

Journal

Education



The Development of Special Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia- Autism The Development of Special Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia-Autism

There are about 30, 000 children with Autism in Saudi Arabia. The children have limited access to education, as there are no proper programs to cater for their individual needs. However, in 1993, Al Faisaliah Association in Jeddah established the first class specifically for children with autism. In response to the private sector establishment of the program, the government through the Ministry of Education initiated a similar program in 1996. Two years later, three programs began in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam. The early interventions focused on the family observation and perception between 2000 and 2003. Other interventions included training the teachers and the parents about the importance of the early intervention programs for the development of the children between 0 and five years. The government took up the responsibility of providing scholarships for students with disabilities by sponsoring ten male students to work in the transition service with Beacon College of Florida. Specifically, the development service has five core elements, which are the Foundation of self-discovery, academic exploration, a preview of campus life, the Florida experience, and post program follow up in Saudi Arabia. The main challenge for the program is conducting interviews about the personal experience for the families who have children with autism.

I learn from this presentation that the government of Saudi Arabia has taken an active initiative in establishing programs focus on the disabled's needs. Mental and physical disability is a major challenge for the families and the patients as they have trouble in their lives. However, interventional

programs are paramount in empowering the families and victims, as they are a means of liberation. The success of the program demonstrates that infirmity is not inability because when given a chance, even the disabled can use their skills and talent to change the world.