

Equity and Quality in Saudi Early Childhood Education: A Case Study on Inclusion School

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Abstract : For many years and until now, education based on gendered division is endorsed in the public Saudi schools starting from the primary grades (1,2, 3rd grades). Although preschool has no boys and girls segregation restrictions, children from first grade starting their first form of cultural ideology based on gender. Ensuring high-quality education serving all children -both boys and girls- is an aim for policymakers and early learning professionals in Saudi Arabia. The past five years have witnessed a major change in terms of shifting the paradigm to educating young children in the country. In May 2018, the Ministry of Education (MoE) had declared a commencement decision of inclusion schools serve both girls and boys in primary grades with a high-quality early learning opportunity. This study sought to shed light on one of the earliest schools that have implemented the inclusion experience. The methodological approach adopted is based on the qualitative inquiry of case study to investigate complex phenomena within the contexts of inclusion school. Data collection procedures included on-site visitations and semi-structured interviews with the teachers to document their thoughts, narratives, and living experiences. The findings of this study identified three themes based on cultural, educational, and professional interpretations. An overview of recommendations highlighted the benefits and possible challenges of future implementations of inclusion schools in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords : early learning, gender division, inclusion school, Saudi Arabia

Conference Title : ICECEC 2021 : International Conference on Early Childhood Education and Care

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : October 07-08, 2021