THE "NOW WHAT DILEMMA": AN EMIRATI PERSPECTIVE ON ISSUES RELATED TO TRANSITION OF LEARNERS WITH SEND FROM EARLY CARE TO PRIMARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This chapter draws upon research conducted in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on parents' perspectives of transition in early childhood intervention (ECI) for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The research followed a sequential exploratory mixed methods design to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews with 11 parents of children with different types of SEND, followed by a cross-sectional survey administered to (183) parents. Thematic analysis of interviews revealed that parents perceive the transition process as: "smooth," "stressful," and "blurring." Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis tests of the parents' responses to the cross-sectional survey showed significant differences among parents' perspectives toward transition with respect to parents' gender, education, type of child with SEND, and educational setting; no significant differences were found regarding children's gender. Implications for practice regarding transition from ECI to inclusive education are addressed through a transition framework introduced at the end of this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood intervention (ECI) refers to "the provision of educational or therapeutic services" (Bruder, 2010, p. 339) to children with confirmed disabilities, those who are developmentally delayed or at risk of being disabled at some point in life (Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2013), and their families (Zheng et al., 2016). These services are crucial for preventing disabilities or reducing their effects on children and their families and for helping the children to transition to the next stage of education with their peers in public schools (Rous, Myers, & Stricklin, 2007). For Guralnick (2001), ECI refers to designed programs that empower families to best promote children's developmental abilities, with specific emphasis on parent–child transactions and family experiences that help reinforce children's health. Meanwhile, ECI's main goal is to prevent or reduce any physical, cognitive, or emotional deterioration in young children who have environmental or biological risk factors (Odom et al., 2003).

There has been a growing interest in families as key partners in ECI programs, particularly the transition process after early interventions, because parents are the primary caregivers and have unique information about their children that can facilitate their development (Kohler, 1999). Parents of children with special needs are concerned about the acceptance of their children and their ability to cope in new educational settings after ECI, which have new staff, regulations, and procedures. They desire to share the detailed knowledge they have about their children and their experiences in early intervention in order to promote understanding of the effectiveness of the services provided in ECI (Starr et al., 2016).

The transition from ECI is an ongoing process, which starts at the pre-school stage. It requires a designed plan that includes all stakeholders to prepare each child for the subsequent phase of education (Siddiqua, 2014). Researchers have pointed out the importance of parents' participation in transition planning, particularly in their concern about their children's needs being met in the transition plans and their roles throughout the process. Their perspectives provide the staff with useful information to design rehabilitation plans to best suit their children's needs (Bruder, 2010; Zheng et al., 2016).

Researchers have studied the process of transition in ECI to identify components of effective parental involvement. Many studies showcase parents' concerns regarding transition as an important stage that needs specific measurements and support to reach the next educational placement (Trach, 2012). Others focus on the importance of collaboration with parents to achieve a seamless transition (Schischka et al., 2012), or on parents' roles and satisfaction regarding the transition process (Podvey et al., 2011).

In the UAE, considerable efforts are being exerted to achieve effective early intervention and smooth transition to inclusive education in collaboration with parents as essential partners in the process (KHDA, 2017; MOE, 2010). However, special education (SE) centers still exist and are receiving transitioned

children from ECI after six years of age, particularly those with intellectual disabilities and autism (MOCD, 2015). This highlights the need for more in-depth research to understand parents' experiences during and after transition from ECI to other educational settings (Starr et al., 2016).

PARENTS IN THE ECI TRANSITION PROCESS

A review of the literature for this chapter detected a number of studies related to the transition process from ECI to other educational settings. An examination of these studies generated three main themes as they reflected the parents' perspectives during the transition. Accordingly, this section summarizes some key findings from the literature exploring parents' experiences in terms of their feelings, challenges they faced and strategies that promote effective transition.

Transition is Stressful to Parents and Families

Previous studies found that transition from ECI to schools and from home-based ECI to center-based preschools is stressful for families to the shift in service provider and place of service. Therefore, parents need support to adapt to these changes (Rous, Hallam et al., 2007).

In the USA, Rosenkoetter et al. (2009) reviewed family studies in early childhood transition published between 1990 and 2006. The researchers found that transition is a stressful stage for families, as it is a dynamic, not static process, so supporting families and building relationships with them can reduce their stress. Another study by Kruse (2012) focused on families' experiences during the transition process in ECI programs. Results of the interviews that conducted with mothers indicated that parents experienced conflicts with the overall system during transition that could be referred to as an imbalance of power between themselves and the system. Meanwhile, Guralnick (2017) emphasized the importance of social support as a fundamental protective factor for families of young children with special needs in addressing and reducing parent-related stress during the transition process. Moreover, Kyn et al. (2013) investigated differences in parental stress with an early intervention program in Norway. Parents reported that when given emotional support, information, and advice, their stress was minimized, and they dealt more confident in their parental roles.

To explore families' and service providers' experiences during the transition from ECI services to school education, Hanson et al. (2000) conducted a study focused on children's transition from the third year of age to the pre-school age. They found that some families expressed concern regarding the shift in service between the ECI and public schools, resulting in a hesitancy to move from one system to another, characterized as movement from the "known" to the "unknown." More recently, Leadbitter et al. (2020) focused on the discussion among parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) about the transition to school and the difficulties they encountered due to a lack of routine-based structure in the new educational setting. The authors also noted the

stressful feelings that parents experienced with extended family members regarding the lack of understanding and acceptance for their children, which made them avoid extended family activities and events.

Challenges Described by Parents during Transition

Kruse (2012) found that parents expressed their concerns regarding the lack of placement options for their children, explained their roles to advocate for their child and keep them progressing, and emphasized the need for external support. This is emphasized by Hanson et al. (2000) who found that families were given limited choices or no choices at all in regards to the new educational settings, as the professionals or other officials mainly made the choice of transition. Scaling up, parents explained that the transition of their children to inclusive settings had been affected by the readiness of the child and type of special needs, such as autism. Moreover, UNESCO (2017) reported that parents of children with SEND are too often forced to select between two only options, the first one is to meet their children's needs within SE schools, and the second is to ensure that their children get the same learning opportunities and rights similar to other peers through enrollment in mainstream education.

Janus et al. (2008) took into account the educational stage in which the child was currently enrolled. They found that families of children with SEND who were still in ECI were more satisfied with services than families of children transitioned to kindergartens, as those families reported to be less positive toward care procedures as a result of lower levels of communication with them following the transition. Gatling (2009) investigated obstacles and factors that assist transition through the perspectives of parents and service providers. The researcher found that factors that may obstruct smooth transition are: parents' worries about services, ambiguity during meetings with professionals to discuss the children's eligibility, they felt that they are not prepared or informed better about types of meetings and their roles in it.

Consistently, Schischka et al. (2012) explored stakeholders' views on the transition process from the ECI stage to public school placement. Thematic analysis indicated that parents expressed some concerns regarding their children's nature of disabilities and how teachers are able to response to their individual special needs in classrooms, as well as the scarcity of communication with parents as a result of a "closed door" policy by the schools after the transition. This was also emphasized by Fontil and Petrakos (2015), who found a number of challenges that faced parents of children with autism, such as communication and trust-building relations with the staff and a lack of support following the transition to public schools in comparison with support before the transition.

Similar results were found in Canada by Villeneuve et al. (2013). The authors reported that parents faced difficulties organizing frequent meetings with teachers to exchange knowledge about the transition process. They experienced a lack of communication with the staff, and they required more information about their children's needs as well as the new educational context. In Ontario, Siddiqua (2014) found that parents of transitioned children had negative perceptions about

the public schools. They expressed their concern regarding a lack of information received from school about their children and available services, and limited communication between teachers and families, as well as regarding a disorganized services post-transition.

Some studies also found that the new educational settings and the lack of consistency in the stages of the transition are among challenges described by parents. Ahtola et al. (2011) found that the majority of parents of transitioned children did not receive sufficient information about the new school and even how their children were progressing. Starr et al. (2016) also pointed out the need for consistency throughout the transition process among all parties in the system, and the importance of early preparation for transition.

Strategies that Promote Effective Transition

The literature clearly demonstrates the importance of parental involvement in ECI, and confirms their satisfaction with the programs as success factors. Rous, Hallam et al. (2007) argued that encouraging families to take part in the transition and helping children to adapt to new settings led to achieving transition outcomes. Meanwhile, Rosenkoetter et al. (2009) claim that parents feel that they are effective in the transition process when they engage more in meetings and school activities. Moreover, Gatling (2009) introduced factors that may support a smooth transition, among them are parents' effective communication and participation, and providing them with sufficient knowledge.

Brown and Guralnick (2012) placed families at the center of a support approach that targets parents to facilitate their day-to-day interactions with needed social structures, and to ensure their children's optimal development by meeting their needs, and providing professionals with assistance and information that enlarge the children's learning opportunities. Guralnick (2017) also concluded that the ultimate goal of ECI is to empower the family intervention style, which includes strong relationships with the community, comprehensiveness, and consistency of services, and placing the family at the center of the process. Therefore, understanding how parents view the transition process and to what extent they are involved in it is highly important for evaluating ECI programs and providing feedback to specialists.

Pang (2010) investigated a family's needs and concerns regarding their child with special needs in early intervention. The results indicated that the utilization of family-centered practices helped the staff to understand family priorities and incorporate greater family engagement in transition. The study suggested encouraging families to provide input about the intervention strategies they wanted to follow, the child's placement, and the transition plan. Pang suggested that every family member should receive training and be included in the transition process.

Starr et al. (2016) interviewed parents of children with ASD to understand their perspectives toward the transition process. Results were categorized into four major themes: relationship-building, communication, knowledge, and support. This was concluded by Ahtola et al. (2011) that collaboration and

communication between sending and receiving staff are highly helpful, particularly the written information shared between programs and the accommodations provided on the new curriculum. Meanwhile, Spencer-Brown (2015) examined parents' perspectives of children with special needs during the transition process. The majority of the parents interviewed indicated the importance of communication and cooperation between families and educators. They perceived their engagement as adding value to the outcome of the transition process, and providing them with needed information. On the same course, Siddiqua (2014) declared that parents provided with more information about the transition, resulting in more positive perceptions and satisfaction about the whole process.

It is worth noting that previous literature has focused on families of children who transitioned to inclusive education and their satisfaction (Burford, 2005). However, there is less information about the parents of children who transitioned to SE centers. In the UAE, laws and policies encourage moving toward inclusion (MOE, 2010); meanwhile, SE centers are still an available option to receive ECI children older than six years old (MOCD, 2015). The current study tried to bridge the gap by investigating parents' perspectives on ECI transition with regard to their children's educational status and other demographic variables.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is based on a mixed-method research study (Qualitative and Quantitative) with exploratory sequential design that was used to investigate parents' perspectives as participants in the transition process from ECI to other educational contexts. In the first qualitative phase of the study, the researchers implemented semi-structured interviews on a purposive sample of (11) parents whose children have transitioned to different educational settings. Two of the children are with global developmental delay, three of them with intellectual disability, four with ASD, one with hearing impairment, and one with multiple disabilities. In the second quantitative phase of the study, the researchers conducted a survey with (183) parents whose children were enrolled in the Emirates' Early Intervention Program. The sample included parents of children with global developmental delay ($n = 66$, 36.1%), intellectual disability ($n = 49$, 26.8%), ASD ($n = 35$, 19.1%), multiple disabilities ($n = 20$, 10.9%), and sensory impairments ($n = 13$, 7.1%).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative findings that emerged from the interviews are classified under three broad themes: (1) smooth transition, (2) stressful transition, and (3) blurring transition. The themes emerged during the interviews based on factors that shaped parental perspectives toward early childhood transition in the UAE. It is worth mentioning that parents' perspectives oscillated back and forth through a full spectrum of feelings. They changed according to the place to which the child

was transitioned, whether to an inclusive setting or SE center. Parents' perspectives demonstrated change depending on the stage of transition and the types of challenges they faced at each stage.

Smooth Transition to the SE System

The interviewed parents explained that the transition went smoothly during the services provided in ECI stage, where children receive comprehensive rehabilitation programs, including family services. Thus, this approach creates a common ground with parents and strengthens their relationship with the ECI program. Siddiqua (2014), who explored parents' experiences during the transition, affirmed that parents had more positive perceptions and satisfaction about service pre-transition than post-transition. Likewise, Gavidia-Payne et al. (2015) agree that parents view the transition as a smooth process before the transition point.

Interviewees whose children have been transitioned to SE centers pointed out that the transition process went smoothly with their children. They believe that their children could make more progress in these centers than anywhere else. They added that the SE staff was more qualified and cooperative with them than regular school staff. Interviewees shared their positive perceptions toward the transition process when their children had transitioned to what they called "suitable educational settings." Parents experienced smooth and clear transition procedures since they consider SE centers the most appropriate placement for their children's abilities. McIntyre et al. (2007) explained how a suitable educational setting, which is one that meets the family's expectations and ambitions for a child, leads to a successful transition. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta's (2000) Model of Transition emphasizes the importance of continuous collaboration between family and school, and seamless relationships among all parties to achieve effective transitions.

Stressful Transition to Regular Schools

The interviewees considered community attitudes as an obstacle to transition for students with SEND to inclusive education; therefore, some parents had preferred not to declare to the public that they had a child with special needs. This finding is in agreement with Rosenkoetter et al. (2009) that transition is a stressful stage and a complicated process for families. Therefore, they recommended providing support to families and building relationships with them in order to reduce stress, as well as building collaboration between sending and receiving educational settings, which promotes positive outcomes for the transitioned children. Spencer-Brown's (2015) also concluded that the interviewed parents asserted the importance of communication and cooperation between families and educators.

Further analysis emphasized that the interviewees viewed teachers and other staff in regular schools as not adequately qualified to receive students with SEND at regular schools and not supportive of inclusion, which makes the transition

more difficult. This is in line with Fontil and Petrakos (2015), who found that trust-building relations with the staff after transition is a challenge parents face during the transition process. The 11 interviewees in this study shared the view that the transition to inclusive education settings is a stressful experience. They suggested that regular education facilities are not prepared to accommodate students with SEND, particularly in terms of staff attitudes, non-adapted curriculum, or the educational atmosphere in general.

A significant number of studies concur with the results of this study. For instance, Starr et al. (2016) found that parents of transitioned children are facing challenges in all ecological systems levels. Similarly, Schischka et al. (2012) pointed out that parents expressed some concerns regarding their children after the transition to public schools. Moreover, Walker et al. (2012) concluded that parents considered schools unprepared for children with SEND and often resisted to include them. In the UAE, Alborno (2013) documented the lack of support services to students with SEND in regular schools, and Alobeidli (2017) revealed that regular classroom teachers tend to have negative attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. However, this finding is different than Walker et al.'s (2012) study in Australia, where parents felt satisfied with the support provided to their children from their teachers. And, it is also inconsistent with Siddiqua (2014), where indicated that parents had positive perceptions toward teachers in Canada. The reason for the differences could be attributed to cultural differences, where inclusion and ECI had its deeper roots in these countries.

Parents in this study stated that they felt depressed when they were informed about the next educational transition setting. Almost half of them would have preferred to keep their children in ECI for a longer because they felt that their children were safe in the ECI program, whereas other educational settings were unknown to them, which caused stress. In line with this finding, Hanson et al. (2000) noted that parents preferred to keep their children in the ECI because they did not want to move their children from "known" settings to "unknown" settings in schools. Consistently, Villeneuve et al. (2013) voiced parents' concerns about their children in a new educational setting and their need for more information about it. And more recently, Carroll and Sixsmith (2016) found that parents felt fear and anxiety when they were informed about the transition to a new setting; they found it difficult to adapt to new professionals.

Blurring Transition Pathways after ECI

Most interviewees highlighted the lack of coordination and collaboration among stakeholders. They shared that, while ECI seeks to include some children in public education facilities by preparing them for the next stage, schools do not complement the role of the early intervention; they follow their own regulations. Guralnick (2001) suggested that the ECI mode requires a high level of collaboration between related government and community entities, and families. More recently, Connolly and Devaney (2018), Starr et al. (2016), and Curle et al.

(2017), all stressed the need for consistency and collaboration in the transition process between all parties in the system.

Interviewed parents expressed their concern about the future of their children after early intervention. They declared that transition pathways were not clearly portrayed, resulting in confusion about what to do with their children and the right educational course for each child. The parents voiced their desperate need to know about available educational pathways after the ECI stage. Podvey et al. (2011) stated that transition is not just an event that occurs with the child at the beginning of the program, but it is a process that starts with planning and setting goals in collaboration with the new placement to ensure consistency and the child's adaptation to the new environment.

These findings are consistent with a significant body of studies that found a lack of knowledge among parents in regards to the transition process (Gatling, 2009; Spencer-Brown, 2015; Villeneuve et al., 2013). In addition, other studies found that parents were concerned about the lack of knowledge regarding their children in general, the disorganized education system, and the services available to their children. The literature suggests that supporting parents' access to information is key in early intervention as it helps the family to shape an understanding about their children's future, including possible needs in the next stage (Siddiqua, 2014).

Interviewees also uncovered the need for their children to develop more skills during the early intervention stage. They felt that their children had not been sufficiently empowered for the next educational level, particularly inclusive education. Gaad and Thabet (2016) pointed out that students with SEND should be well prepared before they are included in regular schools to avoid unexpected situations. Armed with this knowledge, children in ECI should be provided sufficient time to receive the needed services before being referred to the next educational stage, especially when they're transitioned to inclusive settings. The success of the transition depends on sufficient preparation for the child and their family.

DIFFERENCES IN PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES

The quantitative findings from the cross-sectional survey have shown that there were significant differences between parents' gender in favor of fathers with regards to their perspectives toward the transition journey ($t = -3.649, p < 0.05$). Fathers were more positive in their views toward the transition journey ($M = 3.97$), they reported through the survey items, that the transition trajectory was clear and smooth for them when compared to mothers who had moderate views toward transition ($M = 3.04$). This may be because mothers usually undertake the responsibility of following up with their children with SEND, which is consistent with the fact that the vast majority of the employees in SE and ECI centers are female. In addition, children in early developmental stages are more attached to their mothers as a source to satisfy their basic needs while fathers are busy with their business outside the family. Thus, mothers' expectations about

the provided services and transition options may be higher than fathers' who are not as deeply involved in the process. In a recent study in Ireland, Connolly and Devaney (2018) concluded the importance of involving parents, especially fathers, in their children's services. This is in line with Gaad's (2006) findings that the number of fathers of children with Down syndrome in the UAE participating in monthly meetings had decreased, as mothers usually spent more time with their child and responding to their needs.

In regard to children's gender, the t-test indicated that there were no statistical differences between the two groups ($t = -0.258$, $p > 0.05$). In ECI, parents are expected to follow up with their children and communicate with the staff to ensure the best services. Early education policies in the UAE emphasize ECI for all children with SEND without any gender-based discrimination, where both genders are following the same protocols and receiving the same services.

The results of parents' perspectives toward the transition with respect to educational level show higher mean scores among parents with basic reading and writing skills as well as parents with high school degrees. On the contrary, the results showed the lowest mean scores for parents holding a bachelor's degree or higher. One-way ANOVA and Scheffe post hoc tests revealed significant statistical differences between parents' educational level mean scores ($F = 26.228$, $p < 0.05$). These differences are between parents with basic literacy skills and parents with a bachelor's or above ($p = 0.000$), in addition to a statistically significant difference between parents with high school degrees and parents with a bachelor's degree or above ($p = 0.000$), indicating that parents with lower educational achievement demonstrated more positive perspectives regarding transition.

This may be because educated parents are expected to learn more about their children's status, and search for the best rehabilitation approaches as well as best practices in ECI and transition. Therefore, their perspectives toward transition might be associated with higher expectations about their children and their future. On the other hand, parents with lower educational levels who have basic literacy skills or are illiterate, tend to have more limited knowledge about global practices in ECI, transition and inclusion, which may result in them holding more positive perceptions about the transition process overall. With little opportunities for comparison, the services offered are sufficient and acceptable to them. This finding is inconsistent with Siddiqua (2014), who found parents' educational level did not significantly affect their perceptions toward transition. The reason for the difference could be attributed to social and cultural factors that are different from the UAE. Illiterate parents might have fewer opportunities to access information available in languages other than Arabic, or to enroll in training courses and obtain knowledge resources that improve their knowledge about ECI.

In terms of children's educational status, One-way ANOVA and Scheffe post hoc tests indicated significant statistical differences between children's educational status mean scores ($F = 30.737$, $p < 0.05$). The differences found between parents of children in ECI, SE centers and regular schools, indicated more positive perceptions of parents of children enrolled in SE centers and ECI centers. These centers follow the same policies of the Ministry of Community Development (MOCD) as they are affiliated under the same entity, which promotes

consistency in services provided within these two types of centers. However, regular schools follow different regulations set by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) which often make it difficult for the parents to adapt to the new educational environments after the transition, in addition to the challenges associated with inclusive education in the UAE in general (Alborno, 2013; Alobeidli, 2017). Furthermore, ECI centers provide great attention to the family through counseling that meets their individualized needs based on family concerns and priorities. In addition, the quality standards in ECI allow children to receive more therapeutic sessions (MOCD, 2015). Janus et al. (2008) declared that families in ECI were more satisfied with services than families of transitioned children to kindergartens, and they become less engaged in the school stage due to limited student-related education activities such as IEP meetings they were invited to attend (Podvey et al., 2011).

One-way ANOVA test also showed statistically significant differences between the mean scores on parents of children with different types of SEND ($F = 4.887$, $p < 0.05$) and Scheffe post hoc test indicate that these differences are significant between parents of children with developmental delay, and parents of children with intellectual disabilities and ASD. Children with confirmed disabilities such as intellectual disabilities or ASD are stigmatized by the society (Alobeidli, 2017), and their families face community challenges more than families of children with developmental delay that have not yet been classified under disability categories. Transition to inclusive settings is also not encouraged for children with autism and intellectual disabilities by the MOCD that prefers to refer them to SE centers (MOCD, 2019). Interviewees who had children with sensory disabilities also described the transition as an easy process when compared with parents of children with other disabilities, such as ASD. These findings are also in line with the conclusion of the research done by Hanson et al. (2000), Leadbitter et al. (2020), and Starr et al. (2016) regarding challenges facing the transition of children with autism. Therefore, more focus should be directed toward parents of children with autism and intellectual disabilities to ensure successful transitions and create a supportive ecosystem for inclusion in the UAE.

A TRANSITION FRAMEWORK TO INCLUSIVE SETTINGS

Based on the study results, the researchers introduced a transition framework to ensure successful and smooth transition from ECI to inclusive settings. The transition framework suggests three main pillars, constructed based on the parents' views and the literature review, which are "Enablers, Stakeholders, and Inclusive Educational Settings."

The first pillar is the "Enablers" that consists of the ecosystem that children and their parents live in. These enablers support the child's transition to a later educational environment, and any deficiency in the system may lead to confusion regarding the transition process or feelings of stress, as the parents reported. Therefore, the family is considered as the core of the enablers, where family

embraces the child and lead them to a safe transition (Hayes et al., 2017). So a trainings strategy in this pillar is needed to provide parents with the necessary knowledge about the available transition options and support them in making appropriate decisions, as well as their roles during it, to ensure their effectiveness throughout the transition process.

The second pillar of the suggested framework is the "Stakeholders" which also emphasizes the role of parents in the process of transition, particularly their written consent to the transition decisions. Senders and receivers must also agree on the transition steps and the ultimate goal. For example, the ECI program prepares the transition plan in cooperation with parents and the child's transitioned setting. ECI staff are well trained in forming transition plans, and applying them collectively in cooperation with the family in different settings. Accordingly, it is very important that the school team then follows the transition plans, establishes a method for continuous collaboration with the ECI to follow-up the child in the new setting, and ensures the proper implementation of it. This requires a training strategy for regular school teachers, on how to reflect transition plans in the form of suitable individual plans for transitioned students that can be applied in school settings.

The lack of proper coordination between concerned entities, as reported by the parents, has led to feelings of confusion during the transition. Therefore, ministries and local authorities responsible for education and ECI should agree on a unified transition plan and use it as an official document recognized and approved by all parties.

The third and final pillar is the "Inclusive Educational Setting" as a key factor in completing the transition process and ensuring its success, which depends on teachers' attitudes, teaching qualifications, and the schools' readiness to receive children with SEND. To ensure school environments are inclusive requires that all children should have the opportunity to learn regardless of their learning abilities and with adequate support when needed. Creating inclusive environments requires accommodations in physical and human elements, such as physical accessibility, curriculum accommodations, differentiated instruction, and teaching and assessment methods, as well as positive attitudes toward children by teachers and peers (UNESCO, 2017). Hayes et al. (2017) suggested a need for transformation in early learning environments with plentiful opportunities for children to become involved in the learning process, and to have access to different contexts with a flexible and responsive role of the educators.

One of the effective strategies that are already implemented in the ECI stage and needs to be extended to regular schools is the interdisciplinary teamwork that considers parents as integral part of it, this approach promoted greater collaboration with parents so that they participate in their children's educational plans, implement them in natural environments and review them with the team.

This framework might be effective in transition as it conforms with the parents' views on the basic principles of the transition process. They insured the community support, as well as active family participation through the exercise of their roles and responsibilities to achieve an effective transition. Parents also emphasizes the creation of an inclusive culture of inclusion in schools among teachers,

staff and peers, and a unified coordination mechanism among the concerned parties that ensure policy consistency and implementation on common ground.

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the findings of a study that produced insight into parents' experiences during the transition of their children with SEND from ECI to other educational settings. Parents viewed the transition in ECI stage from three different perspectives based on the place of transition, stages of transition, and the types of challenges they faced at each stage. Some parents indicated that the transition went smoothly when their children transitioned to SE centers; however, others felt that the transition was stressful when their children transitioned to regular schools. Meanwhile, parents considered the transition as a blurring stage when reflecting on the coordination between entities, transition pathways, or the need for information. In addition, statistically significant differences were found among parents' perspectives toward the transition pertinent to the gender of the parent, parents' educational level, child's educational status, and type of educational needs; however, no significant difference was found regarding a child's gender. Accordingly, the researchers introduced a UAE's transition framework to ensure successful and smooth transition from ECI to inclusive settings.

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