled children in which the needs-based perspective suggests avoiding mainstreaming these students in education given the anticipated risks to those students (Lindsay, 2007). On the other hand, a rights-based perspective supports their inclusion (Allan, 2008). AESN in this regard is discussed next.



2.2 Opportunities for Students

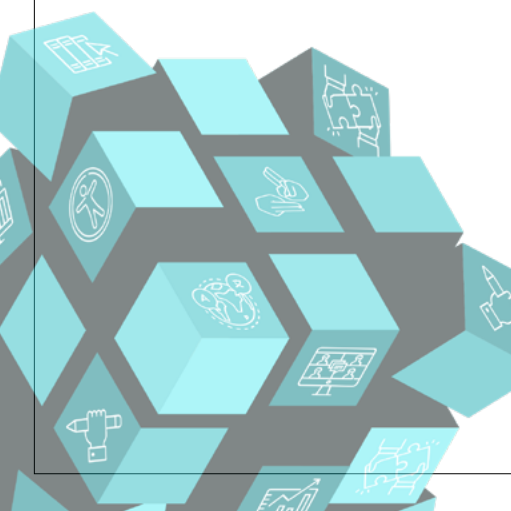
Since the inception of the Supreme Education Council (SEC) in 2001, the Qatari government has addressed issues around the inclusion of students with disabilities (Brewer, et al., 2007). This was documented as an important component in the Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016 and aligned with the educational outcomes outlined in the Qatar National Vision 2030 (Planning, 2008). As a result, Qatar has developed a variety of educational environments, such as specialized schools and separate centres that cater to the needs of children and youth with disabilities. To further highlight the diversity of school choices available in the country the statistics of the academic year 2013/14 can be observed that 59 percent of the 245,000 students were attending private schools (MoEHE, 2015).

Furthering its commitment to the UNCRPD in 2008, the Supreme Education Council (SEC) in 2009 established the Additional Educational Support Needs (AESN) unit. Its role was to increase facilities to maximize professional growth, support parents, and assess disabled students using various means to ensure its commitment to inclusivity and efficiency of educational standards. In line with this commitment, policy guidance was developed for schools, outlining their responsibilities concerning students with special educational needs and disabilities, covering the entire spectrum from kindergarten to secondary schools (SEC, 2009). The AESN department was in charge of a wide range of tasks, such as offering research-based methods for schools, promoting inclusive approaches in all schools, and fostering constructive and trustworthy relationships with parents. It also directed schools to use a collective approach and ensure occasional training of the professional staff to enhance their skills. It aimed at empowering the students by using an educational model rather than making them feel medically unfit (SEC, 2009).



In 2015, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) set up the Special and Gifted Education Office to improve the support for special education. It was to address the needs of children, together with those on the autistic spectrum. The basic aim was to improve the academic outcomes of students by efficiently allocating resources (Hassanein, Alshaboul, & Ibrahim, 2021).

Despite various development, Qatar has been struggling to provide comprehensive support for students with disabilities and many remain excluded from any kind of educational provision.

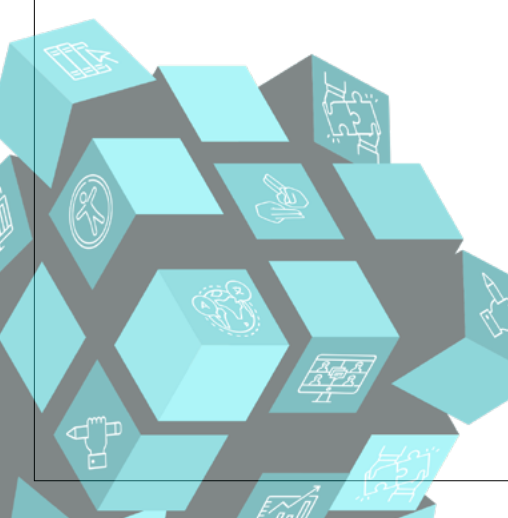
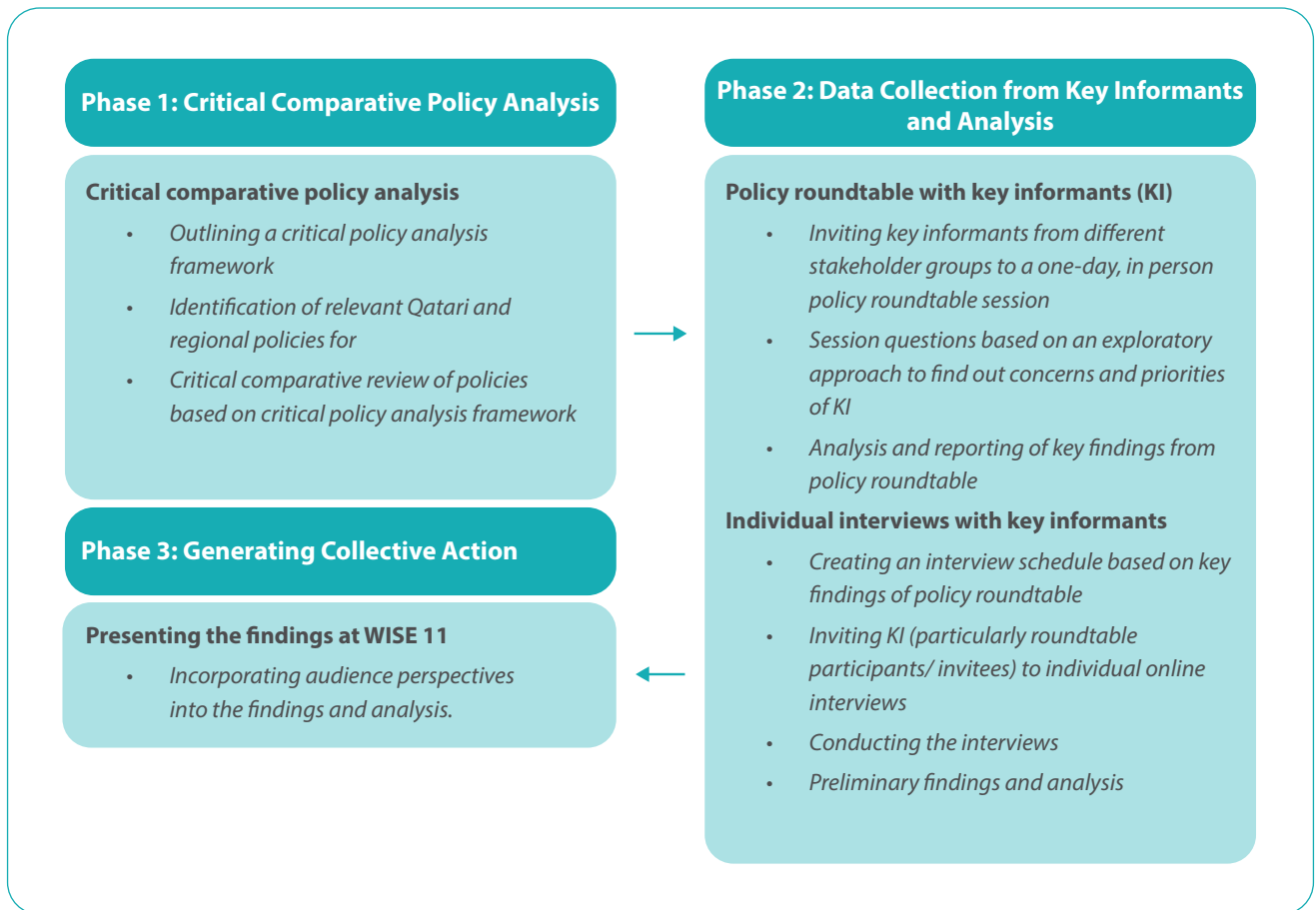


3. Research Approach



To develop a framework for action, our work undertook critical policy analysis and critical policy engagement. It was undertaken in three phases.

Figure 2: Tiered Phases of Data Collection and Analysis



3.1 Phase I: Comparative Critical Policy Analysis

The team undertook a comparative policy analysis of selected policy documents. The documents were selected through a tiered internet search for policies overseeing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in education, employment, and society in general. The findings from the Qatar policies were then mapped across those found in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. These countries were purposely selected as comparable socio-cultural contexts to Qatar. A further distinguishing feature of this shortlist was that all documents had to be available in English. In total five policy documents from Qatar, three from Jordan and six from the United Arab Emirates were analysed.

To streamline the reading of all the policies and ensure that each reading resulted in a similar area of findings, an analysis framework was created and shared within the group. Thus, all the policies were analysed for their priorities for inclusion, target beneficiaries and domain of policies, and use of language about disabilities. This approach entailed a thorough content analysis of the policies, as it focused on particular aspects embedded within the policies, with an underlying view to assessing whether they were satisfactory for achieving equitable and just educational and social inclusion of persons with disabilities.

3.2 Phase II: Engagement with Key Informants

The second phase of data collection was to ascertain the perspectives on the inclusion of key stakeholders in Qatar. This was done in a tiered approach initiated with a group session to map out broad perspectives that were then investigated in more detail in the individual interviews. All the interview sessions were designed in a semi-structured manner that allowed for participant agency while staying within the scope of focused questioning.

Semi-Structured Group Discussion

The team conducted a series of key informant interviews (KIIs), in a roundtable format. Over 50 people attended the roundtable discussion, including disability rights advocates, educators, employers, policymakers, researchers, and parents. The discussion framework was tailored around the 'what is,' (current situation) 'what if,' (what could

be) and 'what now' (what could be done now based on the 'what is' and 'what if'). The discussion focused on identifying the barriers that persons with disabilities face in accessing education and employment opportunities and exploring potential policy solutions to address these challenges. The intention of the roundtable session was to map the broader concerns and priorities of the diverse stakeholders in the holistic inclusion of persons with disabilities across their life spans.

Semi-Structured Individual Interviews

At the second stage of Phase II, the team conducted a series of key informant interviews (KIIs), in individual settings. The schedules for these interviews drew from the themes emerging from the group discussions.

The KIIs include the following stakeholder groups:

- Officials from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE), Ministry of social development and family (MSDF)
- Qatar Foundation and other bodies operating in the disability space.
- University members or knowledge brokers

A broad selection of potential interviewees from these stakeholder groups were invited to be interviewed. The selection was purposely drawn based on the prior sectoral knowledge of some of the co-authors of this report that are affiliated with Qatar Foundation and intended to cover as broad a selection of stakeholder perspectives as possible. Contact was initiated through email with follow-ups until a satisfactory number of Sixteen total interviews were conducted, via Zoom, with key informants, many of whom had also participated in the policy roundtable session.

An interview schedule had been pre-designed for uniformity across the interviews. The focus of the interview was gauging perspectives on the current state of inclusion in Qatar, current opportunities and challenges for inclusion, and participant perspectives on what should be included in an inclusive education policy for the country.

The data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach that created overarching themes based on the participants' responses to the line of questioning. These were Current Scenario of Education, Current Scenario of Employment, and Elements for Action Plan. Under each of these headings were sub-themes that addressed specific areas of challenges and reform. This method of analysis was considered the most appropriate given the exploratory nature of the data collection that aimed to understand multi-sectoral stakeholder perspectives.

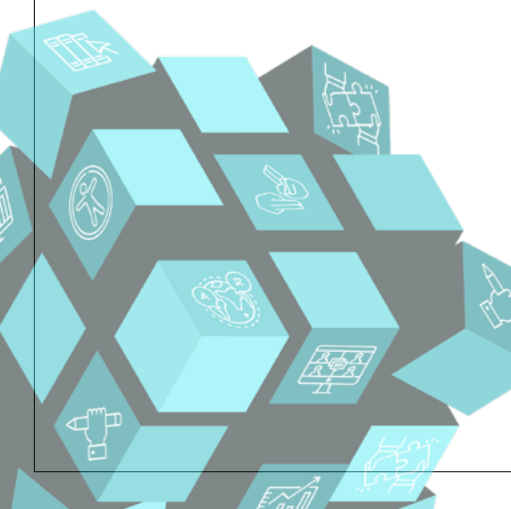


3.3 Phase III: Generating Collective Action

The third and final stage of Phase II of data collection took place in an interactive session entitled *Reflections for an Action Plan: Supporting The Development of An Inclusive Education and Employment Policy for Qatar*, at the WISE 11 Summit in Doha, hosted by Qatar Foundation in November 2023. The key findings from comparative policy analysis and key informant interviews were presented to an audience comprising practitioners, researchers, and other stakeholders. The findings were developed into action points. The participants were invited, in groups, to compose written responses to the following questions:

1. What are your reflections on the action points: do you agree; would you propose something different; what is missing?
2. What should be prioritized in an Action Plan to address Inclusive Education and Employment?

The next section presents our findings drawing across these different phases.



4. Findings



4.1 Policy Analysis

The policy analysis took a tiered comparative and critical approach to analysing relevant policies and documents. The objective was to interpret the embedded foci and priorities of each policy studied, who it targets as its beneficiaries, and how it compares with other national and regional policies. A critical analysis was essential in understanding how disabilities are viewed and addressed by policymakers, what they consider important, and to identify the ways they attempt to create inclusive environments in education and employment. The critical analysis of the policies also revealed weaknesses and challenges in the policies.

The comparative element of the policies was to place Qatari policies in the context of other policies in the greater region. It was decided to focus on a selection of relevant policies in Qatar, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates as comparable contexts with the intention of answering the following questions:

- What is the focus of the policies, i.e., who are the target beneficiaries/policy domain?
- What are the outlined policy priorities within this domain?
- Who are the authors of the policy?
- What is the language used in the policy?
- What does the policy not address?
- When was the policy/document published?

4.1.1 Putting the Policies in the Context of Global Timelines of Policies

It is also important to view the various regional policies in the timeline of global conventions to understand how thinking on disabilities in Qatar and the region has aligned with global thinking (Figure 3)

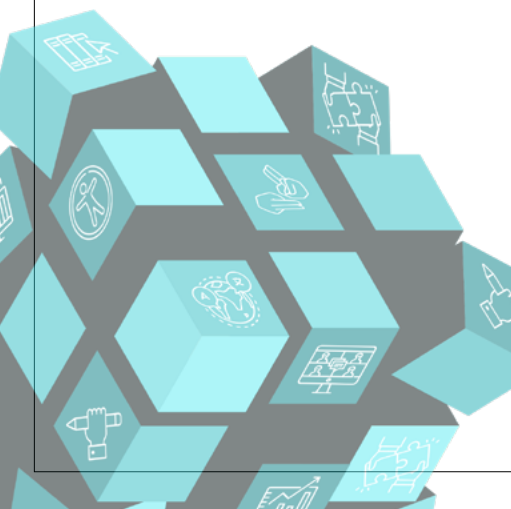
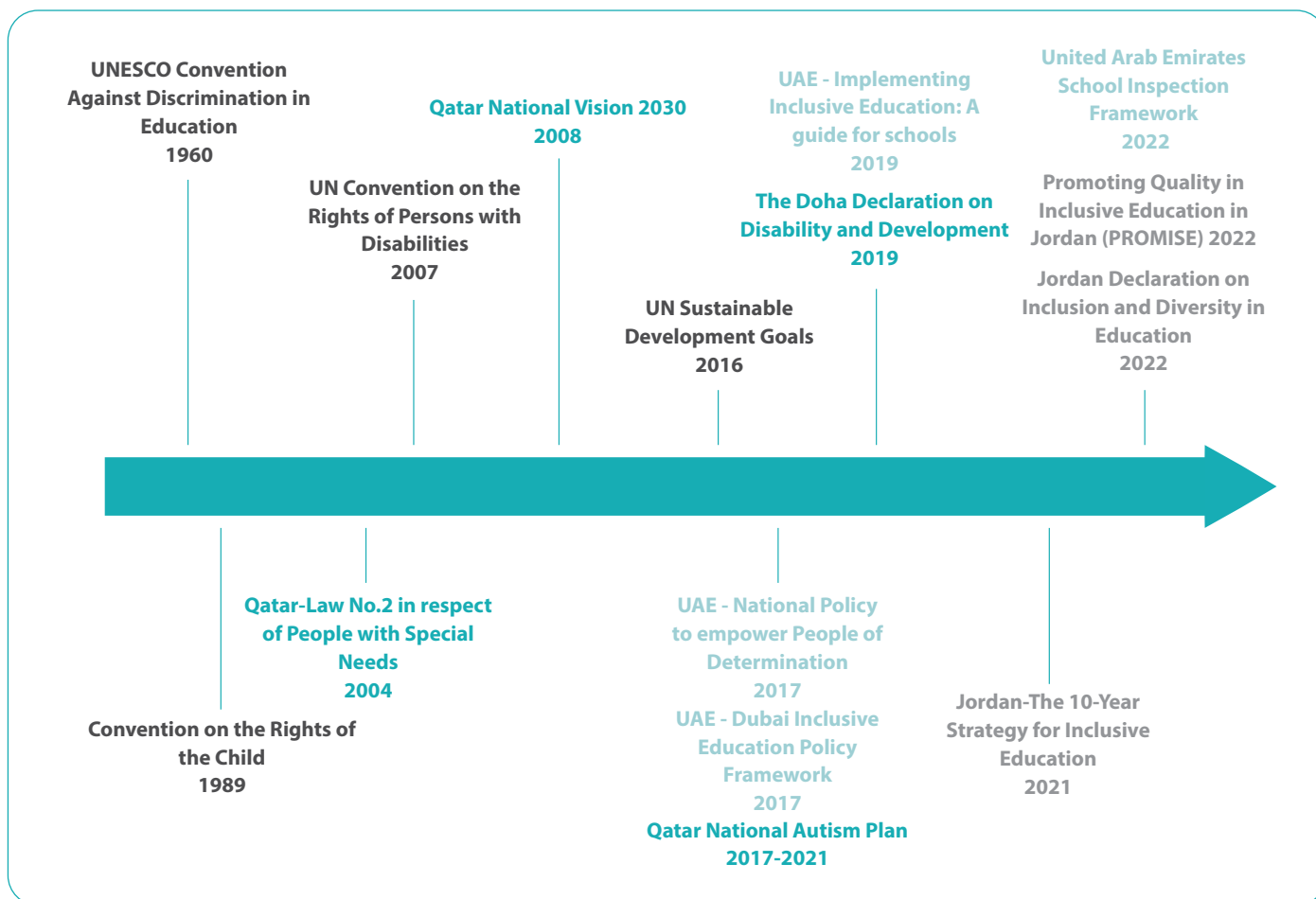


Figure 3: Timeline of Policies in Qatar, Jordan, and United Arab Emirates Compared to Global Conventions

TIMELINE OF GLOBAL AND REGIONAL POLICIES



4.1.2 Key Features of Qatar Policies

- Qatar National Vision 2030
- Law No. 2 of 2004 in respect of People with Special Needs
- National Autism Plan (2017-2021)
- The Doha Declaration on Disability and Development (2019)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) Initial Report on Qatar (2015)

As shown in the timeline Figure 3 above, Qatar (with other countries in the region) is building a focus on fully integrating persons with disabilities into society by creating transformative and empowering opportunities. This intersectional approach across various sectors (education, employment, health, and economy) has established the groundwork

for opportunities. The list of policies noted above reflect efforts to improve the health and livelihood of persons with disabilities, providing greater opportunities for them to contribute meaningfully to their communities, while receiving the necessary support to grow and develop as active members of Qatari society.

Qatar National Vision 2030

The Qatar National Vision (QNV) 2030 was published in July 2008, with Qatari citizens being the main target beneficiaries. The QNV 2030 was developed by a multi-stakeholder working group that included experts and stakeholders from various fields in Qatar, such as government, private sector, and academia. The Vision attempts to set a long-term strategy outlining national aspirations for a sustainable, inclusive future environment for Qatari nationals and foreign residents.

QNV 2030 aims to achieve several interlinked objectives. The overarching objective is to support the country in transitioning away from a hydrocarbon-based economy to one based on creating a knowledge-based economy. The vision would be achieved through four pillars: human, social, environmental, and economic development. The Social Development pillar of the vision emphasizes empowering women, youth, and persons with disabilities, to create an all-inclusive society. It is critical to note that there is no specific terminology used to describe persons with disabilities in the document. However, other government documents cite QNV 2030 objectives towards persons with disabilities, thus, its implicit focus can be assumed.

Law No. 2 of 2004 in Respect of People with Special Needs

Law No. 2 of 2004 explicitly addresses people with special needs. The law came into effect in 2004 and was passed based on a proposal from the Supreme Council for Family Affairs (SCFA), a draft law submitted by the Council of Ministers. The Shura Council, Qatar's legislative body, was also consulted on the law.

The use of language in this document is notable; available in both Arabic and English, it utilizes terminology such as Special Needs Persons and People with Special Needs interchangeably in English

(ذوو الاحتياجات الخاصة in Arabic), and does not describe them as disabled individuals or people with disabilities, except in the definition (Article 1):

“any person with a permanent total or partial disability in any of the senses or in his or her physical ability or in his or her psychological or mental ability to such an extent that his or her opportunity to learn or to undergo rehabilitation or to earn a living is limited.”

The law takes a broad-based view of supporting persons with disabilities at every life stage towards full social integration through a multi-tiered structural and social vision. Article 5 foregrounds employment integration of persons with disabilities by creating a two percent minimum requirement for public entities' employment. This is also contingent upon the private sector where the company's staff size is 25 individuals and more. The law emphasizes that it is important for individuals with special needs to complete rehabilitation and special education programs, where they would receive certificates or ID cards from Special Education Institutes (Articles 4 and 5). Holders of these certificates and IDs can later apply for a job, yes and join the workforce. Article 8 of the law proposes a mechanism for reporting to the SCFA the hired individuals with special needs, their pay scale, and their work type. Individuals with special needs who cannot work shall receive a monthly pension by virtue of this law.

It is notable that since the law was issued, Qatar has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and ratified the Arab Charter on Human Rights in 2008.

National Autism Plan (2017-2021)

The National Autism Plan 2017-2021 was launched on April 17, 2017. The plan's focus can be viewed from two standpoints: the individual level, and the state/institutional level. On an individual level, the National Autism Plan focuses

on helping children and families understand the disorder and develop the services that they need to help people with autism spectrum disorder with training and education, and to facilitate the process of meeting their needs and improving their lives. At state or institutional levels, the National Autism Plan focuses on capacity development training amongst bureaucrats and policymakers to better understand and identify needs and possible policy initiatives. It was created through a multi-stakeholder working group including child psychiatrists, developmental paediatricians, speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, educators, administrators, and family members of persons with disabilities. It was finalized (with buy in from stakeholders in Qatar) by the World Health Organisation. The National Autism Plan has 44 multi-tiered recommendations to be implemented by 2021, including short and longer-term targets with a focus on increasing public awareness and early diagnosis. These recommendations incorporate different sectors including education, healthcare, specialised support, and infra-structural support.

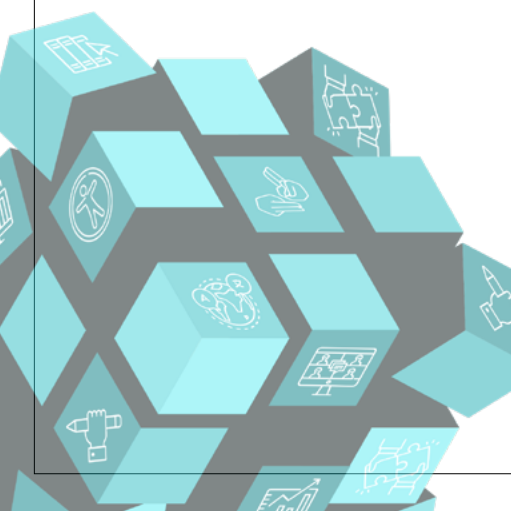
The Doha Declaration on Disability and Development (2019)

This declaration emerged from the Doha International Conference on Disability and Development, organized by the government of Qatar in partnership with the United Nations, the International Disability Alliance, and the International Disability and Development Consortium. The conference enjoyed input from a wide range of stakeholders, including persons

with disabilities, civil society organizations, and government representatives. The theme of the conference was “Harnessing the Power of Sustainable Development to Advance the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.” The conference emphasised the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Qatar. The declaration compliments this with a set of recommendations addressing the physical, social, and structural barriers that excluded persons with disabilities in Qatar. It highlights the role of families, raising awareness and promoting rights of persons with disabilities. It also emphasized a comprehensive approach to disability, beyond a medical one, through accessible education.

Specific foci were outlined:

- a. Strengthening the legal and policy framework
- b. Equal access to education and promoting inclusive education
- c. Ensuring access to health service, including rehabilitation and assistive technologies
- d. Improving access to employment and livelihood opportunities with equal access to training
- e. Ensuring accessibility and universal design, where environment, transportation, information and communication technologies, and other public spaces are designed to be accessible to persons with disabilities



However, while it recognizes that girls with disabilities may face additional forms of discrimination, it does not specifically address the unique challenges and barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities, nor does it address other minorities and marginalized groups.

The declaration was presented in both Arabic and English. It uses various definitions to describe disability, referring to persons with disability as individuals who have physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. It is notable that its language conforms with that of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Qatar ratified in 2009.

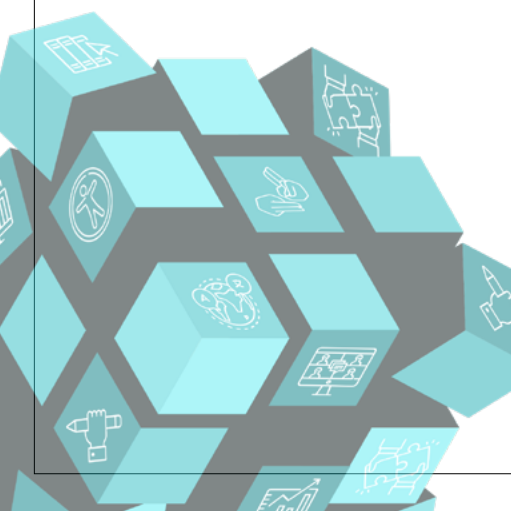
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) Initial Report on Qatar (2015)

In 2008, Qatar signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and ratified it in 2009. This marked Qatar's initial commitment to promoting these rights and ensuring the non-discrimination and equal participation of persons with disabilities. In 2015, Qatar submitted its initial report, prepared by the National Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in collaboration with the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in Qatar. The committee included representatives

from several government ministries, civil society organizations and persons with disabilities, and was open for a period of consultation with civil society organizations and persons with disabilities to gather feedback and input.

The report identifies areas where further action is needed for full implementation of UNCRD; its findings closely resemble the priorities of the Doha Declaration discussed above indicating that implementation has not been comprehensive in the interim between this report and the publication of the declaration. An important result of this report was the establishment of Qatar Foundation for Social Work, improved accessibility in public places, including the construction of ramps, elevators, and accessible bathrooms, and the provision of audio and visual aids for persons with hearing and vision impairments. In addition, the report noted Qatar's preliminary steps for inclusive access to education and mainstreaming of children with disabilities.

The report also identified critical challenges for implementation that parallel those identified in other national documents, such as the lack of awareness, understanding, and employment opportunities. A key highlight was the lack of decision-making agency for persons with disabilities, and the fact that accessibility is favoured over comprehensive inclusion. Thus, segregated structures are preferred for accommodating persons with disabilities in a special system rather than including them in existing ones. Moreover, the report also pointed out that there are added barriers faced by vulnerable groups such as women with disabilities, migrants with disabilities, and persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities with disabilities.



4.1.3 Key Features of Jordan's Policies

- 10-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education (2021)
- Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education (PROMISE) Programme (2022-23)
- Jordan Declaration on Inclusion and Diversity

A selection of policies from the Kingdom of Jordan were analysed according to the analysis framework mentioned above (refer to section 6.1 for an overview of the policies in Jordan). These were the 10-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education (2021), The PROMISE Programme 2022-23, and Jordan Declaration on Inclusion and Diversity. The analysis with the summaries and the key takeaways listed below indicate that inclusive policymaking is viewed through a holistic, contextual lens that takes into account diverse, excluded student groups in the kingdom. These groups range from students with disabilities to refugees and asylum seekers from surrounding states. The policies also acknowledge to a limited extent the intersectionality of these groups.

4.1.4 Key Features of UAE Policies

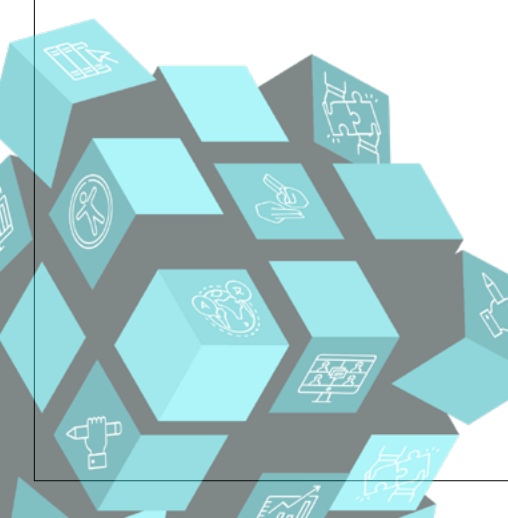
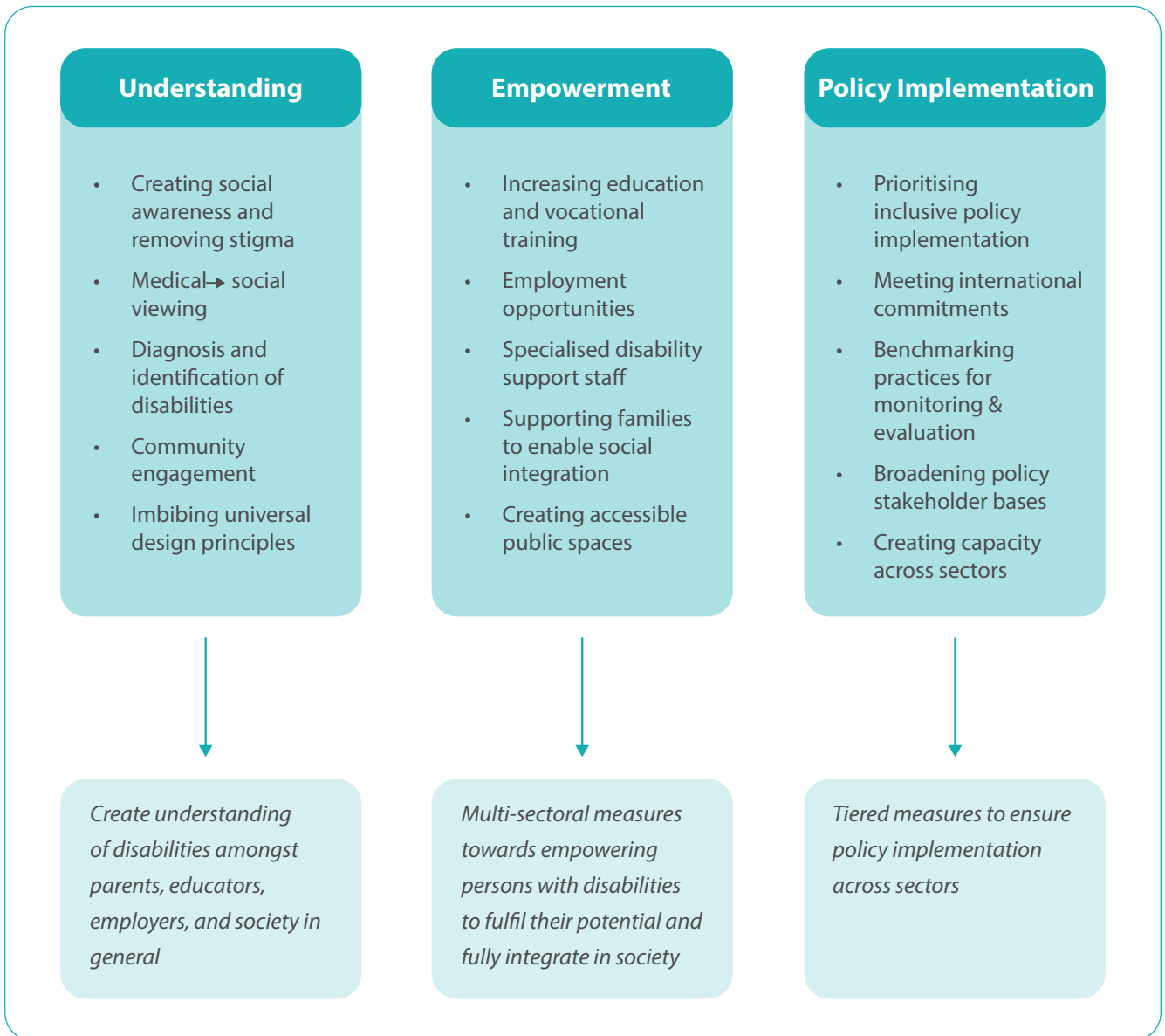
- National Policy to Empower People of Determination
- United Arab Emirates School Inspection Framework
- Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework (2017)
- Implementing Inclusive Education: A guide for schools
- Federal Law No. 29 of 2006 In Respect of The Rights of People with Special Needs
- Law No. (2) of 2014 Concerning Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Emirate of Dubai

Six documents (as listed above) from the UAE were analysed and comparatively mapped with the Qatari and Jordanian policies (refer to section 6.2 for an overview of the policies in UAE). These documents provide an overview of inclusive policymaking in the Emirates, with a mix of overarching goals and specific targets. Expectedly, the laws and policy provide a broader whole-sector view, while the frameworks address specific objectives for the sector.

4.1.5 Themes Emerging Across the Three Countries

A comparative analysis across the policies of all three countries generated three broad thematic priorities: creating awareness, creating measures that empowered persons with disabilities, focusing on policy implementation. All the specific policy priorities and measures could be grouped under one of these themes, although the themes often intersected. Creating awareness would reduce social stigma that would enable specific measures of empowerment to take effect. Similarly, prioritising policy implementation would also have a secondary impact of creating general awareness of disabilities. These themes should be viewed through such a variegated lens.

Figure 4: Themes Emerging Across the Policies of Qatar, Jordan, and the UAE

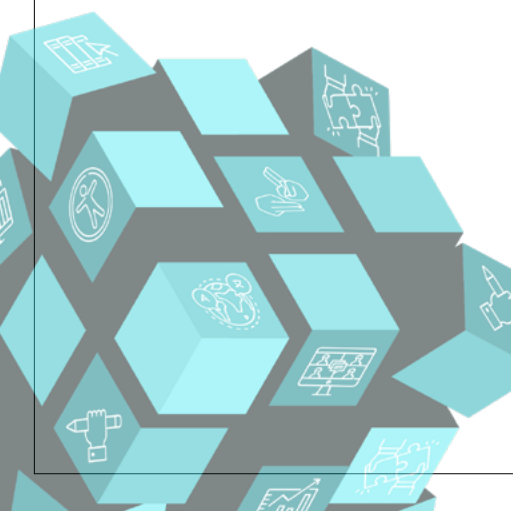


The policies emanate from country contexts that share varied degrees of cultural similarities and histories regarding inclusive policymaking. Comparative analysis of the policies indicates that the policies are contextually informed and nuanced in their approach to reform. The policies in all three countries prioritise awareness and understanding across sectors, largely viewing disability through a social lens, even while prioritising the need for early diagnosis and treatment (i.e. addressing the medical aspects of disabilities). However, each policy presents contextualised initiatives that reflect the grounded realities in their countries. The Jordanian policies, for example, reflect demographic realities, addressing issues of marginalised student communities, with a strong emphasis on refugees in the country.

The shared priorities across all three national policy contexts involve creating a holistic and empathetic understanding of the needs and rights of persons with disabilities amongst stakeholders. Society, in general, acknowledges a concerted need to create multi-tiered capacity to integrate and include them through physical, human, and financial resources. UAE policies focus on developing understanding through clear definitions of disabilities. Jordan, taking a community approach, creates understanding at the school, home, and in the broader community to remove stigma. The Qatari policies link inclusion, awareness, and understanding to larger sustainability goals that identify the broader social agenda of economic diversification and human capital development.

The policies of these countries all shared empowerment goals, with some variation in how empowerment was defined. Given its population and particular demographics, Jordan’s policy approach for inclusion and empowerment was naturally more broadly focused on larger student groups. The UAE proposed targeted identification tools, such as cards describing a person’s disability, in order to facilitate their access to support and to create employment opportunities. Qatari and Jordanian policies prioritised legislative frameworks, the need for universal design principles to be included across sectors, and teacher training.

Policy implementation was a priority for all three countries. Qatari documents make framing inclusive legislation, and monitoring its implementation, a priority; they benchmark this performance against international commitments to inclusion. The UAE policies reflected the most targeted frameworks for monitoring implementation, reflecting, for example, the policies generated by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA). Dubai focuses more on scaffolding and evaluation of school performance and linking that to inclusive parameters. This reflects the established evaluation systems in the emirate operated by the KHDA. Jordan prioritises evidenced data collection for needs assessment and ‘action plans’ to monitor performance on inclusion. It also uses a piloting schools’ framework to evaluate how a holistically conceptualised ‘Index of Inclusion’ performs in thirty selected schools.



4.2 Key Informant Interviews of Stakeholders in Qatar

This section presents findings from the data collected with three key stakeholder groups in Qatar in Phase II outlined above. These findings were captured in semi-structured group discussions, semi-structured individual interviews, and audience engagement at WISE 11 in Doha. The data was analysed thematically, and; we begin by highlighting how participants viewed the current state of inclusive education, and the key systemic elements enabling and challenging its implementation. The subsequent section presents participant reflections on inclusion in the employment sector. We conclude by critically reflecting on the key elements of the proposed new action plan, integrating both perspectives of the participants and research insights from the wider field.

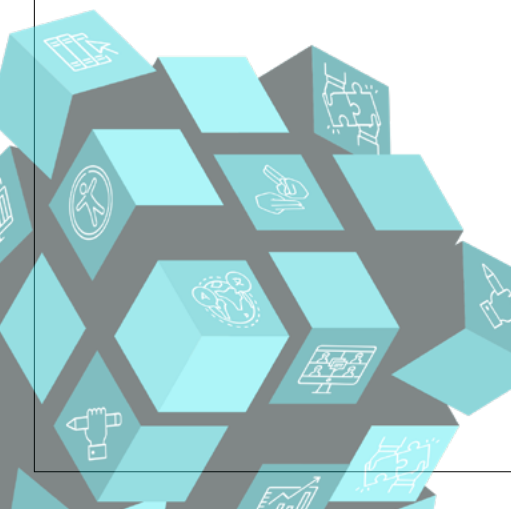
It is interesting to note that much of the findings from this sector corroborate the key takeaways from the Policy Roundtable.

4.2.1. Status of Educational Inclusion in Qatar

4.2.1.1 Understandings of Inclusion in Education

Notions of Inclusion

A key area of investigation was to unpack how inclusion is understood amongst the stakeholders and their perceptions of this understanding in society. The stakeholder responses indicated a varied understanding of inclusion both within education and at the social level. Some approaches were systems-driven, highlighting the need for inclusive practices to be embedded into the structures and processes of organisations for maximum impact, as indicated in the quotes below:



“Inclusion is conceptualised in different ways across sectors. In education: the range of schools’ ability to meet the needs of all students” – policymaker



“Creating multi-tiered systems of support” – policymaker

“Main goals of inclusion policy: to support as many students as possible. Make inroads into the communities” – educator

“Ultimately you would want any child with a disability to be able to have a number of options to consider and should be protected through their educational journey” – academic researcher

Other participants emphasized the need for a more holistic view of inclusion, with a clear focus on moral and justice-driven facets of inclusive practices, as indicated below.

“Say yes to learning for every single child that walks through these doors, no matter who they are...A school for every kind of kid” – policymaker



“I don’t have a full understanding of the objectives, but I would say first would be is not to discriminate against people with disabilities, whether it’s intentional or unintentional” – policymaker

These comments also reflected an overarching sense that the greater community, as well as educational stakeholders, had only a limited understanding about inclusive pathways for persons with disabilities. The deficit in understanding was linked to a lack of awareness of opportunities, as well as associated perceptions of stigma. Where there was awareness, this tended to be skewed towards those disabilities that were visible, such as physical disabilities; these also received greater institutional and social support.

“Much of inclusive practices and initiatives in Qatar focus on visible and physical disabilities rather than invisible ones e.g., wheelchair accessibility, etc.” – educator

Another interviewee highlighted what they perceived as a limited understanding of inclusion, and extended it both to disability and gender identities:

“There is limited understanding and scope in Qatar for inclusion. Inclusion can be for students with disabilities or sexual preferences and gender identities.” – policymaker and educator

Unsurprisingly, many of these reflections resulted in interviewees noting that this lack of awareness was also evident in the lack of prioritisation given to the issue of inclusion. An academic researcher said:

“Until a year and a half ago, I could not find a reference in a national document that covered progress-- that stated that there is a KPI for schools and inclusion. It’s as if that is not a problem and so when you don’t put it down in black and white, people are not going to pay attention to it. So that’s also a huge issue.”

International Benchmarking

A few participants noted a strong trend towards adopting the best policies from other countries, most particularly GCC countries, the UK, and the USA. This alignment of national policies with international agreements, treaties, and global practices was reflected by a policymaker:

“Qatar’s approach to policymaking is to assess international trends and (in general terms) highlight best practices in particular countries. Greater emphasis on countries in the global north (US and Europe) as well as multilateral agencies such as UNESCO and UN decrees (that have been ratified by Qatar).”

There was a tendency to compare Qatar’s performance and progress with other countries, which at times left participants acknowledging how Qatar needed to do more, while others were more favourable in their reflections, especially given perceived progress in a short period of time.

“We’re in the GCC with very unique dynamics, but how much are we really learning from [those]? I’m not saying that the others have gotten it right... But there are certain countries that are ahead of the game, specifically Saudi and UAE.” - academic researcher

“And maybe ... other countries have been working on this for decades. Qatar has been working on this for less than one decade. And some of the changes that we’ve seen in that decade are really commendable.” –academic researcher

What also emerged was a strong acknowledgment of the need to contextualise inclusive policies and practices to Qatari society and culture, to enable their successful implementation.

“Are we learning from them, or just taking best practices that we agree with and contextualizing it? I don’t mean copy paste at all whatsoever, because that’s the worst thing which has been done and has been an utter failure then.”-academic researcher

Challenges

Drawing on the diversity of their experiences our participants provided some thoughtful reflections on the challenges and dilemmas arising from efforts towards implementation of disability-inclusion in Qatar. These were largely structural in nature and are discussed below.

Ability Driven System

In discussing inclusion in schools, participants reflected on what inclusion meant in a system driven by ability norms. For example, some participants highlighted how ability screening is the norm at various levels of schooling. Additionally, there is a strong focus on rewarding outstanding students for good exam scores, but those with diverse abilities and those that need more particular attention get overlooked and side-lined. Others also talked about the lack of alternative pathways for academic progression.

“There is ability filtering system by the government. In order to graduate all students, [they] need to pass the external exams of their schools, e.g., IB, A Levels or AP. If they cannot pass, they cannot be considered graduated. In order to get the government stamp on their degree, students must grade more than 85 percent on their exams. Then they qualify for scholarships to university. Those who go to the special school cannot get a stamp, and so they cannot apply for scholarships to go to universities. There are no alternative (e.g., vocational) tracks for students with disabilities” - policymaker

This creates a systemic requirement to rethink progression pathways to be more inclusive, and posing the question: How does inclusion work in an ability-driven system?

“Elitist” System

An additional factor that emerged in the interviews further revealed how the current system better suited families with greater financial resources. Participants noted that structural support for students and persons with disabilities relied significantly on the families’ ability to afford required support. They could pay for learning support staff in schools and had access to fee-based special schools. This reality suggests the highly elitist nature of a process of inclusion, accessible only by better-off families.

Inclusion in employment was viewed as elitist as well, but in a slightly different twist. Participants noted that sometimes persons with disabilities and their families were reluctant to pursue certain jobs they perceived as low social status. This resulted in a scenario where there were very few opportunities for vocational training that persons with disabilities could access.

“Because of lack of vocational training and cultural stigma attached to doing blue collar and less prestigious jobs in Qatari society, there is no professional scope for Qataris who are not academically strong including those with disabilities”- policymaker

“Being disabled is very, very expensive actually. So, I’m disabled and I’ve got a child with disability, so it’s going to be quite a lot of the wage [that] is going to go to helping us to get by it, so around maybe half of my wage” – policymaker & person with disability



“Finance is one of the biggest barriers in this country, excluding families from accessing education. It’s horrendous” – academic researcher

Such inequities merit inquiry about who is being excluded from the system and how inclusion can be affected in an elitist system.

The Qatari System

The data clearly reflected a demarcation between the availability of resources for Qatari nationals and what is available for expatriate persons with disabilities. Given the smallness of the sector, this worsened frustrations of the parents and families of the students.



"In the public sector, sure, You've got 70 odd schools that have inclusion curriculums or whatever. But the fact of the matter is that majority of children who are going to school are going in the private sector, because the public sector schools are not open for everyone. So essentially when you have an average (expatriate) family looking for a school, they have nowhere to go but the private sector. When they go to the private sector, there are massive barriers to entry and there is no protection for children in place.

There's no clarity in policies on which policies apply to just the Qatari nationals and which apply to every resident of the country. Sometimes this confusion even exists at the policy maker level." - academic researcher

"'Tick-box' Attitudes "

The need to have complete buy-in to the process of inclusion by all the stakeholders was flagged by the participants. A policymaker noted that for many institutions, the practice of including students with disabilities is no more than "a tick-box" exercise i.e., something that they have to do to satisfy appearances of being inclusive. One interviewee, a policymaker, linked this thinking to a lack of understanding of holistic inclusion: *"Inclusion in Arabic is 'demj' which means mixing. So, in Qatar schools the headteachers can tick a box by having [a] student with a disability enrolled."* Consequently, often inclusion became a priority on occasions of public interface as part of institutional image building: As an academic researcher stated, *"The only time that, you know, the word disability comes into an operational matter is in graduation."*

Hopefulness About the Future

Despite the issues highlighted by the participants, it was notable that there was an overarching positivity and hopefulness about the state of inclusivity in the country. Even those participants who believed that most needs of persons with disabilities were not being met by public and private sector actors were positive in their outlook on, identifying existing policies and reforms in place.

"The policies and bylaws on inclusion exist in Qatar. These laws correspond to international standards (such as UNCRPD) and [are] binding" – a policymaker

A few noted the urgency for action in policy and practice, as in the following quotes.

“It is very promising that the Government is recognising this and is willing to have the conversation. ‘Great time to ignite change’
- policymaker and educator



“The fact is that I really honestly have total hope that with the right ingredients, Qatar can do magic all right, and can really change the landscape because they have all the right ingredients. They just don't have the right cook you know what I mean?”
- academic researcher

Families of Children with Disabilities: Key to Success

The role of families in enabling inclusive life experiences for their children with disabilities was highlighted by several participants. The areas in which families played a role were both structural (financial ability) and a multi-tiered awareness and acceptance of their children's disabilities.

Financial Capacity Determines Support

Due to lack of available public financial support for families of children with disabilities, the burden of supporting their children fell on parents. The cost of an instructional assistant for learning support unique to the child can be in the range of QR 7,000 to 8,000. When the parents cannot afford the financial burden, the students are pushed out of the system.

“I guess... because parents have to pay for their LSAs (learning support assistants), and if it's not within the budget, and we can't service and resource them, it would be an injustice... to accept

them, especially if we know that they're not gonna get what they need from us”- educator

Sometimes the institution bears the cost of inclusion, as an educator described:

“We saw a lot of parents in Doha [who] are not able to pay... the fees for the education or the therapy. So, we decided to have one student in every class under the centre sponsorship. We pay the fees. So now we have the five students for free. They don't pay anything for the last academic year, and all field trips, life and social skills, e.g., cooking or taking the kids outside. The centre is paying, we don't charge the families anything.”

Need to Increase Acceptance and Awareness

Emerging in the participant responses was an indication of the complicated status that persons with disabilities hold in Qatari society, which can disempower them from self-actualising. Participants also highlighted reluctance amongst parents to accept that their child(ren) have any type of disability.

“Parents are not on board because they’ve got statements from someone else, and they said no, no, no, my child’s absolutely fine” - educator



“Parents don’t like their children to be connected with special schools” - policymaker

This reluctance is interlinked, according to a policymaker, with perceived social stigma and lack of pathways for social integration as well as *“related to the ‘monetary stigma’ that comes from the government benefits system for... students”* - policymaker.

Participants flagged that the situation is changing as awareness grows amongst younger parents. This is discussed in the following section.

Generational Shift

The interrelated reluctance and lack of awareness means that persons with disabilities are often kept within home spaces where they are cared for and protected. But that does not allow them to fully participate as social actors and citizens. However, *“as a policymaker states, there is a generational shift with younger (more educated) parents not keeping their children out of school like the older parents who did not have enough knowledge of how to empower their children with education and skills”* – policymaker. Thus, more children of younger and more informed parents are experiencing greater educational inclusion.

What Needs to be Done for Families:

There is a clear need for broad, targeted support for the parents of children with disabilities.

1. Increasing Communication

Several participants highlighted that there were limited pathways for parents to reach out to stakeholders who were involved in their children’s lives. This meant that parents are expected to send their children to school without being provided, through a system, with guidance and information on school practices and the experiences of their children. This lack of feedback access was flagged as highly debilitating for parents and children.

2. Formalizing Support Networks

The participant reflections indicated that community building with the families was generally highly informal and consisted of WhatsApp groups and social media platforms initiated by individual stakeholders. A clear need for some form of formal organisation of families into communities that support each other through information sharing and other avenues was expressed by some participants.

“Before the child can even have a voice, the parents have to be a voice for their children” – academic researcher

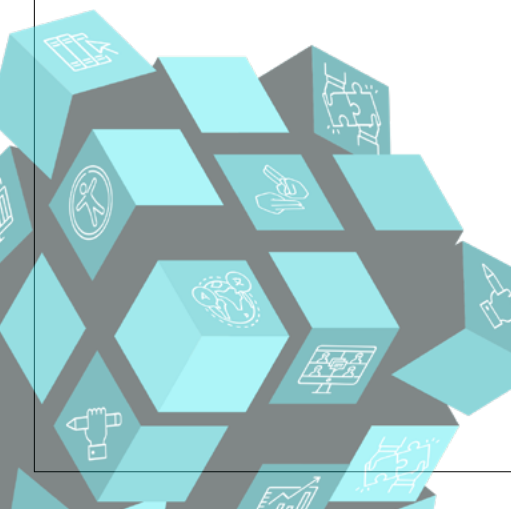


“We have some students that have somehow found a way to convey to either faculty or colleges or to the university that there was an additional support that they required to thrive and that’s great of them to have found a way but that’s not the way the system should work. We should have a formal system where they can communicate to someone and that can be communicated to, you know, every single teacher not on the onus of the student to do that” – educator

4.2.1.3 What is Happening at the Government Level?

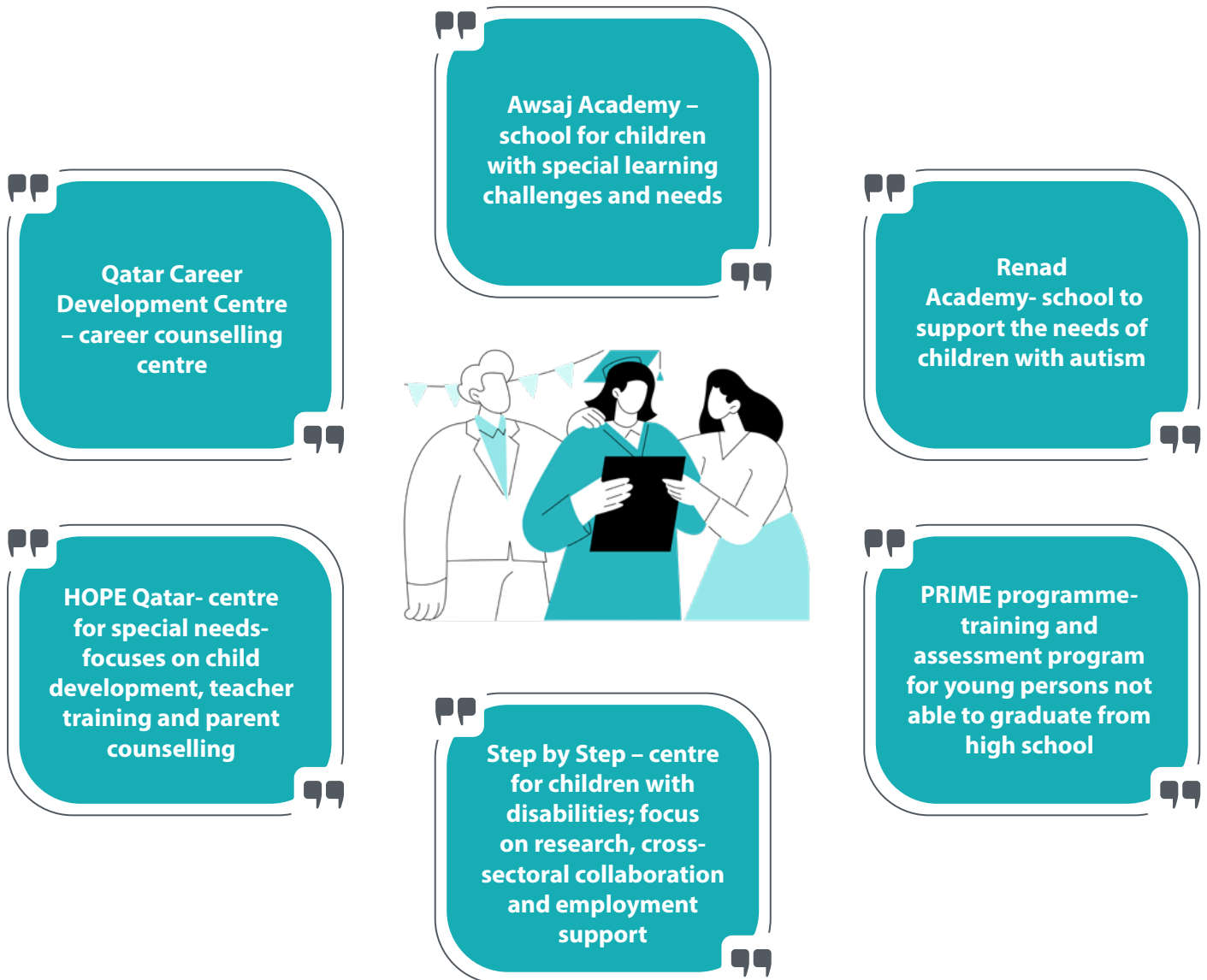
The interviews revealed a multi-layered role for the government, motivated to create inclusive pathways for persons with disabilities across their lifespans. This intention was reflected in the number of existing initiatives on inclusion. However, while sharing areas of inclusive practices, the participant reflections clearly

indicated the implementation gaps that were limiting the efficacy of inclusive practices at the school level.



Current Initiatives

The participants identified a diverse selection of inclusive initiatives currently functioning in Qatar.



Implementation Gaps

While the policies and institutions addressing broad-based educational and social inclusion exist, the data suggests that lack of effective implementation creates shortfalls. Two critical areas of shortfalls were highlighted: distribution of roles and responsibilities, and collaboration across stakeholders.

Gap 1: Distribution of Roles and Responsibilities

There was clear indication that the distribution of roles and responsibilities in the public sector

requires reorganisation. Participants highlighted disaggregation of oversight and reporting structures, meaning that stakeholder groups in the government were working in silos with limited awareness and communication of work being undertaken in other silos. This impacted the degree of oversight that was happening as well as lack of clarity as to which department to approach. A clear need was highlighted for bureaucratic reorganisation and making educational practitioners and parents aware of responsible departments.

“Public school oversight is from the ministry section for public schools. The private schools and ‘community schools’ linked to embassies are overseen by the private schools sector. There are different policies for oversight and evaluation of these schools” – policymaker

“I do not think there are efforts to track numbers because we had these discussions in the university with higher management. As of now, there is no office that supports students with learning needs or any kind of disability. We have the procedures, but we do not have a centralized office that offers service for such students, and that is very important”-academic researcher

Such lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities results in a subsequent lack of monitoring and proactive decision-making. As a policymaker said, with no proactive policy or systems in place, “[practice becomes to] respond to parental complaints and investigate.”

Gap 2: Collaboration Across Stakeholders

Collaboration varied across various sectors of policymaking. Certain stakeholders narrated examples of episodic and ongoing collaborations for policy design and implementation across the relevant domains. Within this process, the roles of stakeholders varied according to their internal ethos and mandates. One policymaker noted that some held

“the potential to connect the community without always feeling [the need] to have a product. Sometimes it is helping the community find the product that is right for them. Maybe ministries can help, we don’t but they tend to focus on the government objectives.”

Other stakeholders flagged a broad-based lack of collaboration across various tiers of bureaucracy as well as at the institutional level in higher education that limited efficiency and impact. Many highlighted that inclusive policymaking and implementation involve multiple stakeholders across stages of delivery

and type of disability. Such crossovers require collaborative efforts to create optimal policy impact.

“There are some significant and real questions about mandate. I just gave you the example about building infrastructure. ... building codes is a completely different ministry than educational content, which is a completely different ministry than medical diagnosis and which is a completely different ministry of family. So you have four ministries with related, overlapping mandates and questions about how that multi ministry or multi sectoral collaboration happens” – educator

“One of the challenges, of course, is that these are different ministries and... you require ministry collaboration. There are questions about mandate, [identifying] where one ministry starts and where one ministry ends. For example, if the student is still in... a secondary school type, who is responsible for job preparation?”- academic researcher

Others highlighted that the mandate was often changed randomly and without prior notification, creating confusion and leaving parents stranded for support. Furthermore, this shifted the burden of responsibility to provide that particular tier of support from the institution to the parents, as noted by an academic researcher who was narrating an exchange with a ministry official:

Ministry official: “We’ve done our part. Now it’s not our problem that they are not delivering.” You can obviously sense that what is this; I mean that is not the way ministries cooperate” – academic researcher.

Even when collaboration happens, the manner in which information is shared and disseminated requires greater cohesiveness as reflected in many of the participants’ narrations, including policymakers themselves.

“Working with collaborators on wellbeing issues; meet three times a year. Different teams work on wellbeing projects individually, but [they] don’t talk to each other” - policymaker

4.2.2 The Status of Employment Inclusion in Qatar

There are a number of policies and frameworks overseeing different aspects of inclusion. These include those targeted to specific disabilities, e.g., the National Autism Plan or social integration such as the law requiring public companies of a certain scale to have a minimum of two percent workforce as registered persons with disabilities. The latter pertains to public sector organisations of a certain minimum size. However, issues outlined in the interviews related to implementation of this quota were multi-fold and are discussed below.

4.2.2.1 Unfulfilled Quotas

Even with the existence of mandated quotas for employment, these spaces remained unfulfilled. Participants outlined a lack of monitoring and accountability among companies that ignored the mandated quotas. Participants linked this practice to the viewing of inclusion as a voluntary practice in the labour market and not a mandatory requirement based on the rights of persons with disabilities. However, the participants also outlined more structural reasons for unfulfilled quotas as discussed below.

4.2.2.2 Lack of Interest Among Persons with Disabilities

Participants described a lack of interest among persons with disabilities in filling these positions, as in this comment by an academic researcher:

"I think there are 34 government-related agencies where the two percent hiring of people with diverse abilities takes place... we found that it wasn't filled and the organizations struggled to find individuals who were interested to work"-academic researcher.

Participants identified various interrelated factors for this lack of interest. The most common was that the employers offered insufficiently meaningful engagement and

purpose. Participants highlighted that often the jobs were not ones where the PWD was actually expected to contribute meaningfully. This was demotivational and resulted in PWD not taking the jobs. Sometimes the employers offered that the persons with disabilities could just stay at home and collect their pay checks.

"Some places they give a job for a disabled person and then sit them there. But they won't do anything, they're just there every day or they will tell them you just sit at home, and we'll give you your allowance, your salary. What's the use of that?"-policymaker

"But in the past we noticed was [that] many companies come forward and give employment, but it's not meaningful because the people are not trained and it just fizzles out. They just do it as a [gesture of]CSR (corporate social responsibility). [They] just make them sit, do nothing and just pay them... just so that they have in the list that we have a special needs person employed here"-educator

Another reason for the low demand for such jobs was the social stigma Qataris associated with low-status jobs like barista or shop assistant also explained low demand for such jobs. This social elitism suggests a need to change attitudes towards prioritising the benefits of meaningful economic activity and social engagement.

4.2.2.3 Lack of Awareness Amongst Employers

Participants expressed the concern that the simple lack of awareness among employers about inclusive laws explained their non-implementation. Thus, the participants registered a need for clear dissemination of this required inclusion, combined with guidance for capacity creation on the ground.

"We don't just need quotas and we don't just need policies. If those are not supported with the relevant capacity, then they're just policies and they're not going to be implemented... So that's part of the broader inclusive environment in our workspaces that we have a lot of work to do [on] that complements the policies and the laws." -academic researcher

A second area requiring awareness relates to the nature and diversity of disabilities, as well as the varied capabilities of persons with disabilities to be useful and productive in the workplace.

“The law, the company should hire people with special needs, but they don’t apply it, or they don’t have the awareness. Like even if the person is on a wheelchair, it doesn’t mean we can label the person as not understanding or he cannot read or he cannot work, or he’s not talented so they don’t know this”- educator



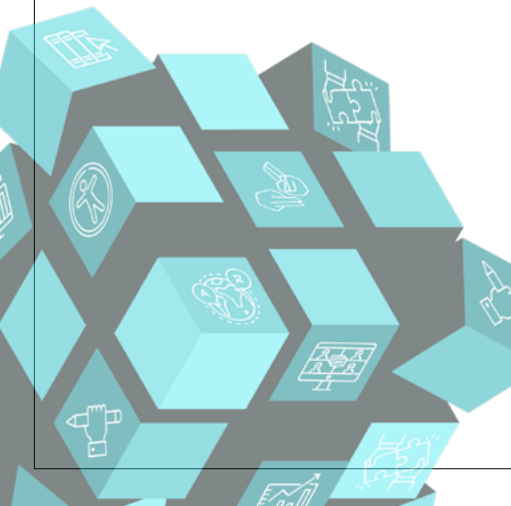
“But you have to give the job for the right disabled person. You have to see what they can do. What they can be trained to make them better and believe in them. Give them time. Have patience with them” - policymaker

Participants outlined how the lack of training and disability awareness often meant that the employing organisation was not aware that the work environment was not conducive for the person with disability. Often small adjustments or accommodations would solve the problem. The motivation to make changes was outlined as part of the awareness creation agenda.

“So, we need to have the right checks and balances in place so that our organization itself has an inclusive environment so that these people thrive and they’re happy and they’re successful and this improves their well-being. And that requires a much more substantive change to organizational culture”- academic researcher



“The organization itself may not understand why maybe you know, and why that happened because they never really recognized that they weren’t being accommodating for the needs of that person” - academic researcher



4.2.3 Elements for An Action Plan

In our discussions with the participants, we were keen to understand what they perceived to be the key area of action, and what any proposed action plan should focus on. In this section, we reflect on the key themes emerging from these discussions.

Participant responses highlighted the need for a very dynamic, flexible, and evolving system that responded to temporal and contextual needs. Any proposed policy or framework for inclusion was expected to include a significant capacity for self-reflection to be responsive to needs over time.

A second overarching priority identified was the need for greater communication and collaboration so that stakeholder efforts were not compartmentalised into silos. Such a focus on collaboration acknowledges that inclusive education is not limited to the boundaries of education delivery, but engages with broader social, political, and cultural processes within which these reforms are enacted.

A policymaker stated that such a broad viewpoint allows policymakers to view the child holistically, *“focused on early years inclusion to provide life-cycle support”* -policymaker. Addressing the whole educational cycle of the student would enable the policy to address the varying needs of the student dynamically, to take ownership of *“who we are admitting and how are we graduating them i.e., both bookends articulated”*- policymaker

Three thematic areas for reform emerged from the data in line with addressing the priorities mentioned above.

4.2.3.1 Systematic Issues that Need to be Addressed

The priority was to reform the system across the various areas of inclusive policymaking. The sub-themes that emerged are discussed below.

Identification of the Child

It was clear from the participants' reflections that the starting point for any inclusive reform is identification and diagnosis of the child. This forms the groundwork on which to base inclusive reforms.

“As soon as the mother has been diagnosed... in her pregnancy that [she will] have a disabled child... [as] soon as that child's born... they [Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC)] should know how to administrate the future, the health. After that they should give... reports of [the child's] diagnosis, so they don't slow the process for him to go to a special needs school. Because they're born, they say he's like that, then he goes to a normal school, then they tell him no, you have to go back and to Hamad Hospital to give us a report. Why can't it be like 1234?” - policymaker

Further issues raised for this reform priority was types of assessment used to diagnose disabilities, and how these were processed.

The screening process is critical: getting students in, interviewing the parents, screening with specialists in the disability and [with] Arabic language speakers: holistic, all of student, approach”- educator

Increasing Available Options for Persons with Disabilities

As highlighted above, the choice pathways for educational and social mobility were limited for students and persons with disabilities. The approaches highlighted by the participants included both creating educational transition pathways within the pre-k to k-12 cohorts, and alternative, post-schooling transition platforms designed to support them in finding employment. As a policymaker noted:

“Now ...introducing different curricula pathways e.g., AP and vocational training... creates variety [in] ways of graduating. It creates diversity in academic and non-academic options.”

The Role of Language

The lack of available information or support in either Arabic or English was viewed as a significant barrier to inclusion. While English was viewed as an ability-driven skill acquisition that could be exclusionary for Arabic speakers, participants also identified certain materials that were only available to Arabic speakers. As an academic researcher pointed out:

“So ...you have this brilliant group of people who are extremely motivated to do something, but they can't do it locally because there's no English option available. They can't do it internationally because online degrees are not recognized. So, they're stuck. What do I do? Where do I go? ...[there] is so much lost potential.”

Given the multicultural nature of contemporary Qatari society, the prevalence of Arabic, and the social and economic need for English, participants believed that all-inclusive policies and practices, such as education plans and specialist support, should be available in both languages at least. Further multilingualism was, of course, preferred.

Raising Awareness About Disabilities

There was a strong focus among the participants on raising awareness about disabilities in schools and amongst employers. Interviewees emphasised that physical disabilities were more easily included in educational institutions, so emphasis on practices for including invisible disabilities should be made. However, creating overall awareness was the overarching priority. A policymaker remarked:

“The most important thing is...to make the public schools more aware of disabled children. They need to make policies... like in the working field. They need to give more and more workshops for the able-bodied ... to be aware of the disabled

people, who [are] going to work with them... in the office. In their office there's a disabled person. They don't know how to communicate or they don't want to. They have a stigma. So, there must be awareness.”

Participants described levels of awareness in the disability community about available support and towards educating stakeholders on how to be inclusive. A policymaker commented:

“The first type of awareness is how well aware the disability community are with the different accessible programs and initiatives. The other aspect of accessibility is how aware the broader community are of the value and the need to design these programs and initiatives in an accessible way and how [we can] organically design programs that take into consideration all of these accessible features.”

There was emphasis on how creating awareness should be simplified in delivery, so it can be more widely absorbed. As a policymaker noted: *“Creating awareness should include ‘tools,’ ‘123-steps’ on ‘how to act.’ It is easier than campaigning for inclusion”* - policymaker.

The Attitude of Viewing Inclusion As ‘Plus’ Rather Than Mandatory

A major implementation bottleneck identified by the participants was a pervasive attitude among stakeholders of viewing inclusion as a bonus ‘good’ activity, rather than a mandatory function of equitable education practice. A policymaker commented:

“[The] biggest challenge is that stakeholder institutions view being inclusive ‘as a plus rather than a mandatory practice. Thus, policy implementation is rare and [only] intermittently implemented.” - policymaker.

Such attitudes results in enrolled students with disabilities sometimes being side-lined in their schools'. Their school staff are inadequately motivated and trained to create the necessary accommodations in their practice. An academic researcher pointed out:

"There are no policies in place that can ensure the quality of education. [I know of] parents who have put their children into schools [where] they are literally neglected in the corner. They're not even looked at or interacted with. But the parents feel satisfaction that [their] child is going to a school and being bumped up grade to grade. But the child comes home and says today I sat while everyone played basketball, you know, and there was no effort to include her."

Consequently, participants prioritised the need for oversight in the implementation of inclusive practices in workplaces.

Lack of Available "Real" Choices

Finding the right 'product' (as mentioned above) is also limited by the choices available. Thus, parental decision-making is constrained by the available types of support and the, as well as the particular institution's capacity of specific institutions to enroll their children.. All the educators pointed out that enrolment waiting lists reflected inadequate capacity in their institutions. This was confirmed across participant groups as shown in the quotes below.

"There is no professional scope for Qataris who are not academically strong including those with disabilities"- policymaker

"Sometimes the child is ready to go to mainstream but the schools don't have place to accommodate, or they have limited seats for kids with disabilities"- educator

"You have no policies protecting children who need to repeat grades because they're just not able to consume the content of higher thinking"- academic researcher

"But it's on an academic institution. But when they're ready to go to an academic institution, the bridge between that and school is missing"- academic researcher



"Students are not selected on ability but all who complete receive the same diploma at the end"- policymaker

Clear Procedures and Processes Integral to Reform Efforts

The process of getting support is distinctly hampered by a pervasive lack of clarity. Many participants outlined the lack of clear processes that appeared to be partly caused by design faults, misunderstanding, irregularities, and other lapses.

“The policies are, I feel, extremely difficult, and I can tell that just from the kind of queries I get all the time that they have not changed” - academic researcher

Such irregularity then derails the process of inclusion creating sustained delays in the development and learning of children with disabilities. As an academic researcher stated:

“When children go into these early developmental programs in these therapy centres, the licensing is horrendous. [There is] massive confusion because there are centres [that] are licensed by [the] Ministry of Education, then there are centres licensed by the Ministry of Health. Those going into the Ministry of Education license centres have a more fluid experience [than] going into a school. Those who end up getting the same therapies in the Ministry of Health licensed centres... I’ve known families have wasted up to two years trying to find that bridge and fighting for the right of their child to attend school because they’re able to.”

Furthermore, while there are processes to track progress in the private sector institutions, participants indicated that this was not in place in the public sector institutions or any centralised manner by government ministries and their satellite organisations. There was also a lack of structural recognition of some of the private sector initiatives that could support the effort of tracking transitions as highlighted in an educator’s reflection below.

“When young children are ready for mainstreaming and we tell the parent... [they] can approach the schools, some of the schools say, okay, get the transfer certificate from your previous school. And although we are licensed by Ministry of Education, the Ministry has not given us any such transfer certificate, which is to attest [to] their time at the centre. So we can’t give that and those schools won’t accept without those certificates. So because of that the parents find it very difficult. They go from ministry, asking for this certificate. The children are ready, they can be mainstreamed. But as a centre we can’t give grade level they will need to be assessed by the school to indicate which grade level as per the schools levels and curriculum.”

4.2.3.2 Better Identification and Monitoring

Need for Reliable and Useful Data

The participants’ responses indicated a clear lack of key data. This included insufficient data on the number of children with disabilities both within systems of learning and those outside. Two issues emerge: 1) There is an urgency that the focus should be on for medical diagnoses that would allow parents and educators to take appropriate steps; 2) Establishing accurate numbers of students with disabilities is crucial for appropriate, effective policy planning and programming.

“... I think that identification of need is massive... and it’s a massive obstacle because blanket statements or blanket comments don’t support anyone” - educator.

An educator commented that the lack of clear diagnosis hampered efforts to make targeted accommodations at the institutional level; institutions *“have to almost imagine the need, or meet the need without knowing exactly where or what it is”* - educator.

There is a lack of centralised data on available support in Qatar. It should be collected and made easily available to parents and caregivers so that holistic support can be provided. It was highlighted that mandates of government bodies overlapped which resulted in redundant efforts and lack of clarity over data collection and sharing responsibilities. To address this issue, participants identified Qatar Foundation as a potential central body for oversight, data repository, and community building as indicated in the quote from a policymaker below.

“QF is a good venue to bring people together, has the potential to connect the community without always feeling that we need to have a product. Sometimes it is helping the community find the product that is right for them. Maybe ministries can help, but they tend to focus on the government objectives.”

Effective Monitoring and Meaningful Data

The participants noted that inclusive policy implementation requires periodic review of policy and practice to align them with the needs of society, institution, and community. Furthermore, they outlined that such processes were systemically inadequate in Qatar, particularly at ministerial and sector-wide levels. While individual institutions highlighted some degree of monitoring –such as the efficacy of individualised learning plans for students with disabilities-- there was no sector-wide oversight and impact evaluation. Lack of monitoring also overlapped with the lack of data collection and aggregation of children with disabilities in the country that would facilitate planning and capacity creation. Participants identified the need for cross-sectoral monitoring approaches for a comprehensive view of success factors and target areas for reform.

“As a policymaker stated: Monitoring should be very specific about type of disabilities because you can’t sum up everything together”- policymaker.

Participants also highlighted the need for collaboration in data generation, collection, and sharing and generation A policymaker said:

[...the] main collaboration that could happen [would be] through the data [schools and universities] collect.” (Policymaker) - ...and using the corpus of data to streamline the sector: Articulate a system that identifies students and lets everybody know where responsibility lies” - policymaker.

4.2.3.3 Invest in Human Resources

Developing human resources to effect inclusion was the next policy outlined by the participants. As an academic researcher stated:

“[We need a] focus on human infrastructure, the human capital. We are social beings and we learn through social interaction, whether we have learning disabilities or other sorts of needs. Focus 100 percent on human capital: people who have the expertise, the knowledge, the skill, but also the commitment and the compassion to serve all students, and in particular students with different needs.”

The next section outlines participant perspectives on what is needed in this area. Focus on human resource development suggested creating pathways for employment inclusion for persons with disabilities, and training employers and staff about inclusive practices and disabilities as a concept.

Avenues for Inclusive Engagement in Employment for Persons with Disabilities

The life-cycle approach to inclusive support was prioritised by many of the participants who outlined its multiple beneficial effects:

- It provides long-term perspectives for parents of children with disabilities that motivates them to bring their children into the fold of education and subsequently into gainful employment.

- It creates synergies for stakeholders over the educational trajectories of their students to employability and facilitates understanding the particular needs of the candidate in the workplace.

Varied pathways for inclusive engagement were identified to facilitate the transition from education to employment by creating, as an educator stated, *“avenues of employment in non-managerial positions that could be satisfied by persons with disabilities, e.g., baristas or working in malls. Remove whatever barriers that exist stopping them from doing this.”*- educator.

For this, a space for collaboration was pointed out:

“...[where] what employers are looking for could influence vocational training so as to align demand and supply for their skills.”-educator.

Stakeholder Training

Training across all stakeholder groups was highly prioritised. The most highly flagged training was for teaching staff and employers. The timing of when awareness training, particularly for educators, is introduced was specifically flagged by multiple stakeholder groups. An educator stated:

“More awareness needs to be done in the society, in the workplaces. Training of teachers, for example, is very important. When are teacher introduced to inclusivity, at what stage? At least in engineering, they will never be introduced, unless there is an elective course. It is never in the curriculum --not in the core curriculum of bachelor’s degrees of engineering. ...you really need to introduce it very early because it is not only about applying something, but also about changing the mindset.”- educator

The responsibility for this was assigned to the top, as a specialist educator said: *“In my opinion it should start from the Ministry of Education making more trainings for the teacher so the schools can accommodate more, [without which “] any policies you put in place [are] not going to be meaningful.”*- educator

Similarly, awareness training for employers was highlighted as necessary to dispel the aforementioned lack of awareness of the needs of their colleagues with disabilities, as well as how to implement inclusive practices and capacity in their workplaces.

Tiered Need for Collaboration

For a cohesively inclusive eco-system, participants highlighted the need for collaboration across sectors and across schools. Participants viewed cross-sectoral collaboration, particularly between health and education, as a holistic, full life cycle approach, supporting the child with a disability.

A policymaker stated the importance of *“Making sure that students have access to specialists and support as needed equally. Ensuring that there is provision available at the point of need from a school perspective. There is an entitlement to having that in an equal manner.”*

The need for specialist educators to collaborate across institutions was also highlighted through reflections on current practices and their impact. These could be through training, as this educator said:

“We do work with teachers and coaches ... through workshops and modules that we deliver, We’ve delivered I think to around 90 different practitioners over the last few years.”

Or through ongoing support and facilitation of mainstreaming, as a specialist educator states:

“And ...the inclusion of the children, young children who are mainstreamed recently, [is] doing great. [It’s a] very successful inclusion in the mainstream school ... with some support in the afternoon with therapy.”

Need for Digital Accessibility

Multiple participants noted the need for creating digital accessibility, which was viewed as a tool of empowerment, information, and knowledge that build learning and awareness of the professional world. Various aspects of digital accessibility were flagged including a variety of digital platforms for awareness raising and learning, as this policymaker notes:

“They need to put it on social media, because some people with disabilities don’t know how to get out of the house. ...so, [government] needs to work more on the social media for the disabled to make them more aware of their rights”

An educator said:

“There are assistive technologies that are offered to students in terms of infrastructure, and also allow students to learn how to use them. They allow students, for example, to transform courses into a format that is accessible to those with certain impairments. There is the physical infrastructure ... of technology, digital accessibility, the physical accessibility set in place”

Further, a policymaker emphasised that the design of digital software should be inclusive from the start:

“Principles of inclusive design should be included in policy. The importance of digital accessibility should be included with the current terminology and language that flags its importance.”

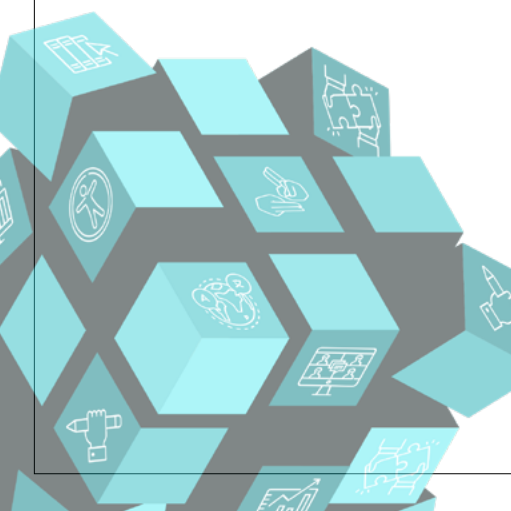
4.2.3.4 Strong and Diverse Stakeholder Involvement

The participants prioritised developing a broad stakeholder group in any future policies by including financial stakeholders and broad policymakers, parents, students, and those involved in admissions. This creates multi-stakeholder ownership of any future policies that increase chances of effective cross-sectoral implementation and success monitoring. A policy maker said that previous policies have tended

“to be compartmentalised. It should be organic and cohesive policies that complement each other.” for which the “Most important, the parents, the mother, the father need to be supported.”- policymaker

The perspectives of parents must be included at every stage of the policymaking process. However, the most critical perspective, in the end, is that of the person with disability. Wherever possible this must be gauged and prioritised in policy, as one policymaker said:

“Don’t put policies just for the sake of policies. No, you have to come and ask [persons with disabilities] ... what would you like changed? As a disabled person in a wheelchair [communicating with] an impaired vision impairment person: “What do you need?”- Policymaker speaking from the perspective of a person with disabilities?”



5. Mapping the Way Forward



The need for systemic reforms at various levels of the system was a constant theme that emerged from the policy analysis and discussions across a wide range of key stakeholder groups.

To capture the various elements needed for change, we draw on the 3Rs framework –rights, resources, and research-- proposed by (Singal et al., 2017). This framework focuses on upholding the rights of persons with disabilities, calls for effective investment in resources, and rigorous evidence-building to shape policy.

Qatar official policies endorse access to education as a fundamental right for all children. In addition to supporting access, there is a need to focus on ensuring that good quality and engaging schooling is provided. Children with disabilities, like all children, have a right to be engaged in the teaching and learning

processes in the classroom. This engagement can be facilitated through the involvement of peers and parents. Additionally, education accessed by children with disabilities should be meaningful, should lead to the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as life skills. It should be socially and emotionally enriching.

These aspects are important to underscore; until recently, the right to education has remained focused on access to schooling, with little regard for its purpose. As Singal & Muthukrishna (2016) noted, “the central questions of inclusion into what and inclusion for what purposes” have largely remained unanswered. Only by engaging with such questions can we begin to acknowledge the real concerns faced by mainstream education systems, including in Qatar. As indicated in previous sections of this report, the overall education system faces issues of teacher training, a high ability-driven system,

INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION



and a lack of adequate resources for children with disabilities. Addressing these systemic issues is vital and needs better coordination and engagement across all sectors.

The overarching consensus among the stakeholder participants was that government institutions across various sectors played the central role in the delivery of inclusion for persons with disabilities in education and employment. This included capacity building across education, employment, and government bureaucracy. It included financial subsidies to support for inclusion of persons with disabilities. It included investment in data collection to support effective policymaking. In the following section, we elaborate concrete examples of action. These points that emerged strongly in both individual and collective discussions with various stakeholder groups.

Need for Clear Identification Pathways and Processes

In various discussions, consensus emerged about the need to clear pathways for children to be diagnosed, especially at early stages, and swift referrals to be put in place. Parents of children with disabilities, along with many teachers, highlighted the absence of available referral systems. They emphasized that the establishment of such systems could significantly assist, which would help parents in better supporting their children.

Diagnoses remains a tiered process, necessitating; there is need for early and ongoing assessments that are accessible not only diagnosis to be available to individuals in the early stages of schooling but also to those in later stages of education and employment.. Coupled with diagnosis is the need for transition planning as the student with a disability transition moves from one stage of schooling to the next, and later into employment. For this purpose, individualised plans should be developed that track and support persons with disabilities as needed during their lives.

Include Disabilities in Data Collection Efforts

Currently, there is very little data about children and adults with disabilities. To effectively plan services and advocate for persons with disabilities, there is a glaring need for robust disaggregated data on disability across sectors. Data can be collected at the national level, through schools, and employment bureaus. Political will for data collection would be needed to drive such an exercise. There are robust examples, from across the world, on how data on disability can be effectively collected and utilised for planning purposes. In the case of Qatar, it is advisable for this effort to be centralised by creating a national disability research agenda that promotes multisectoral collaboration.

Develop a Comprehensive Disability Portal

Another very concrete example which drew significant support among the participants was the need to develop a web portal (or an app) that pulls together the existing services available for persons with disabilities. This was seen as an easy win by many, especially given the ability to harness the potential of things that are facilities, tools, and services already available in the country. It was noted that a lot is happening in many areas, but it tends to take place in silos. Greater communication of what is already available and building on this is important.

Another facet of the portal would be to function as a national register of information on accessibility that would help close the gap of misinformation and support parents, educators, employers, and persons with disabilities to access available support. Such a platform should be both in Arabic and English, and other languages.

Urgent Need to Raise Social Awareness About Persons with Disabilities

Another strong consensus among the participants was on the need to develop greater awareness of persons with disabilities in society. This was needed at multiple levels, both among

parents but also among wider community members. A multi-pronged approach is essential, including developing a media campaign to raise awareness about persons with disabilities. This needs to be done in a sensitive manner that does not portray persons as objects of pity or as superheroes. Such a portrayal of the multi-faceted lives that people with disabilities lead and are capable of leading when their environment is inclusive, is vital.

The possibility of social media channels was highlighted as important by many stakeholder groups, especially as a way of countering disability-related stigma, both at the community level, and among families to change attitudes, and support greater recognition of the potential of persons with disabilities, was highlighted.

Positive portrayal of disabilities, increasing visibility of persons with disabilities in schools, employment, and in public spaces are some targeted pathways towards increasing awareness in which the role of relevant government departments and institutions across sectors is critical.

Develop Effective Training Programmes

Participants highlighted training teachers and others involved in education delivery as a major area of needed reform. Multi-tiered training programmes should include pedagogical training for teachers, shadow teachers, and caregivers to support the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities. Training should address the specific requirements of each disability. Furthermore, there should be training on safeguarding vulnerable populations and preventing abuse to PWD in the classroom and their homes.

Training is urgently needed in ministries and institutions to support administrators

in designing, implementing, and managing appropriate and diverse policy initiatives to holistically support students and adults with disabilities. Finally, training is recommended for employers on how to incorporate persons with disabilities effectively within their institutions.

Creating Meaningful Employment Opportunities

It is important that the support provided to persons with disabilities continue beyond schooling and formal education to include the full trajectory for meaningful opportunities throughout their working lives. This can be done in several ways beginning in the school by presenting students with various pathways to employment such as vocational training and emphasis on non-academic pathways to employment. This means matching the abilities of persons with disabilities to available training and employment opportunities in society.

Persons with disabilities generally cannot access working roles that employers consider essentially unsuited to them for various reasons. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of accountability and oversight of the nature of employment opportunities that are being provided and the prevalent tokenism of this process by certain employers. With reasonable accommodations, persons with disabilities can play integral, impactful roles in workplaces. Thus, government employment quotas for persons with disabilities should match their proportion in the population, or at least there should be an attempt to bridge that gap. Moreover, such mandated employment opportunities should also be included in the private sector to promote hiring persons with disabilities. A further reform in this area includes more volunteering, mentorship, and outreach options as well as remote work opportunities for persons with disabilities and raising awareness about these options among students, parents, and educators.

Some specific recommendations of this report in this area are:

Clear Mechanisms for Monitoring and Evaluation:

To ensure that employment opportunities for PWD are meaningful, there should be a clear mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the progress of employees in the workplace to ensure their growth, and to make sure that the mandated quotas are being implemented properly.

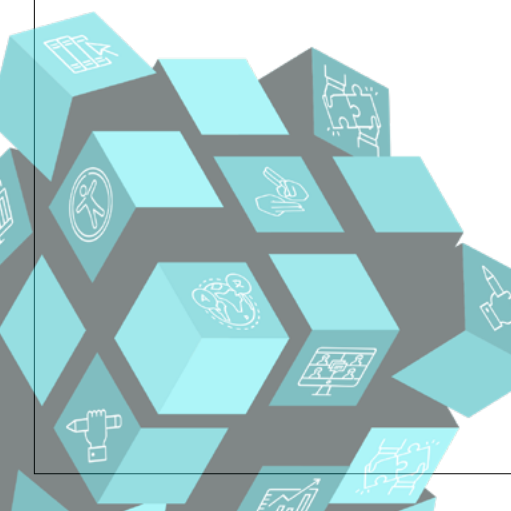
Mandated Employment Benefits: Their employment should incorporate mandated benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans.

Enhanced Collaboration and Coordination:

Ensure that government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders are involved in disability inclusion initiatives. Establishing formal mechanisms for regular communication and cooperation can facilitate the sharing of resources, best practices, and collective problem-solving.

Opportunities for Self-Actualisation: Empower people with disabilities to actively participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives by prioritizing initiatives that provide opportunities for leadership development, self-advocacy training, and promoting the representation of persons with disabilities in policy-making bodies and community forums.

Research and Innovation: Provide resources to support research initiatives aimed at understanding the needs and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in Qatar. Develop innovative assistive technology, rehabilitation services, and inclusive education practices through collaboration between academic institutions, research centres, and community organizations.



6. Appendices



6.1 List of Policies from Kingdom of Jordan

10-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education (2021)

Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education (PROMISE) Programme (2022-23)

Jordan Declaration on Inclusion and Diversity

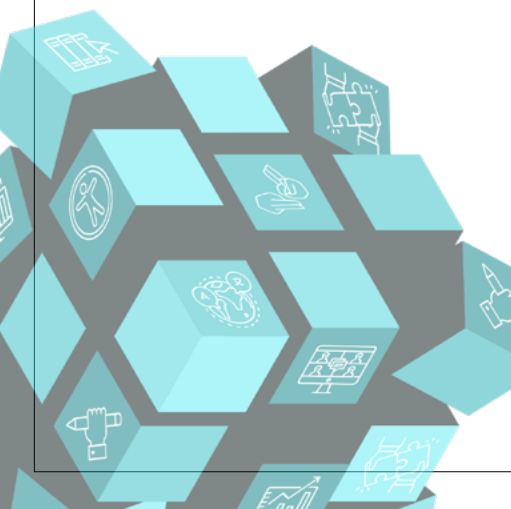
Overview of Policies from Kingdom of Jordan

10-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education (2021)

The 10-Year Strategy was issued by the Ministry of Education of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in partnership with The Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, supported by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit. The focus of the document is to create/develop an inclusive environment for students with disabilities aligning with the developmental goals and legal requirements outlined in Jordan's constitution and Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities No. (20) of 2017. It is also underwritten by a value-based commitment to creating equal opportunities for students with disabilities. These efforts are envisaged in two parts addressing the needs of two beneficiary groups: students with disabilities who are out of school, and those currently in mainstream schools.

The key goals and intentions of this strategy are:

- a. to increase enrolment of students with disabilities who are currently out of school. The critical statistic the 10-Year Strategy aims to address is "...approximately 79 percent of the total number of persons with disabilities of school age do not receive any form of education."



- b. to create an inclusive and empowering environment for students with disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools by focusing on creating capacity and strategies through legislation, curriculum and school design, teacher and administrative staff capacity for inclusive pedagogy and diagnostic capabilities.
- c. to create positive awareness about persons with disabilities and dispelling negative attitudes.

Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education (PROMISE) Programme (2022-23)

The PROMISE Programme was also conceptualised by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), supported by the Ministry of Education and the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and other international partners. This document is a short fact sheet outlining the scope, priorities, and stakeholders of the PROMISE Programme that is an implementation of the 10-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education (2021), and the Declaration for Inclusion and Diversity in Education (2022). The rationale for generating this fact sheet is to implement the stated inclusive priorities of the Jordanian government as outlined in the documents mentioned above.

Several factors have contributed to a greater risk of exclusion among vulnerable groups. There is a general lack of awareness and teacher training in inclusive practices; the Jordanian public school system is overburdened by the influx of Syrian refugees, and by the shift of large numbers of students from private to public schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students with disabilities are identified as a critically vulnerable group. These reasons provide the rationale for the creation and implementation of this programme.

The area of programme influence is explicitly outlined in the fact sheet, and comprises the following:

- a. Strengthening planning and management capabilities. Specific measures include creating “...a 3 Year Action Plan and a steering structure... to monitor the progress of the implementation of the strategy and its action plan.”¹
- b. Supporting 30 pilot schools in developing contextualised inclusive programs of learning on an “Index for Inclusion” to embrace a culture of inclusivity and diversity and share best practices between each other.
- c. Creating capacity development measures for all stake holders in the schools based on a “capacity needs assessment undertaken by UNESCO”, and in ongoing engagement with partners. This includes creating access for teachers beyond the pilot schools to access learning material “to enhance inclusive education related-managerial and teaching competencies.”
- d. Creating community-based and nationwide awareness campaigns about inclusive education aimed at schools, households, and communities, focusing particularly on removing negative perceptions about children with disabilities.

Jordan Declaration on Inclusion and Diversity

This declaration was issued by the Ministry of Education and the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, supported by international and national partners. While the needs of students with disabilities are foregrounded explicitly, the document also outlines a concern for all vulnerable groups of children, making all these groups the targeted beneficiaries of the government’s efforts at inclusion and diversity. It outlines ten groups of

children it considers vulnerable and at threat of exclusion from education. Through this broader conceptualisation of exclusion, this document extends its domain beyond persons with disabilities to other excluded and vulnerable groups with an aim to achieving Jordan's SDG4 commitments.

The main priority of the declaration is to broaden the conceptualisation of exclusion to account for the intersectional characteristics of students facing exclusion in the country.

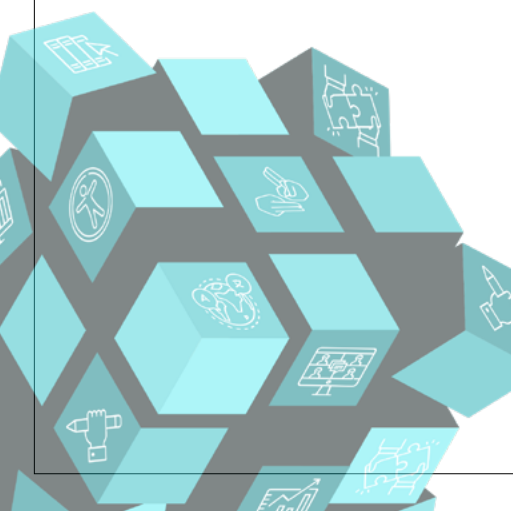
a. Within this objective, the first objective is to identify markers of excluded and vulnerable children. These markers are contextually derived from the social and political conditions in Jordan and listed below:

- *“Children affected by drugs and substance abuse*
- *Children experiencing gender inequality*
- *Children from ethnic, language and social minorities*
- *Children from income poor backgrounds*
- *Children suffering from neglect, abandonment and abuse, incl. orphans*
- *Children who are under-stimulated and disengaged (including first generation learners, children who are not supported by their families, and those who are often referred to as ‘gifted’ and ‘talented’)*

- *Children with disabilities*
- *Institutionalized children and children without freedom of movement*
- *Out-of-school children (OSC) (i.e., children who dropped out of school, never enrolled in formal education, and street and working children)*
- *Refugee, returnee, and unregistered children (i.e., children who were never registered at birth or may be registered in another country)”*

b. A second priority is bringing about targeted inclusion for excluded and vulnerable children with a particular focus on children with disabilities. The identified measures to do so include creating awareness of students with disabilities; inclusive educational institutions, campus design (following universal concepts), and participatory learning environments; removing learning barriers such as assessments for students with disabilities along with proactively creating accessible and enabling learning processes for varied learners. Proposed systems level approaches included creating a legal framework with legislative benchmarks for inclusive practices; building teaching and administrative capacity through teacher professional development that includes a focus on disability inclusive practices and participatory working environments; and advocacy and planning needs for PWD.

c. A third focus highlighted creating evidence-based data collection to inform policymaking.



6.2 List of Policies from the United Arab Emirates

National Policy to Empower People of Determination

United Arab Emirates School Inspection Framework

Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework (2017)

Implementing Inclusive Education: A guide for schools

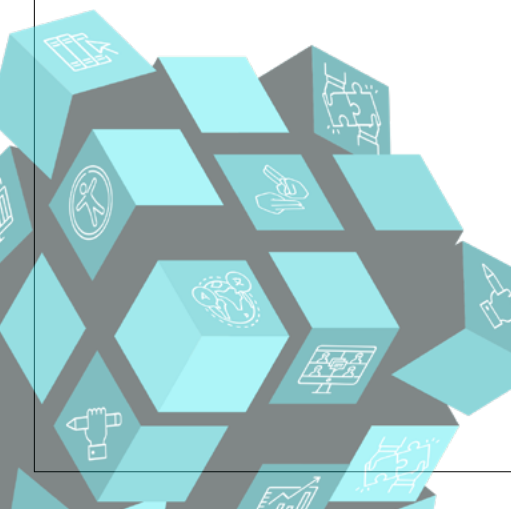
Federal Law No. 29 of 2006 In Respect of The Rights of People with Special Needs

Law No. (2) of 2014 Concerning Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Emirate of Dubai

Overview of Policies of United Arab Emirates

National Policy to Empower People of Determination

This policy was published by the Ministry of Community Development, the United Arab Emirates. It is a federal policy, numbering and describing “people of determination” in the country, including UAE nationals and expatriate residents. It outlines the types of disabilities most commonly found based on their own categorisation and the number of institutions in each of the emirates that cater to diverse disability needs. The document clearly endorses the need to move away from “the medical model” towards a “social model” of viewing disabilities. The shift would entail changing the lens from charity to rights-based discourse. To achieve this, the policy advocates creating a community driven approach that incorporates “modifying (social) behaviours” rather than disability treatment and providing agency to persons with disability.



- a. The stated policy vision is of an “integrated society” achieved by “social inclusion”, “active participation”, “enhancing equal opportunities” and “supporting individuals and their families”. To this end, the “policy pillars” incorporate “healthcare and rehabilitation”, “education”, “vocational training and employability”, “accessibility”, and “public, cultural and sports life”. Some notable points are:
- emphasis on diagnosis and providing information to the PWD and their families.
 - creating adequate and varied employment opportunities with vocational training as needed.
 - creating inclusive building spaces for easy access and varying accessible channels of communication to service providers.
 - social security policies that ensure rights and protects people from exploitation and creates areas of rehabilitation.
- b. The use of language is quite distinct: persons with disabilities are referred to as “people of determination”, only in this document. This reflects a lack of agreed language across the various departments of the government further reflecting possible lack of cohesion in the ministerial approach to inclusion.

United Arab Emirates School Inspection Framework

This framework was developed by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), Emirate of Dubai, Abu Dhabi Centre for Technical and Vocational Training, the Department of Education and Knowledge, and the Ministry of Education. It is part of a broader vision for UAE 2021. The School Inspection

Framework highlights the importance of educational standards in the country:

“To achieve the desired outcome of high-quality education, UAE education authorities and inspectors are committed to ensuring a quality process through the following core values:

Commitment to high-quality and continual improvement

Excellence in inspection delivery, with the highest standards of professional conduct and cultural sensitivity, together with secure, evidence-based judgements

Transparency in communications before, during and after inspections, relating to both the process and outcomes of inspection

Cooperation and partnership with schools and other stakeholders, with the aims of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the inspection process”.

These priorities are operationalised with the following objectives:

- a. The focus of the inspection comprises education as a holistic effort and is underpinned by a school ranking system based on certain parameters. While a specific focus on the needs of SWD is in the last section, their needs and progress are linked to the performance evaluation of schools. Given the multi-cultural social mix in the UAE, inclusion is prioritised and explicitly conceptualised: *“Inclusion **does not** mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences. The inclusive school will be proactive in identifying barriers which restrict students’ achievement, participation and learning, and will take action to remove obstacles which lead to educational exclusion.”*

This is operationalised through the following efforts:

- effectiveness of identification procedures
 - appropriateness of curriculum modification systems
 - impact of specific intervention or personal support mechanisms
 - use of feedback from monitoring and assessment processes.
- b. Creating awareness of and categorisation of disabilities appears to be a priority in the section titled *“Special educational needs and gifted and talented”*. Listing and detailed information on types of disabilities are provided. The descriptive focus is highly medical. A section on gifted children follows, thus both groups are positioned out of the norm.

Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework (2017)

This document was published by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), Emirate of Dubai. It highlights that the *“The focus on inclusive education is part of the wider vision for Dubai to become a fully inclusive city by 2020.”* The document aims to create a cohesive inclusive framework across all schools and cohorts in Dubai, adhering to the UAE’s commitment to *“the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as well as federal and local legislation that calls for the inclusion of all learners, regardless of ability”*. This is to align with international best practices where the *“principles of **inclusion** and **equity** lie at the heart of the legislative framework.”*

Its stated principles include broad acceptance of student diversity, recognising diverse learning potential, innovations towards differentiated learning and teaching that reject “ability labelling”, creating a culture of inclusive accountability. To this end it emphasizes establishing standards that must be met across the education sector in Dubai based on the following targets:

- a. The document takes a systems driven approach highlighting the role of standards to create uniformity. Focus is on identification, enrolment inclusion, active participation, accountability at the school level, teacher training. The framework takes a pragmatic approach, clearly outlining implementation measures such as a school level “Inclusion Support Team” consisting of headteacher, inclusion head, support teachers and other “champions” for inclusive education in every school who will work closely with teachers. An interactive framework is outlined e.g., “weekly meetings with teachers”. Bureaucratic oversight of the program is also prioritised within the framing of the document. Monitoring and evaluation systems are expected to be put in place that follow the educational trajectory of the student.
- b. Distinction is made between the needs of visible and invisible disabilities. The importance of diagnosis of invisible disabilities flagged, and the “Dubai Universal Accessibility Code” is envisioned for physical accessibility in schools. Teachers are expected to have access to and access regular training that is specialised towards the needs of SWD. Special needs schools are viewed as platforms towards mainstreaming as are vocational schools towards job market integration for certain types of disabilities.

- c. Use of language is also diverse with “students who experience SEND” (Special Education Needs and Disabilities) as the most common reference but also disabilities and special needs being used interchangeably.

Dubai: Implementing inclusive education: A guide for schools

This document is also published by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), Emirate of Dubai. It outlines that *“The purpose of the guide is to support Dubai private schools in embedding inclusion and equity in their educational policy and practice. The main objective is to create system-wide change to overcome barriers to educational access, participation and engagement.*

The guide should be used as a supplementary reference document to enable better understanding and more effective implementation of the standards set out in the Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework (2017).

- *Development of the school’s self-evaluation form*
- *Teacher training and monitoring*
- *School improvement planning*
- *Communication with other stakeholders”*

The document notes its mission is aligned with Dubai laws for the same, and specifies priorities:

- a. The guide prioritises a shift away from the medical model to a rights-based one aligning with what has been outlined by UNCRPD. It imposes a responsibility on schools to self-identify embedded exclusion in their practices and highlights the importance of assessment and diagnosis in school.

- b. This is followed by outlining intervention in the school that includes “high quality teaching” with curricular and assessment innovations for accommodations. “Individual Education Plans” are recommended.
- c. Tiered support from the schools governing boards, inclusion champions and school leadership are flagged as essential for successful mainstreaming, including the parameters for the roles, duties, and needs of specialist teachers. Monitoring and evaluation by school leadership and support teacher is also outlined.

Federal Law No. 29 of 2006 In Respect of The Rights of People with Special Needs

This law was promulgated by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the United Arab Emirates, and identifies priorities as outlined below.

- a. The law outlines specific foci on:
 - Defining special needs
 - Providing a card to all persons with disabilities identifying their disability
 - Identifying the social and economic ‘distinctions’ that persons with disabilities may face
- b. It further identifies the broader socio-economic entitlements of persons with disabilities:
 - rights to benefits
 - equality particularly in social and economic development
 - the state’s responsibility to provide inclusive education
 - the state’s responsibility to protect the rights of PWD
 - the state’s responsibility to protect PWD from abuse

c. In order to do this, it outlines the role of government in comprehensive social, economic, cultural, and educational inclusion of persons with disabilities in detailed format that include:

- The state must recognise impediments created by disabilities in meeting legal judgement on persons with disabilities
- The right to medical privacy of persons with disabilities
- The state shall create centres of care and training for persons with disabilities

Law No. (2) of 2014 Concerning Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Emirate of Dubai

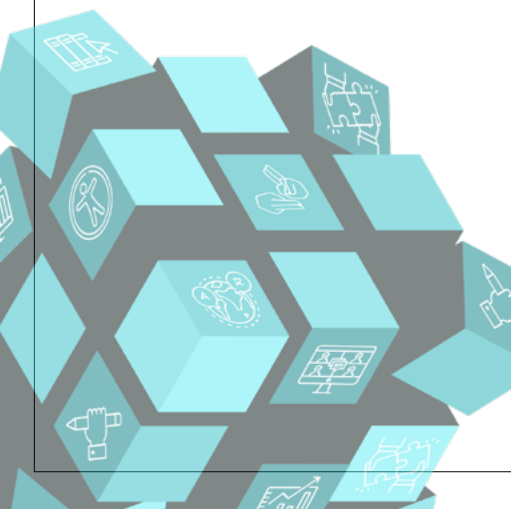
It was promulgated by the Supreme Legislation Committee in the Emirate of Dubai. It outlines its objectives explicitly:

"This Law aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. *providing Accessible Environments to ensure that Persons with Disabilities enjoy all their rights under the legislation in force;*
2. *fostering respect for the dignity of Persons with Disabilities;*
3. *protecting Persons with Disabilities from all forms of Discrimination, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation; and*
4. *integrating Persons with Disabilities into society as effective members."*

To achieve these objectives Law No. (2) clearly outlines its parameters:

- a. Rights of PWD that includes the right to worship, education, access to every part of the Emirate, public services including transport and employment. It also self-identifies as the final implementation stage that *"will set the standards, measures, and procedures to ensure that Persons with Disabilities can enjoy the rights and avail of the services provided for in ... this Article."*
- b. Strong political and bureaucratic support is outlined in the law with the *"The Community Development Authority in Dubai"* responsible for the implementation of inclusive measures outlined, overseen by a proposed *"Higher Committee for Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities"* to be formed by the Executive Council to the Ruler.
- c. Protection of rights and personal safety is foregrounded. There is detailed outlining of reporting structures, penalties, and punishments for violations of the ethics embedded in the law towards PWD. Caregivers are required to report any abuse or violation of disability rights, and specific financial penalties are outlined for violations. A disability identification card and related register of PWD is proposed.



7. About the Authors





Dr. Asmaa Al Fadala

Assistant Professor at HBKU's College of Public Policy

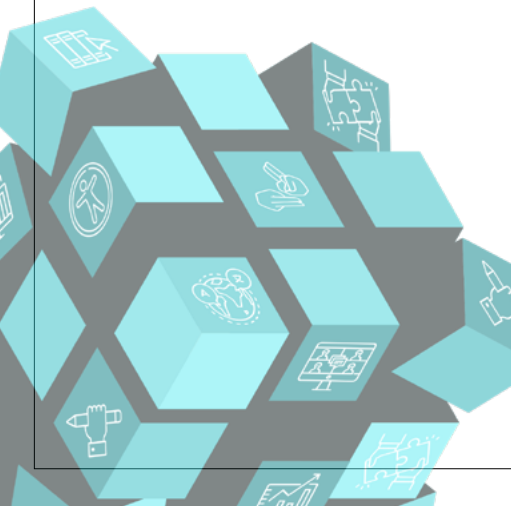
Dr. Asmaa Al Fadala, Assistant Professor at HBKU's College of Public Policy, has a 28-year career in K-12 and higher education and policy development. She has been a governmental policy writer, professor, author on leadership reform, and educational board member. Her research includes leadership for learning, education transformation, entrepreneurship, teacher development, innovation, and SDGs. Dr. Al Fadala holds a Ph.D. and M.Phil from University of Cambridge in Educational Leadership and Policy. She advises global entities and serves on advisory committees, including Hughes Hall Development Strategy Group and board like the University of Doha for Science and Technology and the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement.



Professor Nidhi Singal

Professor of Disability and Inclusive Education at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge

Nidhi Singal is a Professor of Disability and Inclusive Education at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Nidhi's core areas of research interest lie in addressing issues of educational inequity among marginalised groups in Southern contexts. She has worked extensively with children and young people with disabilities in different settings. She has significant experience of working with key international agencies such as, World Bank, UNESCO-IIEP and British Council, alongside disability specific international non-governmental organisations' such as, Humanity and Inclusion and Light for the World assisting them in developing research projects, programme evaluation and policy work. Nidhi has published extensively and her work has contributed to key developments in the field of disability and education. She is an elected fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, and is the Vice President of Hughes Hall College, University of Cambridge.





Dr. Camilla Hadi Chaudhary

PhD, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge

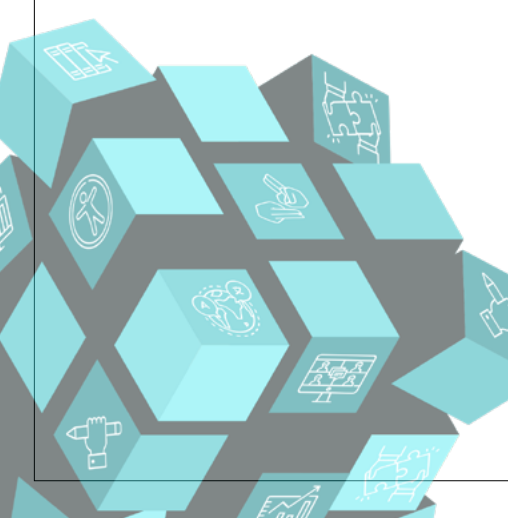
Camilla Hadi Chaudhary is a final year PhD candidate at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, and a member of King's College. She is a Cambridge Trust and King's College Xu Zhimo Scholar. Her PhD research investigates how inclusion is conceptualised in Pakistan's national education system, focusing on education policy and headteachers. Her previous degrees are in development economics and international relations, where her research focused on the economics of education. Her research interests include equity and inclusion in education in low-resource contexts, climate justice education, education policy making and school leadership, and learning empathy. All her research foci are underwritten by an equity and social justice lens. Camilla has previously lectured in Economics at the undergraduate and graduate level, and also worked extensively in the arts and culture sector.

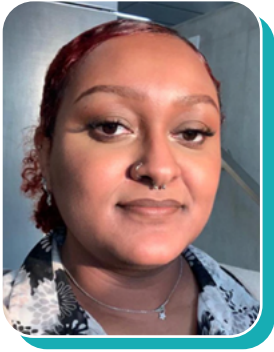


Reem Al Sulaiti

Manager of Research and Policy at the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE)

Reem Al Sulaiti is currently a Manager of Research and Policy at the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE). She leads WISE research reports from an Education Leadership and Inclusion perspective and other key initiatives, such as the WISE ALL IN network and the WISE Prize. Prior to joining WISE, She was the Strategic Planning and Performance Manager at the Qatar Fund for Development. Where she led organizational strategy development, country intervention strategy exercises, reporting oversight, project proposal analysis, and the monitoring and evaluation function. Reem holds a bachelor's degree in International Politics from Georgetown University and a master's degree from HEC Paris. Reem has over 10 years of experience in research, strategic planning, leadership, and dedication to education and social causes.





Warda Elkhalifa

Associate Researcher at the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE)

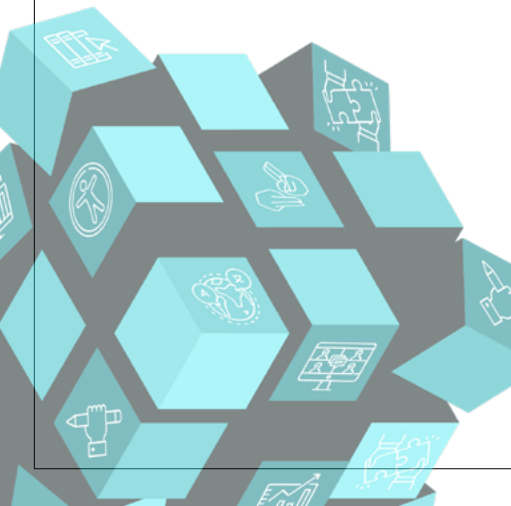
Warda Elkhalifa is an Associate Researcher at the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE). She coordinates with global education experts and conducts impactful research on various themes, including leadership, collaboration, digital addiction, and inclusion. She manages workshops on teacher leadership and empowerment through the Empowering Leaders for Learning (ELL) program. With six years in the education sector, Warda excels in fostering inclusive learning environments and student engagement. Her work involves collaborating with fellow educators and local stakeholders to design and implement innovative teaching strategies aimed at addressing educational challenges and fostering student success. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Foreign Services from Georgetown University, specializing in Culture and Politics.



Mashail M. Al-Naimi

Program Manager at the Qatar Foundation's CEO's Office

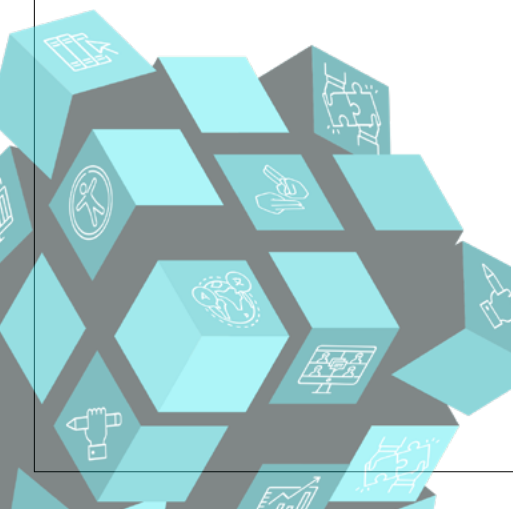
Mashail Mehanna Al-Naimi is a Program Manager at the Qatar Foundation's CEO's Office. A strong commitment to strategic development marks her professional journey. Mashail has worked with national stakeholders in planning, monitoring, and evaluation of national strategies. Currently, Mashail is working on multiple projects addressing critical societal issues. Focusing on accessibility, autism, and childhood obesity showcases her commitment to making a positive impact on individuals' lives. Mashail holds a Master's Degree in Strategic Management of Projects from University College London, a Bachelor's degree of Science in Foreign Services from Georgetown University, and received a Platinum Medal during Education Excellence Day for her exceptional academic achievements.



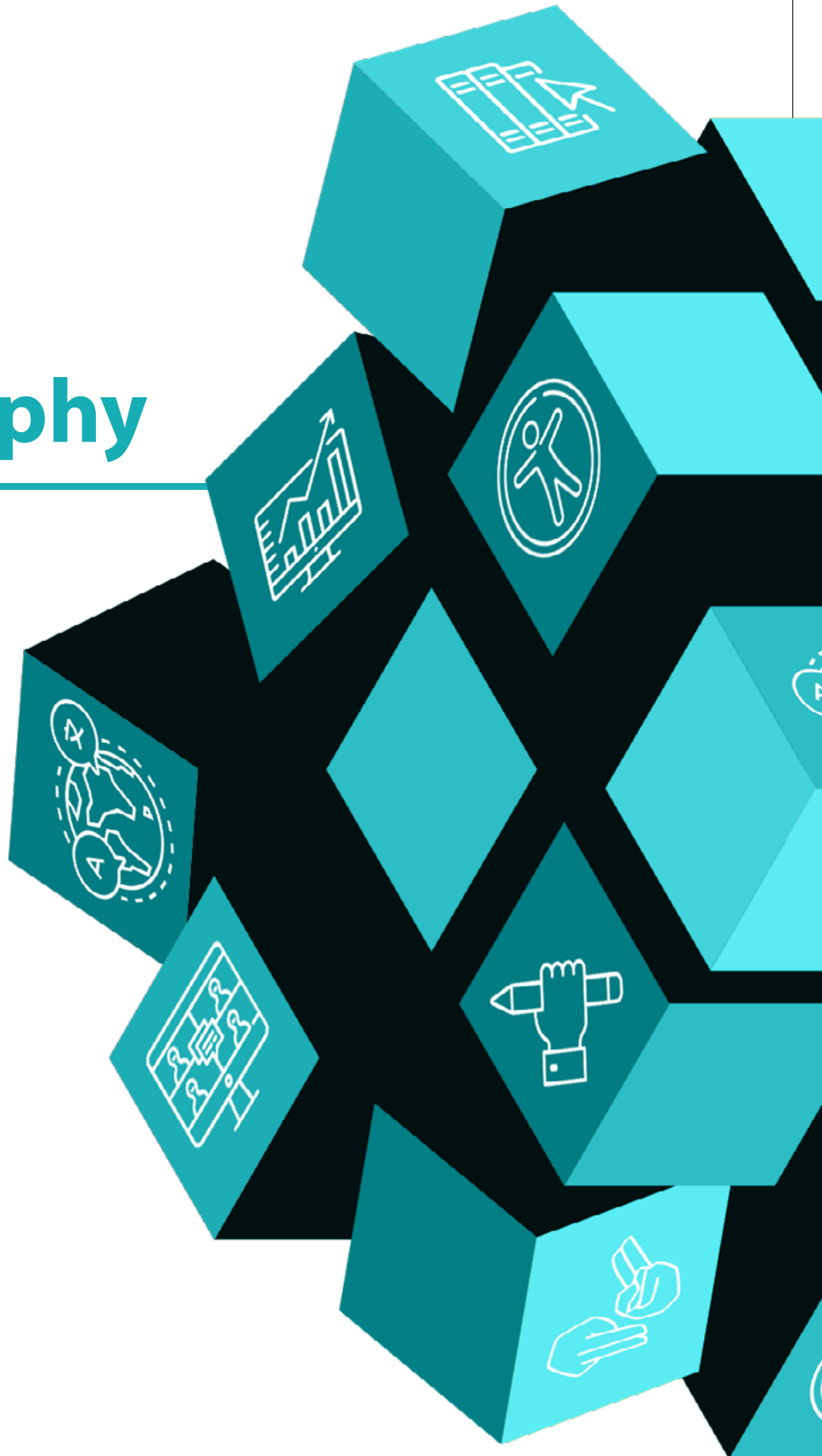
8. Acknowledgements



We sincerely appreciate the contributions of Dr. Sanaa T. Al-Harabsheh, Malcolm Cooldige, and Dr. Ahmed Baghdady. Our gratitude also extends to all the participants we interviewed for their valuable insights. Additionally, we appreciate the support from the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) in hosting the roundtable at the WISE 11 Summit.



9. Bibliography



Al Attiyah, A., & Lazarus, B. B. (2013). *Education reform's impact on the development of special education policy in Qatar*. In Sunal, C. S., & Mutua, K. (Eds.). (2013). *Research on the Influences of Educational Policy on Teaching and Learning*. IAP.

Al-Banai, N., & Nasser, R. (2015). The educational reform in Qatar: Challenges and success. In *INTCESS15-2nd International Conference on Education and Social Sciences* (pp. 678-683).

Alfadala, A., Yiannouka, S. N., & Zaki, O. (2021). Qatar's road to education reform. *Implementing Educational Reform: Cases and Challenges*, (pp. 171-192).

Al-Hendawi, M., Khair, M. S., & Keller, C. (2017). In M. L. Wehmeyer, & J. R. Patton (Eds.), *Qatar*. In the *Praeger International Handbook of Special Education* [3 volumes]: Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

Alkhater, L. R. (2016). Qatar's borrowed K-12 education reform in context. *Policy-making in a transformative state: The case of Qatar*, 97-130.

Allan, J. (2008). *Rethinking inclusive education: The philosophers of difference in practice*. London: Springer.

Arnesen, A., Allen, J., and Simonsen, E. (eds.). (2009). *Policies and Practices for teaching socio-cultural diversity. Concepts, principles and challenges in teacher education*. Strasbourg, Council of Europe.

Brewer, D. J., Augustine, C. H., Zellman, G. L., Ryan, G., Goldman, C. A., Stasz, C., & Constant, L. (2007). References. In *Education for a New Era: Design and Implementation of K-12 Education Reform in Qatar* (1st ed., pp. 171–178). RAND Corporation. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg548qatar.22>

Bowles, N., & Bowles, N. (2022, December 18). Autism snapshot: Qatar - I AM. *I AM - Celebrating Autism in Greater Manchester*. <https://i-am-autism.org.uk/autism-snapshot-qatar/>

Clayton, R., & Shafique, A. (2023). *Strengthening Learning Ecosystems in Qatar: Improving access to opportunity for all learners*. WISE - Qatar Foundation.

Guldberg, K., Ashbee, E., Kossyvaki, L., Bradley, R., & Basulayyim, A. (2017). *Meeting the Needs of Pupils with Autism in Qatar: Moving forward*. WISE - Qatar Foundation.

General Secretariat for Development Planning. (2008). *Qatar National Vision 2030*. Retrieved from: <http://www.mdps.gov.qa/en/qnv1/pages/default.aspx> (2017, July 28).

Lindsay, G. (2007). *Educational psychology and the effectiveness of inclusive education/mainstreaming*. *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 77: 1–24.

Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (2015). *Education in the Schools of the State of Qatar: Annual Report of the Academic Year 2014/2015*. Retrieved from: www.edu.gov.qa/En/Education/Pages/StatisticalReport.aspx (2017, July 25)

Munir, K. M., Lavelle, T. A., Helm, D. T., Thompson, D., Prestt, J. & Azeem, M. W. (2016). *Autism: A Global Framework for Action*. Doha, Qatar: World Innovation Summit for Health.

Nasser, R. (2017). Qatar's educational reform past and future: Challenges in teacher development. *Open Review of Educational Research*, 4(1), 1-19.

Planning and Statistics Authority. (2022). *Education in Qatar Statistical Profile 2022*.

QBRI Insights: Autism Spectrum Disorder. (2021, April 2). Qatar Biomedical Research Institute. <https://www.hbku.edu.qa/en/news/qbri-insights-autism>

Qatar Census 2020. (n.d.). Planning Statistics Authority.

https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/statistics1/StatisticsSite/Census/Census2020/results/pages/result.aspx?rpttitle=p5_c95

Ravet, J. (2011). *Inclusive/exclusive? Contradictory perspectives on autism and inclusion: the case for an integrative position*. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15 (6), 667-682.

Romanowski, M., Ellili-Cherif, M., Badria, A., Ammari, A. and Attiyah, A. (2013). Qatar's educational reform: The experiences and perceptions of principals, teachers and parents. *International Journal of Education*, 5:3, 108–35.

RTI Action Network. (2011). *What is RTI?* Retrieved from: www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what (2017, July 25).

Supreme Education Council. (2009). Additional educational support for students with learning difficulties, students with disabilities, and behavioral support needs: Policies, guidelines and materials for school support. State of Qatar: Supreme Education Council. Retrieved from: www.sec.gov.qa/CS/Additional_Education/AE_English.pdf. (2017, July 28).

Singal, N., & Muthukrishna, N. (2016). Reflexive re-storying of Inclusive Education: Evidence from India and South Africa. In S. Grech & K. Soldatic (Eds.), *Disability in the Global South: The Critical Handbook*. Springer.

Singal, N., TanejaJohansson, S., Al-Fadala, A., Mergia, A.T., Poudyal, N., Zaki, O., Side, A.S., Khadka, D. & Al-Sabbagh, & S. (2021). *Revisiting equity: COVID-19 and the education of children with disabilities*. Qatar Foundation.

Singal, N., Ware, H., & Bhutani, S. K. (2017). *Inclusive Quality Education for Children with Disabilities* (WISE Words). Qatar Foundation.

UNESCO. (2009). *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*. Paris: UNESCO.

United Nations. (2008). *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Retrieved from: www.tjssl.edu/slomansonb/10.3_DisabilitiesTreaty.pdf (2017, July 25)

Zellman, G. L., Ryan, G. W., Karam, R. T., Constant, L., Salem, H., Gonzalez, G. C., Orr, N., Goldman, C. A., Al-Thani, H. and Al-Obaidli, K. (2009). *Qatar's K-12 Education Reform Has Achieved Success in Its Early Years*. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation.

وايزز
wise

مؤسسة قطر
Qatar Foundation
توطيق فدرات الإنسان
Unlocking human potential



وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية والأسرة
Ministry of Social Development and Family
دولة قطر - دولة قطر

