The Geographies of Spaces for Inclusive Education: Narratives of Teachers in Three Primary Schools in Eswatini

By

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DECLARATION

I, Cebsile P. Nxumalo, declare that this dissertation entitled:

The Geographies of spaces for inclusive education: Narratives of Teachers in Three Primary Schools in Eswatini

is my own work, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and citations. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university. The American Psychological Association (APA) 7th Edition Referencing Style was used for referencing the work of other authorities and authors.

Cebsile P Nxumalo

Dr Antoinette D'amant

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family - my husband, Sukulwenkosi; three children, Sandziso, Nkosephayo and Siyambonga, and two grandchildren; Lamhla and Likusasa. It is such a blessing to have you in my life. Each one of you has been there to encourage me even when I was discouraged. You each have been a source of inspiration in more ways than one. You understood when I had to stay up very long at night pushing this work.

This work is also dedicated to all the educators (quality assurance officers, principals and teachers) who continue to strive to make the inclusive education policy a reality.

May the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich, and with which He adds no sorrow, rest upon each one of you all the days of your lives.

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ETHICAL QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS RELATED TO PHOTOGRAPHS' INCLUSION

Since photos do not allow for subject anonymity, it is vital for me to draw attention to the ethical issues and problems of research that uses a visual approach, like photo-voice. The groups of teachers who took part in this study were informed that the images would only be used to depict issues pertinent to their experiences with inclusion, as they pursue careers as inclusive practitioners. The quiet events, locations, and spaces of the participants' lived experiences are thereby documented in the images contained in this thesis. Participants also had a conversation about the ownership and distribution of the images. Although participants and learners are plainly visible in the images, they gave me consent to use and incorporate them in the thesis because my purpose was not to show them in a prejudiced, unfavourable, or damaging way.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the global shift towards inclusive education, there are still basic tensions, contradictions, and gaps between the design of legislation and the implementation of inclusive education's objectives in daily school operations. It is uncertain whether Eswatini will continue this tendency of embracing the rhetoric of inclusivity without any real change. Implementing inclusive education policies and transforming schools to make them inclusive is a dynamic and complex process that, not only entails redefining teaching practise, but also necessitates that teachers develop a different sense of themselves as professionals and as individuals, taking into consideration the context in which they work and the power dynamics at play. This study explores the lived experiences of six teachers from three primary schools in urban, semi-urban, and rural Eswatini, as they engage in inclusive education. It also examines how these teachers negotiate and move through the diverse and complex geographies of inclusive education spaces in their schools, while contending with tensions and discrepancies between "real" - action or what is - and the "ideal" - what might be.

To understand the daily experiences of teachers in the context of the power-laden spatiality of inclusive education, the use of authentic narratives as a fundamental approach of inquiry focused on listening to and hearing directly from the teachers. By utilizing spatial analysis, we can better understand the forces that shape teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. This research is informed by the idea that teachers are active social constructivists working for the change of classrooms and schools in light of inclusive education and the relationships between space and social practice. Thus, using social constructionism as a theoretical framework, my research enabled me to identify the quality of teachers' experiences with inclusive education, as well as the ways in which power embedded in school geographies mediates the construction of teachers' identities and the narratives that teachers construct to account for their lived

experiences. The constructionist framework helps to make sense of the complicated social, historical, and cultural contexts that impact teachers' experiences as they evolve into practitioners who are inclusive.

The results of this study show that while teachers face many difficulties, conflicts, contradictions, and complexities; they also have positive and inspirational experiences as they transform to become inclusive practitioners. There is hope for the future of inclusive education because some teachers are starting to re-evaluate how traditional education can address exclusionary practices and take their role as change agents seriously to foster more inclusive and equitable education in classrooms and schools. Others who have not yet personally started to engage with inclusive education at a deep level, are merely presenting a thin veneer of inclusion to satisfy the demands of inclusive education policy expectations. The realization that historically and traditionally dominant unequal relations of power disempower, demoralize, and discourage teachers from challenging existing and institutional structures and practice, embracing transition, and renegotiating their individual and professional identity as teachers for greater inclusive and equitable education; is becoming more and more apparent. This research helped me to understand the diversity within and between individual teachers' classrooms and schools, the multiple realities that have an impact on multiple and intersecting teacher identity construction, and the consequent need to avoid one-dimensional and linear assessments and interpretations of teachers in transition.

Key words: Geographies; spaces; inclusive education, narratives and primary school

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

For many years, inclusive education has worked to change the paradigm to one in which learners with disabilities and special needs are mainstreamed into regular classrooms (Dela Fuente, 2021). The importance of inclusive education stems from its focus on ensuring that people with disabilities can access education and educational resources on an equal basis with people without disabilities. Some studies even claim that it could be the solution to ending discrimination and prejudice and fostering a more inclusive future (Begum, 2017). According to Ainscow (2016) and Nteropoulou-Nterou and Slee (2019), the Salamanca Framework for Inclusive Education on a Global Scale is viewed as a significant turning point in the evolution of inclusive education. Teachers must consider a variety of children's characteristics and needs since, in accordance with the Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education, every learner has a fundamental right to receive quality education (UNESCO, 1994). Inclusion is a fundamental right, and establishing inclusive educational institutions is an essential first step in creating an inclusive society. Since UNESCO advocated Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand (1990), Incheon, South Korea (2015), and the more recent Sustainable Development Goals, 2030; inclusive education has been a focus. Globally, inclusive education and practices are fast developing. As a prominent advocate of inclusive education, UNESCO has emphasized that teachers' preparation, knowledge delivery, and teaching strategies are crucial elements of an inclusive educational platform (UNESCO, 2015).

To guarantee equal rights and opportunities on accessible, significant, and quality inclusive education for learners with special needs, laws and policies, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), were enacted. This convention urged stakeholders to take measures responsive to inclusive education for exceptional learners. In response to the push for inclusive education, numerous nations have passed laws and regulations on inclusion and inclusive education. By promising to accommodate the educational needs of children with special needs and disabilities in ordinary (mainstream) schools rather than constructing specialized facilities for them, the 1999 National Education Policy Statement in Eswatini supported the move. The aforementioned Statement was updated ten years later, and in 2011 the Eswatini Education and Training Sector (EDSEC) came into effect. It was updated once more in 2018 (Pather & Slee, 2019). Every child has a right to inclusive, high-quality education, and the 2018 EDSEC policy emphasizes this point firmly. It also calls for any structural barriers to be identified and removed. All mainstream schools must admit all learners of school age, and all classroom teachers must support all learners in their academic pursuits, regardless of special needs or disabilities. The needs of the learners who benefit from inclusive classrooms are rising as a result, and schools are becoming more diverse. In order to provide equal rights and opportunities for accessible, meaningful, and quality education; laws and policies, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), were enacted. The UNCRPD urged stakeholders to take measures that were responsive to inclusive education for exceptional learners.

1.2 INVESTIGATING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Despite extensive international funding and campaigns, the realization of the goal of inclusive education varies greatly between nations and even within a single nation, depending on the laws, perceptions of inclusion, financial support, and access to inclusive educational institutions (Schwab, 2020; UNESCO, 2017). Globally, educational systems, in wealthy as well as developing countries face significant challenges occasioned by inclusive education. (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018). Internationally, there is still resistance to inclusive practice in schools (Moberg et al., 2020). Several studies have been conducted to gain a deeper understanding of this global phenomenon, and the results indicate that, while most teachers are generally supportive of inclusive education (Asamoah et al., 2018), some still find it difficult to implement inclusive practices in their classrooms (Dreyer, 2014), and others have serious concerns about inclusive education in general (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). While some teachers support separate special education institutions over inclusive ones so that learners with special needs can obtain a high-quality education, others disagree (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). Disengagement, disruption, and underachievement are now viewed as mental health issues rather than educational challenges or classroom management issues (Allan & Harwood, 2016). This enhances the status of psychologists and special educators as disability experts (Tomlinson, 2017).

Furthermore, even in nations that are pioneers in inclusion, and that benefit from governmental backing, there is a wealth of material demonstrating the difficulties of implementing inclusion ideals in schools and classrooms. For example, studies highlight that a big shift in policy focus still needs to be realised and the reality of the principles of inclusive education are not adequately reflected in everyday schooling (Nilholm, 2021). Several research (such as Moberge et al., 2020; Saloviita, 2020; Asamoah, et al., 2018; Bornman & Donohue, 2013)

focus on teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, and/or their understanding of inclusive education. These studies draw attention to teachers' attitudes and backgrounds. Although space is crucial to the development of inclusive education in a schooling context, most studies lack a deeper knowledge of the spatiality of inclusive education (Baustien Suity, 2019; Waitoller & Annamma, 2017).

As a social and political construct, the importance of space in inclusive education is still not fully understood (Waitoller & Annamma, 2017). The development and maintenance of learners' identities has been influenced by place (Baustien Suity, 2019), but little is known about how space interacts with, and mediates teacher identity and experiences (Thorius, 2016). Scholars argue that policy initiatives should take into consideration teachers' day-to-day experiences in the context of spatial inclusive education and analysis of power (Pather & Slee, 2018), with a special attention to important contextual and cultural specificity. Policy should engage with the strengths and tensions within the current educational and larger socio-cultural systems (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2016). Given that issues surrounding spatial conditions under which inclusive education is implemented are increasingly becoming very crucial for the successful implementation of inclusion, this study examines teachers' narratives using the lens of social constructionist theory to ascertain how the environments in which people work shapes their experiences.

My conceptualization of inclusive education in this study involves teachers as key stakeholders who are active and deliberate participants in the transformation of education systems to increase access and participation for every learner (Baustien Suity, 2019; Pit-ten Cate., 2018). Teachers are the ones on the ground finding "spaces to perform their agency as they select, interpret and modify policies in line with contextual demands and circumstances"

(Singal & Muthukrishna, 2016, p. 202). I argue that the effective implementation and outcome of inclusive practices in Eswatini will be largely determined by the investigating, understanding, and addressing realities and experiences of teachers and their spatial conditions under which they transform to become inclusive practitioners. This will have a significant impact on the effective implementation and outcome of inclusive practices in Eswatini.

The primary research question is 'What stories do teachers have about their experiences of inclusive education in three schools in Eswatini? The following are the research sub-questions:

- What are the dynamics which influence inclusive education in these schools?
- How do teachers negotiate and navigate the complex and varied spaces which impact on how inclusive education is implemented in these schools?

By incorporating genuine narratives of teachers' transitions to inclusive practitioners, this research goes beyond simply reporting on transformation in the abstract. Instead, it considers what is truly there. This helps to highlight factors that favour or constrain contextualizing and implementing inclusive education in Eswatini's schools. Teachers' lived experiences and realities, as well as the contextual tensions and contradictions that shape them, must be thoroughly examined, understood, and addressed if Eswatini is to go beyond the superficial rhetoric of inclusion.

1.3 RESEARCHER'S VIEW AND POSITIONALITY

This study is a qualitative research. The researcher's biases, values, and judgments must be taken into account when conducting qualitative research, because it has an interpretation process (Creswell, 1998). I discuss my experiences with inclusion and how it is implemented in schools, since such experiences may affect the outcomes and interpretations of this study.

Furthermore, understanding the researcher's positionality is significant as it underscores trustworthiness, self-disclosure, and ethical principles as yardsticks that guide a study (Flores, 2018; Moore, 2015). I take heed of the warning by Flores (2018) and Milligan (2016) that, if one does qualitative research utilizing interviews as a data generation method, eliminating the impact of "insider-ness" and "outsider-ness" on the research becomes impossible. In this regard, I am aware that when I do my research on the sampled group of teachers, the divergent status of insider-ness and outsider-ness is likely to arise (Crean, 2018). If the participants feel frightened by my role as Senior Inspector for Special Needs Education that could very well have a negative effect on them. In-fact, I foresee power dynamics between me as the researcher and participants. Even though I agree with Kersen (2016) that the insider/outsider role can be advantageous in research because it can yield insights that would not be possible outside of this dual role, it is still important to explain how I positioned myself as a researcher to avoid any threats that the participants might experience.

Working as a Senior Inspector for special needs education for over twenty years has given me the chance to take the initiative in reforming the education system in relation to inclusive education policies and practices. My long-time advocacy of, and interest in, promoting inclusion in the education system has provided me with an opportunity to work with teachers from public and private pre-primary, primary, secondary and high school levels since 1998. The nature of my work has been largely two-fold – that is, influencing systemic policy change to embrace inclusive education principles, and playing a supportive role to teachers as they transform their schools and classrooms to be inclusive. As a result of my work with teachers, I have noticed that implementing the goal of inclusive education is difficult for teachers at Eswatini's primary and secondary schools, and this has been confirmed by research conducted in Eswatini (Maseko & Fakudze, 2014; Adeboya & Ngwenya, 2015; Zwane & Malale, 2018).

This is why I developed an interest in understanding the teachers' experiences, their perceptions, beliefs and attitudes on their journey of transformation towards inclusion, and to understand the spatial conditions under which they implement inclusive education.

I first had firsthand experience with inclusive education through my involvement in the 1999 Ministry of Education Policy Statement, which addressed the negative effects of closely adhering to historical special education paradigms. I was made aware of a more democratic discourse on assisting learners with challenges in their learning and growth. My involvement in the African Caribbean Project (ACP), which focused on capacity building for teachers on inclusive education, further shaped my beliefs and attitudes about difference, diversity, and inclusive education. A three (3) year train-the-trainer capacity building project involving Kenya, Uganda, Botswana, Eswatini, and the UK started in 2009 and finished in 2011 (Pather & Slee, 2019). This project offered a very useful forum for exchanging perspectives on inclusive education. Additionally, it gave me a chance to collaborate with school administrators, teachers, and educators from primary and secondary schools across Eswatini's four regions, with a focus on teacher development. Through training, teachers were given the tools they needed to understand the value of inclusive teaching and learning, cater to the diverse needs of their learners, and accept learners who were not currently enrolled in school.

Different approaches were used for capacity building such as selecting four teachers from each school to attend a series of workshops. These were designated as resource teachers for inclusive education issues in their schools; conducting school-based workshops for all staff members including support staff in selected schools that already have learners with disabilities, targeting and training Guidance and Counselling teachers in all secondary/high schools, playing the role of resource persons for inclusive education, sensitizing head teachers from both primary and

secondary/high school on the need of strong leadership in inclusive education, and being instructional leaders. The focus has been to prepare teachers to work in classrooms with learners with special needs and diverse curricula needs; and to accommodate their diverse abilities. The trainings contributed positively to sensitizing teachers on inclusive education and to some extent developing positive attitudes towards inclusion.

Despite the extensive trainings conducted, the reality of inclusive education in Eswatini varies greatly between and even within individual schools. The steps required to advance policy and practice are still unclear in the field. One has observed that certain primary schools in Eswatini, including those that were selected as inclusion models, continue to discriminate against children with special needs. While their institutions prepare for inclusion, some principals and teachers wonder if learners with special needs and disabilities who are already enrolled in their facilities, can be sent home or sent back to special schools. What has facilitated transformation in certain teachers, for example, are the questions: What prevented other people from changing? Why have the trainings, orientations, and sensitization efforts had so little impact on some teachers? What is necessary to change educators? What have the teachers' experiences been like—those who have changed and those who have not— comparatively?

I cannot deny feeling a certain amount of disappointment and frustration upon learning of the exclusionary practices of learners with special needs and disabilities in schools, especially after making personal and professional investments on my part to see the successful implementation of inclusive education become a reality in the schools I had been working with. As I listened to the various voices surrounding me, including those of officers from the Ministry of Education and Training, head teachers, teachers, organizations for disabled persons, and parents, who all seemed willing to consign inclusion to failure; I began to feel hopeless. It

worried me that there was still a disconnect between formulations and realizations of inclusive education in the Eswatini educational system, despite the transformative policies, principles, and practices of inclusive education. The transformative policies lack consistency and are not connected to other facets of social and educational policy that both overtly and covertly promote exclusion. The environment for inclusive education, not only poses difficulties for the Ministry of Education and Training, but also places greater demands on teachers, who are at the forefront in school settings (Fuente, 2021). This context inspired me and led me to investigate the everyday realities of teachers' work amidst contradictions and tensions among "real"- action or what is, and the "ideal"- what could be, and the textually mediated power relations. There are no studies specifically on Eswatini inclusive model schools and teachers' experiences. This research sheds light on the experiences of teachers in primary schools designated as models of inclusive education.

This study is guided by the idea that teachers are key players in educational reforms, and that they must be given the freedom to implement these changes as they create their own interpretations of what the changes entail because change is a human experience. To understand the complexity of teachers' lives—that is, the tensions, contradictions, and dilemmas they encounter while taking into account the context in which they occur—the research sought to investigate the experiences of teachers as they make the transition from being inclusive practitioners to successfully implementing inclusive education. By looking at specific teacher experiences, we can learn more about how they engage with the tensions, contradictions, obstacles, and problems that exist in the environments where they live and work.

I believe in the principles of inclusive education, and I think that the current and upcoming generations of teachers hold the key to its success. I am aware that converting schools and teachers to be inclusive is a dynamic and complex topic, and there is ongoing demand for fresh perspectives on how teachers successfully integrate inclusion in their day-to-day work. I have a vested interest in seeing inclusive education successfully implemented in Eswatini, and this inherent interest may lead me to pass certain judgments on schools and teachers if, in my opinion, they fall short of the standards of inclusive education. However, I realize the complexity of implementing inclusive, especially regarding the different backgrounds, contexts and understandings of the very teachers who are the ones to ensure the implementation. I am aware that unless someone is faced with the practical consequences of inclusive education, or until they are forced to look at what is, they may not fully understand its complexity, multidimensionality, and problematic character.

1.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

Consistent with qualitative research as the foundation of the study's methodology, individual and focus group interviews were the instruments used to generate data from a sample of 6 rural, semi-urban and urban Hhohho region teachers. These participants were purposively sampled, and two teachers were drawn from each school. A narrative analysis procedure was employed as a tool to thematically analyse the data captured through recorded interviews. Focusing on a sample of 6 rural, semi-urban and urban Hhohho region, the study concentrated on teacher's personal understandings of inclusive education, their work, the dynamics which influence transformation in their schools, and the complex and varied spaces in which they work. This study depends on the connections I have made with teachers who have participated in several of inclusive education projects and programs including the ACP project.

Although the research focuses on a few teachers in the three schools, it would be unrealistic to present conclusions from the three schools to other schools, or even to other countries given the varied local and international context. The qualitative approach was useful in opening up possibilities for understanding the phenomena under study from the perspective of teachers. To engage in inclusive efforts and better understand inclusive education as a tool for a more just society, it is important to pay attention to the complex intersecting forms of exclusion that are ingrained in the communities where we live and work. This knowledge would necessitate a more radical transformative agenda at the front and centre. I am aware that by focusing on geographies of spaces for inclusive education by choosing teachers experiences of inclusive education, the study inherently excludes other significant types of experiences teachers may have. From this understanding, significant contribution to practice and knowledge of inclusive education can be inferred. My sample of participants comprised teachers from selected schools in all the four regions of the country. This study sought to provide deep insight rather than wider generalisations. The teachers' narratives shared in this study helped us to understand the practice of teaching more directly, as we faced the challenge of implementing an inclusive school for all learners. The qualitative approach was useful for opening up possibilities for understanding the phenomena under study from the perspective of teachers.

1.5 PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A significant amount of inclusive education research recognizes individual teachers' reality and experiences as a crucial component in comprehending the discrepancy that exists between stated policy and actual practice. In both affluent and developing countries, there seems to be a gap between teachers' notions of practical practice and the inclusion ideal. I believe the outcome of this study is significant enough to contribute towards policy development, transforming practice in the schools and classrooms and contributing towards new knowledge

on teacher agency and spaces in the implementation of inclusive education policy. This study can be seen as a tool for thinking, providing fresh perspectives and new information and knowledge that, perhaps, would make it easier to implement inclusion in Eswatini's classrooms and schools thus improving practice. Furthermore, the study can also be seen as contributing knowledge on issues surrounding spatial conditions under which inclusive education is implemented, which may determine transformation of education in Eswatini. Careful considerations of the teacher's narratives and findings can help the academic community to fill in some of the knowledge gaps in the inclusive education field of study. Other researchers can use this study as a guide in further exploring schooling spaces in the context of inclusive education.

The lack of teacher voices in the discussion of inclusive education in Eswatini is notable. Through this research, the teacher's voice in the Eswatini environment emerged in the narratives this research yielded. This study provides a platform for teachers' voices and stories to be heard as they personally narrate their life experiences as the transformation unfolds. These narratives can benefit policy makers to draw understandings and conclusions on the realities of teachers as they implement inclusive education. For example, understanding how the spaces at different levels of policy offer an arena for teachers to engage with inclusive education policy processes and the implications on policy development and practice. I was also concerned about giving this study empirical flavour by having the narratives of teachers correlating with theory.

This study is anticipated to add new knowledge into how teachers construct inclusive education and deal with the reforms and challenges in their everyday work. Carzins and Carzins (2018) argue that key members to putting inclusive education policy into practice are teachers whose willingness, open-mindedness, self-awareness, and cooperation is key to successful inclusion

practices. In order to plan and implement teacher development to enhance practice, Eswatini needs a better understanding of teachers' experiences and the environments in which they live and work. The intention is to influence reforms in practice and teacher development so that teachers can meet the demands of inclusive education policies, to share their stories and learn from their experiences. According to Pellicano, Bolt and Stahmer (2018), teachers have a substantial, agentic role in transforming current learning settings to satisfy the unique requirements of all students. This study therefore will contribute to transforming practice in terms of what happens in the classroom as teachers exercise their agency to address diversity.

The study further aims to validate that investigating, understanding, and addressing teachers' reality, experiences, and the geographical settings under which they work determine the effective implementation and outcome of inclusive practices in Eswatini. It is hoped that such an understanding will provide an accurate picture of specific life experiences encountered by the teacher, and provide a basis for developing informed ideas and teacher development programmes that are based on the "real" versus the "ideal" about the whole process of effective implementation of inclusive education practices in schools. Furthermore, focusing on the real workplaces of teachers addresses what Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) call "failed idealism" or what Haug (2014) calls a "rhethoric masterpiece". Most literature on Inclusive education communicates the view that classroom teachers play a significant part in the adoption of "inclusive pedagogy" (Makoelle, 2014) and the school and the classroom in particular, is the most important arena where they exercise their agency. Teachers' narratives are a critical factor in successful inclusive education.

The purpose of this research is to advance and expand investigation, thinking and understanding about issues crucial to inclusive practice among teachers, which have not been

attended to sufficiently in the Eswatini education system. The research does not start out with a hypothesis, nor does it represent logical formative steps towards proving or disproving a hypothesis. The various chapters and sections are closely tied to several others rather than linked in a cyclic sequence (Maxwell, 2008), and should be considered as "contributing to a set of overlapping conversations" (Young, 2000, p.14).

1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study's introduction and context are presented in **Chapter 1.** It indicates the researchers' positionality and interest in the phenomena under study while providing a quick synopsis of the subject being studied. The purpose and significance of the study are among the explicitly stated research aims and objectives in this chapter.

Chapter two explains the study's conceptual and theoretical framework. The conceptual framework outlines the concept, definition(s), and emergence of inclusive education on a national and international scale. The discourse of social justice and inclusive education is traced back to the historical discourse of special education, which established a dual educational environment that promoted the exclusion of specific groups of children from mainstream education. The chapter presents social constructionism as the theoretical framework for this inquiry. Additionally, it describes the connection between space and social practice (Baustien Suity, 2019) and the idea that teachers are active and purposeful participants in the change of classrooms and schools towards inclusive education (Makoelle, 2014). Particular attention is given to the fact that teachers work in socially complex environments as they seek to transform their schools and classrooms. The chapter presents the constructionist theory with which the teachers' experiences and complexity of factors which promote or hinder transformation can be identified and clearly understood. A critical geography perspective –

critical spatial analysis- is used to examine, from the teacher's perspective, how educational spaces such as schools are socially and discursively constructed as places that promote or inhibit inclusive education.

Chapter 3 is a review of the relevant literature, commencing with international, African, and Southern African literature, as well as studies on inclusive education in Eswatini. It serves as a review of the research on the reactions of teachers to the introduction of inclusive education. It includes a critical examination of the role of inclusive education in advancing equality and equity, with a particular focus on recent criticisms in the field. It reviews the implementation gaps, focusing on ideals versus reality; and a critical understanding of what is required for inclusive education to be implemented successfully in Eswatini.

Chapter four sets out the research design and methodological approaches which guide my study. Before explaining the study's research process, I first discuss the narrative research approach. Research findings are reported in **Chapter five,** predominantly comprising data in form of verbatim excerpts. Empirical data generated by the individual interviews and focus group discussions are used to support claims made in respect of findings. The findings are related to the literature and theory. Photographs give participants a visual voice that is mostly used to express their reflections and stories.

In **chapter 6** I interpreted and discussed in detail the findings in terms of the major themes and sub-themes that emerged. I brought my perspective while locating the data within the literature. The interpretation and discussion highlighted the complexities involved regarding how teachers engage with inclusive education policy, exercising urgency by creating their personal and professional identities in school and classroom spaces.

In **chapter 7**, which is the last chapter I discussed how the findings of the study met with the objectives of the study and further summarized the key findings of the study, share the conclusions reached and suggestions made for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

TEACHERS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

- a conceptual and theoretical framework for investigating teacher's experiences as they become inclusive practitioners

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The sociology of education's interest in inclusive education has spread throughout the world, challenging exclusionary practices and traditions, as well as what Slee (2019) describes as the historical positioning of schools as "enlisted in the application of boundaries through institutional givens such as banding, streaming, and special education defended as best practise" (p. 910). More broadly, inclusive education is seen as a reform that aims to remove exclusion and advance socially just means of offering excellent instruction, interventions, and support to all learners enrolled in mainstream education classes (Walton, 2018; Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014). It seeks to transform education systems and school cultures, and calls for a different way of thinking that includes evidence of expression and valuing of difference, as well as increasing responsiveness of daily education to all learners (Baustien Suity, 2019). It goes beyond simply integrating learners with disabilities who were previously excluded or marginalised. Teachers must adapt to these changes by changing the way they think, how they conceptualise themselves and others, how they learn, and how they use a variety of tools to make sense of the world, the people in it, and the social relationships that exist within it (Dámant, 2010). This entails boosting the efficiency of teachers, supporting learner-centered pedagogies, creating appropriate textbooks and learning resources, and ensuring that all learners attend school in safety and health. It demands a redoubled commitment to education that upholds principles of diversity, respect, a feeling of community, and social justice for marginalized and excluded groups (UNESCO, 2017). There is now pressure on schools to

move from forcing learners to "fit into" the system, to reforming themselves to accommodate the various needs of all learners and ensure that every learner gets a learning experience appropriate for their skills.

Implementing an inclusive education strategy necessitates a significant and meaningful pedagogical revolution that goes beyond simply reframing teaching to include a major challenge to the social order, bias, and established myths (Dámant, 2022). Teachers (and all educators) are faced with the task of making a drastic departure from one set of assumptions, beliefs, values, norms, behaviours, practices, and connections; to others. The role of teachers in the mediation of policy and the implementation of inclusive pedagogy was established in the previous chapter (Makoelle, 2014; Singal & Muthukrishna, 2016). Teachers must adopt a new perspective to assume the role of change agents (Dámant, 2010). They must see themselves, not only as educators, but also as people searching for what Singal and Muthukrishna (2016) refer to as "spaces to perform their agency as they select, interpret, and modify policies in line with contextual demands and circumstance" (p. 202).

It is important to investigate the complex relationship between policy and practice, and theoretical ideas are required to explain whether a policy is followed and why it does not function in practice (Azorn & Ainscow, 2020). According to certain theorists (Baustien Suity, 2019; Ngcobo & Muthukrisha, 2011), the creation of inclusive education depends heavily on the use of space. The experiences teachers have daily are contextualized and ought to be considered in the perspective of the spatiality of inclusive education. As a social and political construct, the importance of space in inclusive education is still understudied (Waitoller & Annamma, 2017). For the successful implementation of inclusive education, issues relating to the spatial context in which it is implemented are becoming extremely important. Any inquiry

into teachers' experiences as they transition to being inclusive practitioners, according to theorists and researchers, must take a closer look at the spatiality of inclusive education (Waitoller & Annamma, 2017; Broderick et al., 2012; Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011). In order to structure and support this research investigation, a combination of two conceptual and one theoretical element was used.

The definition of inclusive education is first conceptualized by concentrating on how it emerged at the international and national levels. It links the historical discourse of special education or exclusionary spaces, to the discourse of social justice and inclusive education, or inclusionary spaces, which created a dual educational environment that promoted the exclusion of specific groups of children from mainstream education. It focuses on the idea that schools are complex contact zones where a variety of factors, including beliefs, ideologies, and practices; interact in frequently uneven relations of dominance and subordination that frequently lead to unpredictability and uncertainty (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2019). It has been determined that space influences attempts to end educational exclusion, as well as how that exclusion is shaped (Soja, 2010).

Understanding teachers' experiences is more than just hearing their stories. It also involves understanding the meanings they give to the stories, and how geography interacts to mediate the formation of their identities and experiences. The study adopts the social constructionist theoretical framework, which holds that teachers actively participate in the construction of their narratives and that there will be multiple realities. Teachers' meanings and understandings of the phenomenon under study are embedded in the context in which they work.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

2.2.1 Global Emergence of Inclusive education

The practice and pedagogy of inclusive education are on the rise globally, and inclusive education is recognized as one of the most important elements in demonstrating fair access to high-quality education. Numerous statements, policies, and efforts from across the world promoted and structured the inclusive education discourse. The landmark World Conference on Education for All in 1990, held in Jomtien, Thailand, ignited a significant conversation and movement for inclusive education. It emphasized the need for learner-centred, adaptable approaches that can meet all the various needs of children. Later, the discussion was carried on at the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain, in June 1994, where 164 governments reaffirmed their dedication to the idea of universal education. The Salamanca Statement, which proposed significant changes to the way education was conducted either by excluding or integrating learners with special needs and disabilities, served as the catalyst for the idea of inclusive education (Pather & Slee, 2019). According to Rao and Kalyanpur (2015), the Salamanca Statement had a significant impact on how inclusive education was envisioned as "the hallmark of service provision for children with disabilities" (p. 11). The international community was urged to support the inclusive education philosophy by adopting the following policy: "We call upon all governments and urge them to adopt as a matter of all or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise" (UNESCO, 1994: ix). Additionally, the Salamanca Statement was particularly effective in linking inclusive education with ideas of an inclusive society. For instance, it said that:

> Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an

> inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide effective education to the majority of children and improve efficiency and ultimately the cost effectiveness of the entire education system. (UNESCO, 1994, p. xii).

The goal of this international policy is to advance the idea that education is a fundamental human right, paying close attention to significant policy changes required for the advancement of inclusive education, which needed to be designed to allow schools to serve all learners, including those experiencing learning barriers, ushering in a broader definition of inclusion. At an international forum in September 2019 with the subject "Every learner matters" to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Salamanca Declaration, a fresh commitment was made to bolster inclusion and equity in education. In order to provide equal and equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities for all learners, this event provided an opportunity to resurrect the concept of inclusion as a broader general guiding principle (Ainscow, 2020). The expanded definition of inclusion necessitates new thinking that concentrates on identifying, decreasing, and/or eliminating barriers that some learners encounter, and which cause them to be excluded due to contextual circumstances (Ainscow, 2020).

2.2.2 Transition from Special to Inclusive Education: Eswatini Context

Special education was recognized in Eswatini as the only strategy for educating learners with special needs and disabilities until 1999. The development of inclusive education was influenced by the 1960's experiences using integration as the organising concept for special education. Integration preserved the division between regular and special education, according to Haug (2017, p. 208). Most of the time, integration was a system-level reform that assumed that changes in placement would have the best effects on the teaching and learning environments for the "integrated learners." Unfortunately, integrating practices do not completely eradicate segregation, marginalization, discrimination, or devaluation in traditional

school environments. The transition to a new education policy on inclusive education was considered essential in resolving the historical systemic unfair special and integration educational practices, thus guaranteeing equitable access to education for all with a clear commitment to non-discrimination, and removing obstacles to high-quality teaching and learning. It was crucial for the Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training to rebuild an educational system that would value diversity and encourage each learner to participate equally and meaningfully. The 2011 EDSEC, which was reviewed in 2018, frames inclusive education within the context of human rights discourse, serving as a significant turning point and milestone on the path to granting excluded learners' equal access and participation. The Eswatini government's attempt to change the educational system to be inclusive has been strengthened by the 2018 Eswatini National Disability Act. The EDSEC plays a critical role in correcting the errors of the exclusionary special education policies and later integration policies, which, for a considerable amount of time, dominated policy and practice. The fundamental tenet of the EDSEC is that schools should offer high-quality instruction and accommodate all learners' needs, regardless of differences in gender, life circumstances, physical or mental abilities, developmental stage, learning capacity, academic level, or other factors (MoET, 2018). No child is excluded from receiving a regular education thanks to the strict reform of the educational system that the EDSEC formalized.

A more expansive viewpoint is supported, and a narrow perspective of inclusion, that concerns the placement of learners receiving special education where the instruction is taking place, and who is participating in it, is being questioned (Haug, 2017). A broader conceptual trend is to view inclusive education as a means of transforming educational systems rather than as a specialized approach for marginalized children (Opertti, Walker & Zhang, 2014). This will enable mainstream schools to become capable of offering all learners in their local

community's meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities. This broad perspective has given scholars momentum in their advocacy of inclusive education development, which is moving away from a deficit approach to transforming educational systems (Watkins, 2017), community collaboration, and scaling up effective inclusive education policies and practices (Messiou, 2017; Phasha et al., 2017).

This broad perspective supports the call for an inclusive education system as stated in the Eswatini Education policies. An alternative definition of education is also presented, one in which diversity and difference are celebrated rather than seen as a problem or a deficiency, and equal opportunity is promoted. The consensus is that Eswatini as a nation must go beyond merely integrating diverse learners into schools to providing them with the accommodation and support they need to participate completely and perform to their fullest ability. In order to ensure that what happens in the classrooms and at schools reflects the ideals of inclusion — it calls for equipping teachers and school administrators with the knowledge and skills they need. This shifts inclusion from the sphere of disability into the field of diversity, which is more difficult to practise since it "now incorporates a more extensive spectrum of concerns and discourses" (Thomas 2013, p. 474). It is difficult and time-consuming for teachers to undertake such a significant shift in schools, particularly when the goal is to adopt a unified reform that spans the entire system.

2.3 ACCESS, EQUALITY AND EQUITY

The concept of inclusive education has been evolving over time, and currently, the words "access, equality, and equity" best sum it up. These ideas are based on the social and human rights paradigm, which contend that every child matters, that no child should be denied an education, and that schools should offer learners a decent education regardless of their

circumstances, background, or aptitude. According to this perspective, access goes beyond simply being incorporated into the ordinary classroom setting, and instead calls for the classroom to embody the principles of inclusion, such as fair and equal opportunities for access, significant engagement, and development.

Equity is now central to the international development agenda for the first time, thanks to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Education 2030 Framework for Action in 2015. In the context of education, SDG 4 expressly requires that all UN member states offer inclusive and equitable quality education and support opportunities for lifelong learning for everyone (United Nations, 2015). All United Nations member states are obligated by Target 4.5 to address all types of exclusion and disparities in access, participation, and learning outcomes, from early life through adulthood. Additional arguments in favour of this target include its explicit equity focus, commitment to end gender disparities in education, and guaranteeing equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the weak, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations. The similar argument is made in the 2013 UNESCO Handbook on Education Policy Analysis and Programming, which emphasizes that equity is a crucial component of educational policy and that the degree of equity in educational delivery affects both participation in and access to education (p. 27). I am aware of the numerous and intricate connections between equality, equity and inclusive education, as well as the fact that the term is open to different interpretations and points of view regarding what aspects of education should be distributed "equitably" to whom and regarding what educational levels are "equitable or inequitable" (Alcott et al., 2018). Examining "whether education services are provided equally to all groups of learners paying particular attention to the actual access and participation by sub-groups" (ibid. p.27) is one aspect of determining equity in the Eswatini educational system.

2.3.1 Understanding complex equity issues

Nations across the world have implemented educational reforms to enhance the educational opportunities for all pupils as part of a commitment to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994). However, the transition from words to deeds has been at best, perilous and at worst, lost sight of its intended outcome (Kozelski et al., 2014). The need for equality in inclusive education has come up in countries that are attempting to provide inclusive answers to the increasingly heterogeneous populations (Artiles et al., 2011). Kozelski et al., (2014) argue that the real concern is how a movement meant to advance fairness may end up granting some learner groups uneven access to educational opportunities. A defined set of equity indicators, like those from UNESCO (2017), can aid in the implementation of inclusive education, according to Ferdulova et al. (2019).

The liberal ideal of inclusion serves as the foundation for current equity-driven reform initiatives and provides the finest education possible (Martin, 2019; Lambrecht et al., 2022). This means that everyone who wants to learn has access to it and the chance to do so in ways that are specific to their abilities, needs, and sociocultural environment (Calabrese et al., 2020). It is through these conflicts that relationships and subsequent 'performings' in schools that replicate exclusionary systems of power are tested, disturbed, and possibly challenged. Calls for such equity-driven reform, however, fall short of recognizing the struggles of people who are oppressed and discriminated against in educational settings as acts of justice, both in terms of form and content (De Royston et al., 2017). According to Willis (2015), as cited by Calabrese Barton and Tan (2020), equity frameworks in schools, particularly in the teaching and learning of academic subjects, have largely maintained the exclusion and discrimination power dynamics, and only slightly disrupted the hierarchies that exist in education.

Inequalities are (re)produced by the social frameworks of education, particularly the presumptions built into models of teaching, learning, assessment, and how we judge success (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016). Systematic social institutions that support inequality have a long history of ethical, moral, and cultural norms that are supported by the dominant educational paradigms. According to Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2019), fundamental economic imbalances and the resulting inadequate physical and human resources are largely to blame for the dynamic interaction between contextual obstacles and the establishment of inclusive practices in all of the district's schools. Numerous issues, such as large class numbers, shortage of teaching staff, and lack of instructional materials, have an impact on the implementation of inclusive education in schools, both the special schools and full-service schools in the district. The need to prioritize equity in all-inclusive education projects stems from the fact that exclusion and equality are pervasive in cultural, historical, economic, and political contexts, which have a negative impact on the implementation of inclusive education and crystallise in practises, tools, and ways of thinking of national and local communities (Kozleski et al., 2013). Equity as inclusion seeks to address the accumulating effects of numerous structural inequities by posing the question, "Who benefits from inclusive education?" What role do these learners play? Who has the power to choose who will attend? Who benefits from excellent educational options that enable all students to participate fully, realise their full potential, and feel valued members of a learning community — in this case, the mainstream learning community? (Windschitl et al., 2020).

For some groups of learners, marginalization still persists, and who is marginalized seems to be related to who and what was/is valued in each political, social, and economic system at the national as well as at the school level. Promoting equitable access to social and educational resources "often relies on the reasoned actions of professionals - in this case teachers - working

in complex contexts," according to Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht, (2019, p. 5). Teachers are believed to build the idea of who belongs and who does not, potentially preserving the status quo since they are school bearers, gatekeepers, and have the duty to encourage fair access (Kozelski et al., 2014). Teachers, who are central figures in educational frameworks, play a critical role in ending these systemic discriminatory patterns and fostering fair educational results for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. In this regard, it is crucial to have a thorough understanding of the context of how teachers perceive inclusive education, how and why they come to their decisions, and how they "find spaces to perform their agency as they select, interpret, and modify policy in line with contextual demands and circumstances" (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2016, p. 202).

2.4 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Although inclusive education is promoted as a way of breaking down barriers, enhancing results, and ending prejudice; it is a complicated and contentious concept with many different practical applications. The overall success or failure of inclusive education in Eswatini is difficult to determine with any degree of certainty. Thought should be given to some cautions that emerge from worldwide assessments of inclusive education. Due to incoherence and conflicting interests on what inclusive education is and its practice, the implementation has been marked by tensions and even resistance (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education 2014a, 2014b; Norwich 2014; Arduin 2015). Criticisms focus on the importation of theory and practice from the wealthier countries of the global North to the poorer countries of the global South without consideration for local context, culture, history, or conditions; the need to avoid essentialism and reductionism; and the temptation to give in to rhetoric at the expense of critical analysis (Dámant, 2010); while making sure that the concepts of inclusive education reflect local strengths and needs.

2.4.1 Plurality within the inclusive education agenda

There is no guarantee that there will be a single, coordinated worldwide movement in favour of inclusive education just because it has gained popularity in theoretical discussions and policy pronouncements (Malinen, 2013). The diversity of the inclusion agenda is reflected in the many conflicting definitions and imprecise understandings in many contexts, which hamper both implementation and change (see Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Krischler et al., 2019). Definitions of inclusion are varied and frequently at odds with one another (Schuelka, 2018; Slee, 2018), and lacking in conceptual clarity, which compromises comprehension in many circumstances. Locally created understandings of inclusive education are also influenced by contextual variables (Kozelski et al., 2011). According to Walton (2018), "tracking the genesis and historical trajectory of inclusive education is easier than settling on its definition and establishing what it is" due to the wide range of inclusive education practices around the world. According to scholars, the word "inclusive education" is controversial and does not have a clear conceptual focus, which may be a factor in some of the confusion and misunderstandings (Forlin et al., 2013; Slee, 2019). There are disagreements over its definition, including whether it should be limited to a narrow view of including learners with special needs or disabilities; or take a broad view, where it should be about all children at risk of exclusion due to any characteristics or identities (Ainscow et al., 2006 cited in Walton, 2018). There is a concern whether separate education settings for some learners can be justified within an inclusive education system (Slee, 2018; Kozelski et al., 2014).

Inclusive education is still seen as a way to serve learners with disabilities in settings where general education is offered (Ydo, 2020; Pather, 2019; Goransson & Nilholm, 2014). Others emphasize the pathologizing of difference, which has been a persistent theme since the 1950s, as well as the psycho-medical aspects of individual difference (Healy, 2011 cited in Pather &

Slee, 2019). Yet others (Tomlinson, 2014; Brownell & Smith, 2012; Pather & Slee, 2091) concentrate on curricular approaches in terms of what curriculum techniques are required to support special needs. According to Booth and Ainscow (2016) and Slee (2018), the most compelling emphasis is on school reform guided by inclusive principles and values that embrace and celebrate variety. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Incheon Declaration are among the treaties that provide the most authoritative definitions of inclusive education (Schuelka, 2018). According to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2016), inclusive education entails a continuous process of removing obstacles to education and promoting reform in the culture, policy, and practice in schools, to include all learners. It also focuses on a fundamental right to education; a principle that values learners' wellbeing, dignity, autonomy, and contribution to society. The foundation of inclusive education is the idea that every child has a right to attend school in the same setting as their peers (Cobley, 2023; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2017; Hehir, et al., 2016; UNESCO-IBE, 2016).

South Africa is one of the Southern African nations that has tried to change its perspective on inclusive education from one that focuses solely on learners with disabilities, to one that addresses systemic hurdles that may restrict the participation of all learners across all educational institutions. The formal Education Policy White Paper 6: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System, published in 2001, outlines the change. It is obvious that a commitment to quality educational opportunities for all, including learners with special educational needs (LSEN), remains at a policy statement level within general education policies for some nations in this region, such as Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, Eswatini, and Zimbabwe (Pather & Slee, 2019). It is somewhat accurate to say that inclusive education lacks a clear conceptual focus (Slee, 2018). The philosophy and

practice of inclusive education has given rise to increasing ambivalence and uncertainty. Its ideals and practises are being rejected in some circles, and a return to separate schools for children with impairments is being called for (Imray & Colley, 2017).

In recent years, there has also been increased focus on sociological perspectives of inclusive education and how society influences the invention of special needs and disability as social constructs. These are then viewed as a mechanism for achieving social justice (Boronski & Hassan, 2015; Singhal & Muthukrishna, 2016). Inclusive education is intended to enhance the rights of all learners who were made vulnerable and excluded within the sociology of education. The inclusive education plan is fundamentally guided by social justice and equity ideas. It is a manifesto for political education (Pather and Slee, 2019, p. 3). Slee's working definition of inclusive education, which is rights-based and asserts this way of thinking and understanding, is; "Inclusive education refers to securing and guaranteeing the right of all children to access, presence, participation, and success in their local regular school. For all children and young people to receive top-notch educational experiences and results, inclusive education requires local schools to increase their capacity to remove obstacles to access, presence, participation, and achievement" (Slee, 2019, p. 9).

According to this definition, inclusive education aims to create a more equal and high-quality educational system while also extending conventional schools' obligation to meet the various needs of all learners. In the same vein, Forlin et al., 2013, p. 7) conclude that there are two main categories of definitions of inclusive education: (a) those that define the characteristics of inclusion, and (b) those that identify and characterise the obstacles to inclusion that must be overcome. This, however, does not consider the fact that various domains overlap. The second category includes researchers like Ainscow (2015) who frequently outline the characteristics

of inclusive learning environments for all children before recommending a more comprehensive education reform agenda for the benefit of all children, including children and teenagers with disabilities. Slee (2018, p. 16) cites Loren (2009) who proposes the following seven essential characteristics:

- All children go to their local school, and schools and districts have a "zero-rejection" policy when it comes to enrolling and educating kids in their area.
- All children are accepted and loved.
- All study in regularly occurring, diverse classrooms with classmates their own age.
- All follow broadly comparable course curricula that can be adjusted and modified as necessary.
- All children participate in regular school and classroom learning activities and events.
- All children are encouraged to make friends and succeed socially with their peers.
- Adequate resources and staff training are provided within the school and district to support inclusion.

Tensions arise from the many interpretations of inclusion that support the growth of inclusive educational policies and practices in the Southern African region. Definitions illustrate how a subject is understood and have an impact on its application, which in turn, affects how diverse learner groups are met and treated in inclusive education (Haug, 2017). Norwich & Koutsouris, (2018) argue that, when inclusion is define as being about everyone's learning guided by abstract values, it has an effect of distancing inclusive from the unique conditions of disability. Disability is combined with other diversity factors including ethnicity, gender, learning a second language, and socioeconomic disadvantage, which can oversimplify the disparities between the various diversity factors.

The concept of "inclusion" is adopted in this study, positioning it at the centre of the social justice debate. It is presented as an expression of social justice and individual human rights, as well as an unmistakable rejection of exclusion (Slee, 2011). It is supported by a commitment to human rights (Sulochini & Slee, 2019). This study supports the notion that inclusion entails ensuring that everyone has access to opportunities for achievement regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or handicap (Paseka & Schwab, 2019). The focus is on reform that values and supports diversity while critiquing "practices which continue to reflect hierarchies of belonging and exclusion from the educational main-game" (Slee, 2019, p. 910). In order to promote access, belonging, participation, and achievement for all learners, inclusive education focuses on recognizing and addressing exclusion in the education system (UNESCO 2018). To foster learning, participation, and well-being in the classroom, schools and educators are expected to create school-based inclusive policies, integrate inclusion into different school development plans, and use differentiated teaching and learning strategies (Nxumalo, 2018). The most successful way to address "system change" and end discriminatory attitudes is to establish welcoming societies, and ensure quality education for all through an inclusive approach to education and schooling. It enables us to seriously consider the changes that must be made to policies, organizational and physical structures, teacher roles and responsibilities, classroom curricula, and overall understanding of the components required for inclusive, high-quality teaching and learning (Burello et al., 2013).

The battle to improve teaching and learning in classrooms so that all learners benefit from inclusive education, is one issue to take into account, independent of definition and practice. It continues to be difficult to operationalize inclusive education in practice in a way that responds to the realities and priorities of local society, according to Donohou and Bornamn (2014). Because exclusion persists as a social and pedagogical reality, inclusive education has

been described as a process in this context (UNESCO, 2018). This is a continuous area of study and discussion, and it is inevitable that such a drastically different approach to education will require more than just a modification of existing regulations. Instead, it will necessitate continual reflection on school cultures, rules, and practices. I concur with Slee (2019, p. 9) that the following direct questions should guide the thoughts and deeds of inclusive practitioners:

- What type of world do we want our children and young people to live in?
- What types of classrooms and schools are necessary to create that world?
- What do children need to understand, consider, and do to create a more inclusive world?
- Who gets in, who gets out in mainstream schools, who makes the decisions, and what are we going to do about it when it comes to our schools?

2.4.2 Lack of localized construction of educational policies

In the development of inclusive education and the suggested global reaction, the Northern hegemony has been criticized (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2014; 2016; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). The hegemonic narrative of inclusive education relates to what Kozleski et al. (2015) referred to as "first" and "second generation" inclusive education or what Kalyanpur (2020, p. 296) refers to as "universality of applicability" – that is, that constructions and implementation of inclusive education are equally appropriate within any context. The premise of fit disregards differences in the global North and South's social, political, economic, and cultural context (Kozleski et al., 2015; Kalynapur, 2020). The requirement for a localized formulation of educational policies and programmes is highlighted by the failure to represent the educational realities of the South and/or recognize the mounting facts (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2014; 2016; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). The primacy of Western ideas, knowledge systems, and discourses has been criticized as having influenced inclusive

education and as being an unwelcome imposition on nations in the Global South (see, for instance, Walton, 2018). Toolkits and indices, created by academics with northern bases who have little familiarity with the realities of schools in distant and rural areas of impoverished populations in many developing nations, are being naively imported. According to Singal and Muthukrishna (2014, 2016), the Index for Inclusion is cited as an example of toolkits that are not culture- or value-free. They are based on the presumption that inclusive education calls for a single or homogenous strategy, and can thus, be implemented in the same way across nations and national contexts. These methods promote widely recognized ideas like "equality" without taking into account regional interpretations of such ideas in the context of social, political, and cultural history and contemporary understandings. For many people, including teachers and policymakers who are caught in the web of pursuing success markers that are articulated by donor organisations affected by such discourse, such an approach is disempowering (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018).

Although inclusive education is a contextualized discourse, “Inclusivity, in community and education, is a cultural product that has unique and specific configurations depending on its spatial and temporal contexts” (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2014, p. 7). The power dynamics in the policy process in countries of the South are evident in the exclusion of culturally relevant knowledge, social histories, economic realities, indigenous knowledges, contextual priorities, and local experts. Therefore, there is a strong debate about decolonizing inclusive education (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018) and a strong advocacy for its implementation in our national context and a broader Southern context — implementation that draws on the strengths and capabilities of local communities and takes into account the historical, socioeconomic, political, geographical, cultural, and religious con-straints. This choice also holds true for research on the implementation of inclusive education in Eswatini because the country's

various circumstances make it impossible to apply a single, uniform plan to all the schools. "There can be no single or homogenous strategy, no set, given, formula against exclusion," claims D'amant (2010, p. 17), "because exclusion itself is never homogenous; it varies, it changes, and it is always uneven." A successful method in one situation might not be transferable to another situation, location, or time. The Salamanca's "global norming" requirement that "children with special educational needs must have access to regular schools that should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs" (UNESCO, 1994, p. vii) ignores regional contextual differences, and undercuts native educational structures (Kalyanpur, 2020). However, Kricke and Neubert (2017) urge us to acknowledge that local communities are always embedded in the larger dispositifs (according to the Foucauldian view), in many complex ways, in global interrelations. In this regard, they suggest that the inclusive slogan must be: "Learn locally, think globally!"

2.4.3 Competing Initiatives: Special and Inclusive education

Special education has been designed to fulfil the role of providing education to learners with special needs and disabilities as long as mainstream schools exclude these particular groups of learners (Tomlinson, 2017). Special education was created because of the refusal and incapacity of mainstream schools to teach all children. According to the inclusion principle, many nations still maintain a divide between special education and general education (Florian, 2019; Anastasiou, Kauffman &Di Nuovo 2015; Hardy & Woodcock 2015). According to several studies (Allan & Sturm, 2018; Slee, et al., 2019; Corcoran & Whitburn, 2016), inclusive education policies, programmes, and practices have a significant positive impact on the ability of special education to adapt. There is disagreement about inclusive education in both the North (rich nations) and South (developing countries), and a claim that inclusive education is flawed from both a theoretical and practical standpoint (Armstrong et al., 2010; Singal &

Muthukhrishna, 2014). The "pragmatic watering down of the underlying idealism of inclusion" has theoretically undermined inclusion (Armstrong et al., 2011, p. 37). There is an argument that inclusion is perceived as ignoring the realities of education and schooling from a practical standpoint and that special education language has evolved, emitting a language of inclusiveness rather than learning new languages (Slee , 2018).

Discourses of inclusion (in both policy and practise) have failed to move past medical models of difference, rather than bring about a paradigm shift. This has ultimately resulted in a situation in which conservative forces use the language of inclusion to uphold practises of exclusion (Slee, 2019). According to research, some teachers who work in separate settings believe that a certain amount of withdrawal to a different setting has inclusive elements by enabling some learners to participate in learning the same curriculum as other learners (Slee, 2019). Hodkinson (2012) emphasises that the concept of integration is occasionally referenced when the term "inclusion" is employed. As a result, placement has taken on significant importance, and the presumptive standardization of identification, diagnosis, and categorization has evolved into a "global norming" that medicalizes a deficit within the child, while ignoring the "constructed otherness" of labels as peculiar and culturally based (McDermott, Edgar & Scarloss, 2015). The 1999 National Policy Statement on school, which sought to increase access to school for learners with special needs and disabilities, was a clear example of the contradictions between the "specialized" and the "inclusive" discourses in Eswatini's policy-making process. Theorists have voiced concern that inclusion as an idea and practice, has not been sufficiently explored since special education has gotten too much focus within inclusive education (Norwich and Koutsouris, 2018). Because of this, some scholars have suggested that nations that are establishing inclusive education should forego special education and switch to inclusive education instead (Richardson & Powell 2011). Despite the criticism that inclusive

education has received, I agree with calls for inclusivity or minimization of its importance in fostering high-quality education for everyone. In fact, I firmly believe that diversity is an essential element of any educational practice that is truly democratic. Nevertheless, frameworks for diversity must develop within certain historical and contemporary settings (Kalyanpur, 2020).

2.4.4 Deconstruction of disability

The inclusion movement is seen as having erred more in expressing a rational and consistent ideology that promotes the non-exclusionary education of all learners, than it did in establishing approaches for inclusive teaching and learning (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2014). The failure of inclusion advocates to actively and unwittingly advance their own integrationist and civil rights goals by defending the stigmatization and devaluation of learners with disabilities, while denouncing it, raises serious concerns. Singal and Muthukrishna (2014) express concern that discourses on disability in the global South have largely become deficit-oriented, with the pattern in debates focusing on "what is lacking" and "what does not work" without acknowledging the strengths to build upon. One persuasive philosophical perspective on inclusion that challenges the political and ethical hierarchy of ability and handicap in the education system is deconstruction. They contend that deconstruction is a vital step in changing the presumptive power dynamics in daily life. A crucial component of the inclusion agenda in the field of special education is the emphasis on identifying and rearranging social inequities that exist in children's lives. According to Singal and Muthukrishna (2014), a sociological understanding of the intricate and subtle ways that the experience of disability is formed and shaped within social and political arenas, is necessary.

2.4.5 Using criticism constructively

It is important that we do not just promote the idea of inclusive education in our countries, but rather to engage in a critical study of the current systems, and pose key questions. Considering this, the role of policy and teachers as active agents in the mediation of inclusive education policy is critical to challenge the status quo in the interests of "what could be" (Gillborn, 1995, p. 17 as cited in Dámant, 2010) and inclusion to what, inclusion for what purposes. (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2016). Teachers who promote social justice and inclusion must also be aware that "the communities they themselves build are always a cultural construction that must be kept open for further deconstruction and reconstruction in order to include more diversity and do justice to the democratic claims of participation for all who want to join them" (Kricke & Neubert, 2017, p. 9). Critical thinking and reflective practice increase the chance of understanding the evolving nature and genuine challenges faced by teachers and mainstream education institutions in many Southern African nations, including Eswatini (Singal, 2019). Additionally, inclusive teachers will come to understand that the standards of inclusion are constructions that grew out of the social and political claims made by social movements in the latter half of the 20th century, and that these standards are open to the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of additional democratic claims through critical thinking and reflective practice (Kricke & Neubert, 2017). In light of this, it is important for teachers to enhance their critical thinking and reflective practice in order to promote inclusive teaching and learning.

2.5 THE NOTION OF GEOGRAPHIES

2.5.1 Examining Human Geographies

Children's geographies is a field of human geography that has attracted a lot of attention over the past 20 years (see, for instance, Christensen & James 2000, 2008, 2017; Kellett, 2010;

Palaiologou, 2012). The term "geographies" refers to an emphasis on explicit and detailed attention to the everyday spatiality of people's lives as they interact with social institutions in human geography (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2012, p. 358; Campbell, 2018). Geographies that are inherently subjective, individual, and personal are always encountered, lived, and shaped by particular periods (Campbell, 2018). According to Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018, p. 8),

> Power, oppression, and marginalisation are processes that operate in all facets of creating inclusive schools and communities, including the development of an inclusive school culture; creating an inclusive curriculum and inclusive pedagogies; creating safe, health-promoting schools; community partnerships; indigenizing education; and ensuring educational access for all and achieving the goal of quality learning outcomes for all learners.

Critical geographers contend that the moment is right to further this line of research since space influences educational exclusion and efforts to end it (see, for instance, Soja, 2010; Harvey, 2009). Given that space is socially created, Soja (2010) emphasizes that justice and injustice have a spatial component at all scales of geography. According to Soja (2010), space is regarded as an active ecology that mediates and is mediated by human activity, rather than simply a container or stage. Kozleski et al., (2014) argue that, in order to achieve social justice, efforts must take into account the historical legacies of injustice ingrained in the local context at the national, community, and educational levels. According to Waitoller and Annamma (in press), organizations like governments and social organizations have purposefully influenced how space is arranged. The segregation of learners with special needs in getting special education services in separate schools where some resources and access to educational opportunities are absent is one example of the arrangement of space. According to Waitoller

and Annamma (2017) citing Soja (1989), "every space is simultaneously lived and imagined" (p. 25). This suggests that concepts of disability and inclusive education are woven into the social fabric of place. According to Lipman (2013), spatial inequalities can be corrected through a range of group political and social initiatives because they are a product of human behaviour. Spaces' symbolic meaning can be altered with the aid of educational policy.

Scholars are advised to take a spatial turn (Soja, 2013), and Aoki (2000) advises that advocates and scholars of inclusive education should adopt the persona of "space invaders" who are attempting to challenge and politicise "neutral" concepts of space (p. 913). Invaders of space should be aware that fairness requires a social and spatial conceptualization, which helps us grasp how power is related to space. According to Soja (2010), in Waitoller and Annamma (2017), inclusive education scholars would not envision justice if they reject the idea of space as a natural setting and see it as consequential, both influencing and being influenced by social processes. Research that acknowledges the importance of space can also envision enabling landscapes that favour inclusive education and have a positive influence on learners' educational access, participation, and outcomes. To better understand what steps are required to eliminate complex kinds of exclusion, this research focuses on the geographies of places for inclusive education and teachers' experiences.

Space is not just seen as a box or a stage; but rather, as a dynamic ecology that is shaped by culture and is both mediated by and mediates human activity (Soja, 2010; Rosen, 2018). Kozleski et al., (2014) argue that, in order to achieve social justice, efforts must take into account the historical legacies of injustice ingrained in the local context at the national, community, and educational levels. According to Waitoller and Annamma (2017), organisations like governments and social groupings have purposefully influenced how space

is constituted. The segregation of learners with special needs into separate schools where some resources and access to educational opportunities are absent, is one example of the arrangement of space. According to Waitoller and Annamma (2017) citing Soja (1989), every space is both lived in and envisioned. This indicates that the social fabric of space is woven together with constructs of disability and inclusive schooling. However, because spatial injustices are a result of human action, they can be addressed via many forms of collective political and social activities (Waitoller & Annamma, 2017). Education policy is crucial in changing the symbolic meaning of spaces.

Waitoller and Annamma (2017) call on scholars and supporters of inclusive education to take on the role of "space invaders" and subvert, contest, and politicize the "neutral" ideas of space. Invaders of space should be aware that fairness requires a social and spatial conceptualization, which will help us grasp how power is related to space. Waitoller and Annamma (2017) quote Soja (2010) in their argument that "inclusive education researchers will be able to imagine justices, by rejecting the concept of space as a natural backdrop, and recognising space as consequential, both being impacted by and impacting social processes" (p.26). Research that acknowledges the importance of space can also envision enabling landscapes that favour inclusive education and have a positive influence on learners' educational access, participation, and outcomes. The issue of power and agency has come up in discussions on inclusive education due to differences in how inclusive education is understood and how it is implemented in varied school settings. Who should select which form of inclusive education should be the focus of implementation in a particular school region, cluster, or school is the key question (Engelbrecht, 2018). According to Ngcobo & Muthukhrishna (2011) the network of power is entrenched in the pervasive spaces of normative discourses. Therefore, Ngcobo and Muthuthrishna (2011) make the case for a power analysis in educational institutions that have

enrolled learners with a range of needs. The importance of spatial geography for understanding and designing strategies to address exclusion has been underlined in recent studies on inclusive education (Waitolla & Annamma, 2017). Since exclusion results in large part from the unequal allocation of opportunities and resources among various social groups and across geographical locations, it is necessary to link inclusion to a spatial and territorial view on distributive justice. To better understand what steps are required to eliminate complex kinds of exclusion, this research focuses on the geographies of places for inclusive education and teachers' experiences.

2.5.2 Geographies of Space: re-considering the politics of special educational needs

In the past, boundaries have been utilized to maintain order and keep people out of the physical space (Baustien Suity, 2019). This has been done historically to perpetuate exclusion. Special education facilities that are segregated attempt to contain any learners who could upset the peace in public areas. According to Honeyford and Zanden (2013), cited in Baustien Suity (2019), special schools are described as environments for a specific group of learners with special educational needs, with unique practices and expectations tailored to that group (while mainstream physical spaces are designed for learners s with normal physical abilities). Even in this era of inclusive education, certain groups of learners who are classified as having special needs are still excluded. The adoption of inclusive education has historically been associated with granting special access to learners with special needs in regular classes. Recent studies have highlighted the significance of space in considering and developing strategies to end exclusion. Scholars have documented and supported a "spatial turn" in addressing spatial (in) equity in light of the importance of location in forming and conditioning human activity (Soja, 2013; Kraftl, 2022).

2.5.3 Inclusion gatekeepers - bearing the weight of ableism

The inclusive education framework that I use in this study supports what Waitoller and Artiles (2013) and Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) refer to as an enlarged conceptualization of inclusive education, or what Baustien Suity (2019) refers to as critical inclusion. "Critical inclusion critiques ableism as a system of oppression that defines normative centre of schools that uses dominant conceptions of normalcy and difference in order to distribute access and power," notes Leonardo and Broderick (2011), as cited by Suity (2019, p. 1033). According to research, practising contexts where dominant beliefs about normalcy and difference exist and how these normalizing discourses support oppression, have a significant impact on teachers' perception of inclusion (Baustien Suity, 2019). With institutional givens like streaming and special education defended as best practice to accommodate learners who do not meet certain criteria, schools have historically been involved in the application of boundaries (Slee, 2019). These practices continue in the era of inclusive education to reflect hierarchies of belonging and exclusion from the educational main-game. Who was and was not educable, of value, or worth investing in, according to Ball (2013), "became in many respects an expression of humanity and a demarcation of the limits of humanity" (p. 48). Schools are venues for some children and young people, rather than all of them, due to accepted pressures within the culture and organization of education (Slee, 2019, p. 911). The relationship between education (school spaces) and "outsiders" (referring to other institutional actors such as family, community, Ministry of Education, and state) is another major issue in inclusive education, and discussions about the geographies of education have begun to focus on how these institutions contribute to marginalisation (Kraftl et al., 2022).

The argument for doing a power analysis of educational institutions that blatantly mistreat learners with disabilities or those that are different by employing "tactics of domination" is

made by Ngcobo and Muthukhrishna (2011). Oppression exists when the dominant group has the power to decide and mould the reality that the oppressed groups experience. Accordingly, oppressive social interactions result in an environment where the oppressed group is constantly being watched (Ngcobo and Muthukhrishna, 2011). The "othering" that results from teachers creating the "normal/not normal binary" is impacted by a negative depiction of differences (Ngcobo and Muthukhrishna, 2011). Studies have emphasized the practice of "othering" (see Reeves et al., 2020). According to Ngcobo and Muthukhrisha (2011), schools appear to be places where adults recreate unequal social structures while frequently being unaware of the sinister nature of their actions (p. 362). In their assessment of one school-based project that sought to incorporate children with disabilities and follow the imperatives of Education White Paper 6, they discovered that the school made almost no systematic modifications to establish an enabling environment for the various categories of handicapped learners. Their analysis of the internal layout of the classrooms showed that there were few options for learners with disabilities to get a high-quality education through inclusion. In fact, Ngcobo and Muthukhrishna (2011) believed that the spaces in which general and special education is provided tend to reflect a spatial convergence where differences are emphasized. The diversity of the learners in the classrooms must have been difficult for the teachers. According to the results of the study on the spatiality of the classroom, teachers urgently need training on curriculum and evaluation procedures that would be sensitive to the diversity in their classrooms. According to Sibley (1995), cited in Baustien Suity (2019), individuals in authority draw borders to protect their own security and maintain order, and anyone deemed a threat to these systems of order is subsequently expelled from the physical area. Therefore, segregated special education settings work to keep the so-called polluted individuals contained, and from contaminating the rest of the school. These findings are made worse by the fact that learners with very severe disabilities are overrepresented in special schools and are more likely

than their disabled peers to receive an education in segregated settings. In other words, the physical manifestations of social stigma around differences from a dominant norm, such as being abled, are represented through the real and imagined borders between mainstream education and separate special school settings (Baustien Suity, 2019).

2.5.4 Foregrounding space

Foregrounding spatiality was helpful in this investigation for a variety of reasons. First, it gave a chance to examine how space is created in schools in Eswatini in ways that support inclusion or exclusion. Second, it was helpful in confronting the way that special education frequently uses terminology, labels, and practices that exclude people. Thirdly, this approach to inclusive education was appropriate for examining teachers' experiences because it aims to change the education system in Eswatini for greater equity by identifying, deconstructing, and reshaping the social mechanisms that contribute to unfairness (Baustien Suity, 2019).

In order to better understand how spatiality in education is influenced by the geography of power, this study examines teacher narratives on the geographies of spaces for inclusive education in primary schools in Eswatini. This superficial comprehension of space in inclusive education scholarship is based on Felicity Armstrong's work (Armstrong, 2003, 2007), in which she discovered that social values surrounding disability and difference are infused in ways such that learners are categorized and educational structures and curricula are managed to (re) produce exclusion (Baustien Suity, 2019, p. 1033). It is the goal of this study to "disrupt the assumption of space as a neutral construct and uncover ways in which power is embedded in school geographies" by emphasizing space (Waitoller & Annamma, 2017). In order to comprehend the process of normal school teachers' spatial identity creation, this study adopts a spatial turn in inclusive education using Soja's (1996) three-tiered conceptualization of space. According to Soja (1996) in Baustien Siuty (2019), the original space represents the actual,

physical construction of space, Examples include the classroom doors and walls, as well as the stairs, floor, wings, and halls. Second space encompasses the implicit presumptions that underpin and maintain physical space. The second important area exemplifies how power is rooted in the social constructions of space. It looks into the ways in which power structures employ social and physical space to uphold order and control. The third space combines the first and second space, to better understand the contextualized lived experiences of people who inhabit social space. It refers to the space where all locations are present, each clearly visible from all angles, but also a secret and imaginary object, full of illusions and allusions. It is an area that all of us share but which we have never fully seen and comprehended, an incomprehensible cosmos.

I want to demonstrate how the spatial trialectics combine to influence how the identities of the teachers in this study are created. Spatial identity formation, according to Leander (2002, p. 215) cited by Baustien Suity (2019) refers to how spatial constructions, which are rooted in social practices, control and support the production of identity. In order to appreciate how spaces function as a medium through which identities are mediated, it is important to understand spatial identities. In light of this, the definition of space as something with clearly defined limits is rejected in favour of one associated with spaces that transcend context (Honeyford & Zanden, 2013). By locating lived experiences within larger cultural practises, socio-political interests, and social positioning, the social constructionism theory brings issues of justice and power to light (Collins, 2013).

2.6 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF TEACHER'S NARRATIVES

This research is informed by the idea that teachers are active and purposeful social constructivists in the change of classrooms and schools towards inclusive education, as well as

the connection between space and social practice. Vygotsky (1978) and other influential social constructionist thinkers believe that social interaction is the primary source of knowledge and reality. According to Jurtela and Carman (2015), the term "social constructionism" refers to a tradition of research that holds the view that social and interpersonal effects account for a significant portion of human existence and experiences. Social constructionism, according to Burr and Dick (2017), developed within the postmodernist movement that questioned the notion that there is a single truth. Social constructionism, according to Burr and Dick (2017), was one of many alternative epistemologies that placed emphasis on language and the social construction of meaning. According to Burr and Dik (2017), social constructionism places a strong emphasis on subjectivity, multiple truths, the historical and cultural specificity of knowledge, and the fact that our beliefs about what is true at any given time are inextricably linked to language use and power dynamics. Additionally, social constructionism recognizes that knowledge and understanding are framed by discourses that frequently reflect the ideas of powerful groups acting to the exclusion and disadvantage of the less powerful groups in society. These discourses often reflect how the world is portrayed or produced through language (Burr & Dick, 2017).

This study's conceptualization is based on the idea that people actively participate in creating the reality they experience (Rees et al., 2020), and as a result, teacher narratives are socially produced. Relationships, not objective reality, determine how we perceive the world. (Morejele, 2012). This claim does not deny the existence of outside facts, but since teachers are social beings and inclusive education is a social phenomenon, it is crucial to understand how they interpret their surroundings. The foundation for social knowledge production consists of norms, attitudes, traditions, and practices that might change depending on the situation and cultural group. This demonstrates how reality is complicated and arbitrary

depending on how research participants view it. While also examining and evaluating the data and employing a qualitative approach to the research as a whole, this study sought to embrace the notion of multiple realities as teachers strive to implement inclusive education policy (Creswell, 2007; Burr and Dick, 2017). The narrative form of this research study fits nicely with the qualitative approach's emphasis on people's regular encounters and how they use language to construct their worlds. This study recognizes the critical role that language and meaning play in the construction of knowledge, conceptions, and understandings of events.

According to recent advances in social science, location is important for the creation and maintenance of the identities and narratives that teachers use to describe their lives and experiences (Baustien Suity, 2019). Given that this study characterized inclusive education as seeking to change educational systems to improve access, engagement, and accomplishment for learners at the intersection of various producers of difference, the significance of space as a social and political construct becomes important. According to recent developments in social theory, emphasizing spatiality is crucial for inclusive education methods that seek to alter the educational system in order to improve equity (Baustien Suity, 2019). Teachers' narratives, identities, and practices are influenced by their social identities, as well as the opportunities and constraints presented by the context in which they work (Carrim, 2019). These influences are not limited to knowledge-base and professional teaching (Ruszynyak & Walton, 2022). The spatial critical analytical lens through which this study is conceptualized is therefore, informed by the knowledge that the narratives teachers develop to explain themselves are influenced by a number of contextual effects on teachers and their practice. I refer to Felicity Amstrong's (2007) theory that the geography of power shapes spatiality in education. This study responds to Waitoller and Annammas's (2017) recommendation that scholars examine the ways in which power is ingrained in school geography and question the notion that space is a neutral

phenomenon. By putting a focus on spatial analysis, we may better understand the forces that shape inclusive education and how teachers navigate the complex and different settings of inclusive education in their schools.

Reviewing the theoretical justifications used by teachers to frame their narratives about inclusive education in Eswatini is the focus of this research project. The objective is to comprehend the teachers' "quality and texture" of inclusive education experience and investigate how they negotiate and navigate the intricate and different inclusive education environments in their respective domains. With the help of this framework, we can examine the numerous social realities that teachers create for themselves within the context of the phenomenon known as inclusive education, and give voice to their experiences. The narrative technique used in this study relies on hearing directly from the teachers as they self-reflect and describe their transformation into inclusive education practitioners.

Social constructionism easily fits in with qualitative research since it seeks to understand how people and groups shape the social world they inhabit (Burr & Dik, 2017). In particular environments like schools, the use of qualitative research techniques is advocated for understanding people's meanings in their own settings (Burr & Dik, 2017). It is best to use qualitative research methods to collect linguistic and textual data since they are less likely to decontextualize participant experiences and accounts (Burr & Dik, 2017, p. 17). A key concept for attaining inclusive education, qualitative research "gives voice" and enables teachers to participate in the research process (Burr & Dik, 2017). Teachers have the chance to talk about their understanding of inclusive education and their own experiences with it. Awareness of human geography leads to a social grasp of inclusive education. According to Baustein Suity (2019, p. 1034), this framing provides a basis for re-examining the familiar in order to generate

new insights that can challenge ingrained assumptions about the function of space in inclusive education work, and the narratives that teachers create to describe themselves and their professional lives. The constructionist framework is a tool for deconstructing the complicated social, historical, and cultural contexts that influence teachers' experiences as they undergo a transformation to become inclusive practitioners and effectively implement the federal policy on inclusive education.

2.61. Language

The central tenet of the social constructionist approach is that our understanding and even perception of the world, its objects (including people), and its events is not always a reflection of the nature of that world, but rather the result of how that world is represented or produced through language (Burr & Dik, 2017). The emphasis is on the level of attainment because knowledge and meaning cannot be attained without a common contextual language (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021). Humans use language as a tool to organize their views of the outside world and of ourselves. As a result, most of our worlds, stories, and narratives are constructed through language (Burr & Dik, 2017). It is the means through which people create and discover meaning. Language has the potential to construct and perform; to frame the world; create and reflect realities; and reveal identities. We must therefore, consider the way that teachers use language to describe their experiences if we are to comprehend their narratives.

As language is constructed and meanings reflect reality, this study aims to understand what inclusive education means to teachers. The setting of the participants also has a big impact. According to Farghaly (2018), history and culture are the sources of knowledge and meaning. The historical and cultural backdrop of a person affects how they characterize their growth and experiences. The plurality of perspectives on a given phenomenon, and the fact that the present

consensus over which perspective is true is impacted by politics and power, are thus, important considerations for social constructionist scholars. (Burr & Dik, 2017). This suggests that people's experiences and the stories they share are more complicated than we realize. In any attempt to comprehend meaning, social constructionism strongly emphasises the necessity to take into account the sources of widely held beliefs, the idea that things are not always what they seem, and the importance of context (Schultheiss & Wallace, 2012; Burr, 2015). Knowledge is constructed by social processes, and since we construct and reconstruct knowledge through our daily lives by accepting some truths and rejecting others, it follows that people, as we know them, would not exist at all if the social realm were to be completely absent. This is because we cannot be separated from our historical context. By participating in social life, we shape who we are (Burr & Dik, 2017). This study recognizes the role that social interactions have in shaping the narratives that teachers present (Amineh & Asl 2015).

The implementation of inclusive education emphasizes how language, terminology, the curriculum, school environment and pedagogical teaching techniques must change to accommodate diversity (Makoelle, 2020). Certain terms, concepts and language used in the past failed to recognize diversity, the language choice is therefore significant. Global conversation has been ignited by and is still being sparked by the argument over the propriety of language and vocabulary in the field of inclusive education (Makoelle, 2020). Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018, p.4) call this the "sayings or semantic space" of inclusive education. Their argument is that ideologies that guide policy thinking and action are embedded in language and meaning, therefore, examining "dispositions and knowledges that lead to different kinds of actions and judgements" is helpful (Edwards-Grove & Grootenboer, 2015, p. 150 cited in Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018).

The use of terms like "disability" and "special needs" is a contentious issue in politics and the field of inclusive education (Mokoella, 2020). The phrase "differently abled" is recommended to indicate difference as the terms "disability" and "who is disabled" are societal constructs that imply people with disabilities lack aptitude. According to research findings by Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018, p. 4), the semantic analysis of educational websites revealed the use of exclusionary terminology or concepts, such as "slow learners," "learners with special needs," and "normal versus disabled learners" This finding illustrates the persistence of pathological discourses and dominant "special education" ideologies rooted in the past of the four countries. Our language for describing disability is influenced by the medical worldview, which sees variety as a flaw. Even though the ideas behind inclusive and special education have changed over time, the lack of language for inclusive education that "stipulates its vocabulary and grammar" increases the risk of political misappropriation, and this problem with language and meaning is at the heart of the inclusive educational project (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018; Makoelle, 2020). Understanding the historical significance of language should help us better understand the importance of terms and concepts used in the era of inclusive education as well as how the semantics of inclusive education shape people's attitudes, actions, and behaviours, as well as describe what is happening in practice (Makoelle, 2020). When implementing inclusive education policies, it is necessary to disrupt the language and meanings of traditional ‘special education’ because language has the power to both shape what people know and do not know, as well as to create discourses that shape people's behaviour and actions (Makoelle, 2020; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). A more inclusive education glossary that is consistent with the values and tenets of inclusive education must be developed as part of the effort to transform the system towards inclusive education (Makoelle, 2020). This requires immediate and careful consideration, as well as constructive discussion among inclusive education practitioners.

2.7 THE CONCEPT OF SELF AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

The idea that identity is a dynamic construct that is always being built underlies the various conceptualizations of identity in the social sciences (Steinert et al., 2019) According to Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), identity is the sum of the elements that a person uses to identify who they are, and is inversely correlated with the sense of professional belonging (Davey, 2013). According to Lasky (2005) cited in Avidof-Ungar and Forkosh-Barungi, (2018), professional identity is the way in which a person sees themselves as professionals. It is made up of the expectations that a person has of themselves, and their abilities based on their experiences, personal backgrounds, as well as the expectations of others. These expectations all serve to direct that person's behaviour. According to Brenner, Serpe & Stryker (2018), a teacher's professional identity essentially consists of their understanding of the various facets of their job in the teaching profession and the lens through which they evaluate, justify, and engage in their work. Identity is not one thing, but many things, and it is created when people assert their identities, and as external factors or others give them their identities (Reeves, 2018, p. 1-2). According to Avraamidou (2019), a teacher's professional identity is always being formed via the interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences. This approach is consistent with the idea that a teacher's professional growth never ends and may be viewed as a process of lifelong learning. As a result, during the teaching process, each instructor bargains for and then renegotiates his own unique identity.

Professional identity has a significant impact on how teachers position and comprehend inclusive policies and practices (Lai & Jin, 2021). It also impacts how teachers make meaning of their own behaviour in their teaching profession. According to Ungar and Forkosh-Baruchi (2018), inclusive education reforms call for a shift in both educators' professional identities and

how education is seen (Hargreaves, 2003). The role of the inclusive educator becomes a new identity to negotiate, because teacher identities are often socialized from a traditional dichotomy of either general or special educator (Naraian 2010, 2017). Teachers figure or construct their identities within educational contexts as they come to terms with who they are (Thorius, 2016). A teacher's identity and duties as an inclusion facilitator are influenced within and beyond the limits of special and general education (Naraian, 2017).

According to Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013), a teacher's professional identity is composed of a variety of identities that more or less mesh together, indicating both a person and a setting. The concept of many identities pertains to the various settings and connections that teachers have, some of which may be closely related and serve as the foundation of their professional identities, while others may be more tangential. The professional identity of teachers can also be understood as a guiding principle in their professional lives or as a tool they employ to justify, explain, and make sense of things. As a teacher negotiates their identity, certain underlying variables govern the negotiation's course, which is a continuous process of integrating their educational knowledge, experience, and practices into their sense of who they are as people and the roles they must play (Burkhuizen, 2017). This identity is not constant but evolves together with the body of knowledge taught in schools (Burkhuizen, 2017). The practice of creating and maintaining a teaching identity is crucial to a teacher's belief system, and directs his behaviour, both within and outside of the classroom and school (Reeves, 2018). According to this definition of identity, there is a connection between identity and practice, and therefore, changes in identity are reflected in adjustments to inclusive teaching strategies (Kanno & Stuart, 2011, cited in Reeves, 2018). This has pedagogical implications for teacher education that should work to equip teachers to be conscious of the constraints that acting out their teacher identities may have on their learners (Reeves, 2018). Given that they are socially negotiated

and fraught with power disparities; schools, policy, and society must all be approached with a critical and enquiring eye by teachers (Reeves, 2018). Critical reflexivity has been suggested as a tool for teachers to assess how their identity and practices are shaped by social, cultural, and political influences within the context of their work, as well as by their own role in influencing the context and identities of learners and other teachers (Reeves, 2018).

According to Hoekstra et al. (2009), cited in Vahasantaneu (2015), educational transformation is a reality and a part of teachers' professional lives, as educational institutions adapt and modify their policies and procedures to keep up with social change. In reaction to educational transformation like inclusion and inclusive education, teachers must accept new professional roles and cultivate and transform their professional identities and practices. Teachers' professional identities arise from past and future identities under these settings of change, ambiguity, and continual educational restructuring. The retrospective identity draws from the past and acts as its foundation, whereas the prospective identity is primarily concerned with the future. The projected identity cannot be viewed as stable due to the rapid changes. Rather, it is contested, ambiguous, open, and fluid. These are the results of politically correct and culturally appropriate meanings, as well as the powerful, open-ended structures these terms adopt when used in actual situations (Hoekstra et al., 2009, quoted in Vahasantaneu, 2015). Communities of practice create normative forms of membership that require participants to take on particular identities that denote involvement (Kezar et al., 2018). This does not imply that there will not be a range of cultures in communities (in this case, schools). In other words, teachers may choose to distance themselves from a school's customs and culture without outwardly objecting to it. An example is a teacher who participates in high-stakes assessments to evaluate learners s' learning without really identifying with the practise.

The politics of exclusion have unavoidably influenced the politics of inclusion because of the power dynamics that led to some learners being shut out of mainstream education. Teachers' retroactive identities have been shaped by the exclusive framework of the educational system, which is socially created. According to some scholars (Avido-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018; Shoulders & Myers, 2011), teachers' professional identities have to do with how they view themselves personally, individually, and as a member of a wider professional unit. This stems from constructivist educational theories, according to which knowledge can only be acquired through experience gained both individually and socially, giving teachers access to unique and individualised knowledge. These scholars add that, as knowledge cannot exist independently and can only be formed through one's subjective reality, it can and does lead to the acquisition of specific information based on particular experiences in or within the social context. Because identity is the process of constructing meaning for oneself based on interactions with the social world and its ideas, this argument further illuminates the identity of teachers. The widespread culture of bias and exclusion cannot be ignored since it inevitably impacts teachers' personal and professional identities. Many teachers who are expected to instruct learners in accordance with the inclusive education framework—which is based on politics of ethics, difference, and equity—are the by-products of a culture and educational system that used exclusionary practices to divide kids into groups according to their abilities and disabilities. They have been socialized according to the power relationships that define who should acquire an education and where (Avido-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018; Shoulders & Myers, 2011).

Given that identity is understood as a lived experience including the production and recreation of meaning via experiences or tales that are developed within numerous contexts over time (Avraamidou, 2019), experience is regarded as a crucial factor determining teacher professional identity. The politics of inclusion revolve around the question of one's sense of

self: how one's identity is defined in the past (based on experiences with unfair educational practises and injustice) and how one might start to redefine it in the future (based on experiences with inclusionary politics and social justice); and how one's identity is negotiated by one's teachers. Because meaningful learning only builds upon prior knowledge and because understanding who we are is the first step in knowing or deciding who we want to be, teachers use their experiences to develop and reconstruct the notion of self and professional identity over time (Avraamidou, 2019). It follows that experiences of teachers are essential to the development of the professional identity of teachers. With this in mind, investigations of teachers' experiences as teachers should be conducted, with the findings used in initiatives to enhance the capacity of inclusive education. This would help researchers better understand how teachers change to become inclusive practitioners. This leads to the current area of research, which begins with the realization that teachers' perceptions of inclusive education are socially constructed and have an impact on both their personal and professional identities.

2.8 RATIONALE FOR INTEGRATING THE THREE CONCEPTS

The three concepts—inclusive education, human geographies, and the theory of social constructionism—are all used in this research project because they have several shared underlying principles that allow me to do so. All three ideas place a focus on the social construction of knowledge over time and space that people (in this case, teachers) actively participate in creating new information and experiences. Inclusive education is a social justice concept whose meaning and application depends on a subjective assessment of time, place, and space. Justice and injustice have a spatial component at all scales of geography, and the core tenet of human geography is that space is socially constructed, leading to the existence of many realities. Geographies are always encountered and lived in individualized, subjective ways. Investigating spatial geographies is important when looking at inclusive education because it

helps link inclusion to a territorial and spatial viewpoint whose creation is influenced by the power dynamics at work in a particular environment. The social fabric of space is woven into teachers' constructs of inclusive education, despite the fact that spaces are a result of human activity. As a result, teachers who work in socially constructed mainstream schools actively participate in the construction and reconstruction of their identities, as well as the knowledge of inclusive education in space and time (geographies) as they grow into inclusive practitioners. Because it is an approach that successfully "gives voice" to the teachers and understands the significant people within a specific contextual situation, the social constructionist theory is relevant and closely related to the concepts of inclusive education and human geography. Therefore, combining the idea of inclusive education with the human geographies perspective and the social constructions theory helped explore how the teachers interact socially to construct their everyday lives, as well as what it means and how it feels to experience inclusive education in specific circumstances. This information was obtained directly from the teachers as they freely shared their stories.

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a conceptual and theoretical framework of how this research understands teachers' experiences as they transition to becoming inclusive practitioners. In so doing, it has presented the global and national emergence of inclusive education, the critical perspectives of the phenomenon, and has drawn on theoretical arguments about the changing nature of teacher identity and how identities are mediated by the spaces that teachers associate with inclusive education. The chapter stressed the significance of doing in-depth contextual study on teachers and paying special attention to the complex interactions between place and trialectics as they relate to the formation of teachers' identities. The study's theoretical framework, social constructionism, was discussed, emphasizing the need to examine teachers'

day-to-day experiences in relation to the spatiality of inclusive education. The chapter offers a case for the growth of teachers' critical thinking skills, which should pave the way for the establishment of critical theory, reflective practise, and inclusive pedagogy. In chapter 6, the research findings are interpreted and discussed using this framework of thinking.

CHAPTER THREE

TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Waitoller and Artiles (2013) and Waitoller and Kozleski (2013), inclusive education aims to change school culture in order to promote access, participation, and accomplishment for learners at the intersection of many markers of difference. In this ambitious plan, teachers represent important stakeholders (Baustien Suity, 2019). According to Krolak-Schwerdt (2018), teachers play a significant role in the effectiveness of inclusive practice implementation, hence their traits and backgrounds are important to consider. Research (for example, Schlessinger, 2018; Thorius, 2016; Waitoller & Artiles, 2016; Ashby, 2012; Oyler, 2011) has concentrated on strategies for fostering inclusive practitioners through teacher preparation and professional development. However, research has shown that practice contexts where prevailing ideas about normalcy and difference exist continue to have a significant impact on teachers' understanding of inclusion and teacher identity (Naraian, 2017; Waitoller & Artiles, 2016; Naraian & Oyler, 2014). It is crucial that teachers' experiences and initiatives to promote inclusion are understood in light of the social norms and values of their professional communities (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). Rather than focusing on the experience itself, it is important to consider the interpretations given to their experiences (Riessman, 1993). This chapter examines and analyzes local and worldwide studies on teachers' transitions to inclusive practitioners.

A literature review locates and summarizes the findings of other research pertinent to the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Creswell 2018). The purpose of this chapter is to

review earlier studies on teachers' narratives by concentrating on the meanings that teachers give to stories of their personal experiences and the ways in which teaching and learning are changing, regardless of how they emotionally react to the demands of the inclusive education policy. The background factors that affect teachers' lived experiences and the methods they use to successfully implement inclusion in the diverse and varied environments in which they operate are also highlighted in this chapter. The chosen studies used well-known qualitative and quantitative research techniques to solicit relevant information from respondents (teachers), who play important roles in the field of education in diverse developing nations. From an analysis of the teacher's narratives in the literature, I was able to pinpoint key themes by which the review is organized.

3.2 UNDERSTANDING INCLUSIVE PRACTICE THROUGH TEACHER NARRATIVES

Research on teacher narratives in the context of international and African education shows a high degree of coherence in the types of stories teachers tell and the organizing themes (see Dela Fuente, 2021; Adewumi et al., 2019; Aarela et al., 2018; Zwane & Malale, 2018; Adebayo & Ngwenya, 2015; Torombe, 2013; Pather & Nxumalo, 2012). Thematic analysis of the teacher testimonies reveals that teachers face a variety of difficulties while also looking for solutions, resulting in triumphs, opportunities, and inspiration in implementing inclusive education. A chance is also created for the teachers to learn and gain first-hand teaching and learning experiences that helped them to develop their knowledge and skills. The stories of teachers are examined under the following headings: tough experience, professional and personal competence, and coping techniques to overcome the problems despite the identified sentiments of loneliness, uncertainty, and anxiety. Walton and Kenny (2022, p. 5) cites Carrim (2019) as saying that the opportunities and limitations to what was possible in the context in which they

worked were equally influenced by the various and interconnected identities of teachers as social beings as well as the narratives of their challenging experiences, created identities, and practices. The chapter describes how space, or "triad space" (Soja, 1996), which may be either enabling or disabling (Gleeson, 1999), was socially created by teachers to exercise their agency and authority to adopt inclusive pedagogy in the setting in which they worked.

3.2.1 Challenging experiences

According to research, teachers acknowledge that inclusive education is a good practice, and that learners who have diverse abilities have a right to participate in general education classes (Bailey et al., 2015). However, many teachers are still unsure of how to implement inclusion in the classroom, and some teachers are outraged and apathetic about how inclusive education can be successfully implemented (Florian & Linklater, 2010 cited by Singal & Muthukrishna, 2016; Malale, 2018; Adebayo & Ngwenya, 2015; Thwala, 2015; Dela Fuente, 2021). The environment for inclusive education calls for greater expectations of teachers as the driving force behind an inclusive educational experience. Teachers experience feelings of isolation, uncertainty, and anxiety as they attempt to embrace practices of inclusion within the scope of their professions. Teachers face a variety of difficulties as they attempt to address such challenges. Lack of parental involvement, lack of resources, large class sizes (overcrowding), coupled with heavy workloads, reliance on external examinations, and an inadequate collaborative support system within the school and the education system, are just a few of the many challenges that educators face today (Mpu & Adu, 2021; Malale, 2018; Adebayo & Ngwenya).

3.2.1.1 Lack of clear conceptualisation of inclusion

The multiple meanings of terms like "educational inequality," "inclusive education," "social justice," and "change agency" mean that there are various ways to think about ways of working and how they might be developed through initial teacher education and then further implemented in the classroom (Pantic & Florian, 2015). It is clear that teachers are expected to work in ways that help to mitigate the external causes of educational inequality. When examining the problems and difficulties associated with inclusive education in India, Begum (2017) noted that "a limited understanding of the concept of disability, negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities, and a hardened resistance to change" (p. 6563) are the main obstacles to its implementation in the nation.

There are numerous definitions of inclusive education in literature (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014; Slee, 2018). According to Goransson and Nilholm (2014), there are four distinct inclusion notions that may be identified in literature and are grouped into the following four categories A through D. Whereas category B definitions concentrate on the circumstances of individuals, in this case learners with disabilities rather than communities; category A definitions centre on the actual placement of learners in regular schools. The first two categories thereby situate the inclusion debate inside the special education discourse as opposed to the regular (or general) education discourse. In contrast to category D definitions, which are founded on the premise that inclusion entails creating communities in classrooms and schools, category C definitions place more emphasis on the circumstances of people than communities. Category C and D place the topic of inclusion within the overall focus on all learners engaging in social and academic activities. The definitional issues point to disparities in viewpoints of what schools can and should achieve, which raises the issue of power in the

analysis and asks who should decide which version of inclusion should be the end objective of education (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014, p. 275).

According to research (Naraian, 2017; Waitoller & Artiles, 2016), practice contexts where dominant assumptions about difference and normalcy persist have a significant impact on teachers' understandings of inclusion. As a result, teachers' efforts to advance inclusion should be viewed in ways that account for their social norms, rules, and values of their communities and practice. However, there is a need for openness to different ideas about inclusive education for a specific educational system taking into account the micro-politics of schooling (Ball, 1987), the complexities of communities (Carrington & Robinson, 2006), and the point that there is no single universal school for social constructionism. Perhaps, given the different contexts in which teachers exercise their agency, the idea is not to advocate a single or common definition.

Implementation and advancement will be challenging without a common grasp of inclusive education's ideals (Ainscow, 2020). Language serves as the foundation for production and meaning of a phenomenon, in this case inclusive education, and is rooted in context (Burr and Dik, 2017). Everyone in the school and the community that the school is serving must understand the operational definition in a particular situation. It must start with enhancing neighbourhood mainstream schools' ability to accommodate the participation and learning of a broader spectrum of learners (Ainscow, 2020). This paradigm change, which Ainscow (2020) refers to as an "inclusive turn," places more focus on school development than it does on merely integrating disadvantaged groups of learners into the existing mainstream school structures.

3.2.1.2 Inadequate training and or inadequate skills

Due to lack of training, some teachers have negative opinions about inclusive education. Dela Fuente's (2021) study detailed the forty-three teachers' interactions with deaf learners in inclusive schools. The teachers had difficulties communicating with their deaf learners since they were not proficient in sign language, which made it difficult for them to understand them using their own language. The teacher's ability to communicate with their learners and deliver lessons effectively was hampered by their lack of proficiency in sign language. According to Ainscow (2016), teachers need to be proficient enough in sign language to give deaf learners meaningful experiences in a welcoming classroom setting.

The results of a study by Adewumi et al., (2019) on teachers' experiences implementing inclusion of learners s with special education needs (LSEN) in selected primary schools in South Africa's Fort Beaufort District show that teachers find including LSEN to be difficult. The teachers emphasized that the district office's support for inclusion was insufficient, despite the fact that LSEN inclusion necessitates ongoing training and improvement of teachers' skills to mobilize support in both the school setting and at the district levels (Adewumi et al., 2019). The irregular use of Teacher Assistants (TAs), particularly in classes where a large number of learners displayed problematic behaviour, led primary school teachers in England to highlight lack of frequent help needed to fulfil learners' different needs (Losberg & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021). Teachers in England have voiced concern about the insufficient opportunities to participate in specialized training courses on special education needs and disabilities (SEND) (see Woodcock & Woolfson, 2019; Brennan et al., 2021). Chibwe and Mulenga (2021) argue that teachers still lack the necessary training despite continual professional development being essential to keeping practice relevant and fruitful. Brennan, King and Travers (2021) agree with the observation. Mpu and Adu (2021) also emphasized the difficulties teachers have as they

undergo transformation to become inclusive practitioners. It has also been found that Ethiopian teachers and school officials support the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms, but acknowledge the lack of proper training as presenting a hurdle to Ethiopia's inclusive education (Franck & Joshi, 2017).

The management of varied classrooms with a range of needs and the constant need to help all learners, including those who are academically gifted and those with lower ability, were the other challenges that teachers reported experiencing (Losberg & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021). According to participant accounts in D'amant's (2010) research with South African teachers, not all teachers were prepared to cope with learner variety, as inclusion necessitates adequately providing for a range of learners' diverse individual needs. The need for additional training and support was brought up by the attendees. Wanjohi (2014) notes that inadequate teacher preparation for managing both the impaired and non-disabled learners in the same class was another factor detrimental to the achievement of inclusive education. Despite their efforts to incorporate a range of inclusive management practices, teachers were all concerned that the everyday difficulty of ensuring all learners received equitable chances impeded inclusive practice.

Although the majority of experiences shared by teachers pointed to lack of education or abilities, it is important to note that research from three Ghanaian colleges revealed a different viewpoint. Despite the majority of teachers having been exposed to the idea of inclusive education, they opted to use inclusive teaching practices that were simpler to implement (Nketsia & Saloviita, 2013, quoted by Asamoah et al., 2018). In Ghana, a study was conducted with 69 participants, comprising 23 learners with visual impairment, 27 learners without impairments, and 19 teachers. It was found that, even though the 19 teachers had taught at

inclusive schools for more than 6 years, their opinions on inclusive education had not changed (Asmoah, et al., 2018). Despite the majority of the teachers having taken inclusive education courses in college, it appeared that only a small number was ready to work with learners who had special needs (Asmoah, et al., 2018). The historical and cultural backdrop of segregated schooling among the teachers may have had an impact on their stance - "a dislocation with the past which resulted in levels of confusion, insecurity, and lack of confidence among teachers to become inclusive practitioners" (Dámant, 2010, p. 215). This demonstrates that change is difficult to accept and embrace in general, and particularly when it challenges the assumptions that teachers have come to socially accept as the way things are and should be. In addition, this is an illustration of how those in authority establish boundaries in order to preserve their own security and order, and how anyone deemed a threat to these systems of order is subsequently expelled from the physical space (Sibley, 1995 in Baustien Suity, 2019). Teachers frequently discuss the difficulty of successfully integrating learners of various abilities into the classroom (Dámant, 2010).

3.2.1.3 Lack of parental participation

One difficulty in implementing inclusive education is absence of parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities. According to Gajendrabhai and Saini (2020), the general public's and families' unfavourable attitudes are obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education. Another difficulty mentioned by teachers in their accounts is non-involvement of parents who are the first members of the community they interact with outside of the classroom (Sijuola & Davidova, 2022). Parental participation needs to be optimized for children with SEN to flourish and develop in inclusive school systems (Hanssen & Erina, 2021). Parental involvement in their children's education is necessary for an inclusive movement to be effective (UNESCO 2021).

The importance of family participation is acknowledged by Ainscow (2020), who suggests a practical next step for parents to take in order to encourage change and inclusion in schools. He adds that in some nations, parents and education authorities already work closely together to create community-based initiatives for particular categories of learners, such as those who are excluded due to their gender, socioeconomic standing, or physical or mental disabilities. According to Ainscow (2020), parents must be involved in order to strengthen their networks, capacity, and confidence to support their children, and contribute to the creation of inclusive schools. Examples of how to achieve this include setting up parent support groups, teaching parents how to work with their children, or improving their advocacy skills so they can negotiate with authorities and schools. All of this requires improving the opportunities that children's families, communities, and environments offer. Parental involvement can be increased in this way to help the community and school support teachers as they transition to inclusive practices.

3.2.1.4 Lack of resources

In terms of the scope of the resource challenges, several research studies on teachers' experiences (Delubom et al., 2020; Chibwe & Mulenga, 2021; Mpu & Adu, 2021; Adewumi & Mosito, 2019; Franck & Joshi, 2017; Bhat and Geelani 2017; Sijuola and Davidova, 2022; Khoaeane & Naong, 2015) reveal certain commonalities. These research studies found that there was insufficient financial, physical, human, reading materials, infrastructural, curriculum, and support services resources. From an infrastructural standpoint, many schools in developing nations lacked basic and essential facilities like playgrounds, toilets, play equipment, properly ventilated classrooms, accessible classrooms, kitchens, and furniture, safe and clean water. According to Chibwe and Mulenga (2020) it was hard to be inclusive with facilities that did

not have accessibility features for learners who are differently abled. There is an understanding that inclusive education had increased the number of learners in education institutions, which had decreased the resources available at schools. To ease the burden, some of the differently abled learners were transferred to special schools with better facilities (Wanjohi, 2014).

The findings from these studies reveal that governments' efforts to ensure the implementation of inclusive education are regrettably not supported by the necessary financial provisions. The results of these studies further demonstrate how teachers' spatial identities are shaped in the classroom by the physical environments of their schools. In particular, it draws attention to the way teachers relate the social significance of inclusive education to the physical locations of their schools (first space) (Baustien Suity, 2019). There is general agreement that having enough resources is essential for promoting inclusive practises, and that all kids and classes need to have the right tools, like manipulatives, equipment, and technologies (Losberg & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021). Round et al., (2016) acknowledge the significance of material resources in providing help and Wanjohi (2014) highlights that the distribution of resources should realistically account for the variations necessary to give every learner a conducive learning environment.

Teachers continue to have substantial concerns about the lack of specialized support personnel, such as Teacher Assistants, who work with children who have special needs (Round et al., 2016; Woodcock and Woolfson, 2019). According to Sharples et al., (2018) the employment of Teacher Assistants (TAs) is increasing and now makes up over one-fourth of the school staff in England, as more learners with special education needs are receiving mainstream services. All the teachers emphasized the need for additional TAs' assistance when working with various groups of learners during in-class activities (Woodcock & Woolfson, 2019; Round et al., 2019).

However, there are no teaching assistants in developing countries like Eswatini to help learners develop what Sharples et al (2018) refer to as independent skills, such as toileting, self-scaffolding, urging, and encouragement to take chances. Teachers in Eswatini schools have called for the hiring of TAs. Since TAs play a direct instructional role in classrooms, Sharples, Webster and Blatchford (2018) say they should be seen as a valuable addition to teachers' work.

3.2.1.5 High teacher pupil ratio and reliance on external assessments

Zwane and Malale's (2018) study examined the challenges teachers have when implementing inclusive education in high schools in Eswatini's Gege branch. Their research revealed that the enormous number of learners of 40+ learners in class hampered efforts at inclusive education. It was challenging for the teachers to implement inclusion in a class of fifty to sixty learners, especially when it came to accommodating learners with special needs. The heavy workload, increased preparation requirements, and expanded contact hours without monitoring rewards worried teachers as well. Teachers specifically voiced concern about excessive class sizes, lack of assistance, and restricted access to information. They described feeling that they were doing significant work that was not completely appreciated or encouraged (Savvidou, 2011). In a large classroom, the teachers acknowledged the challenge of satisfying the requirements of each individual learner while also managing exam schedules, loads of marking, and ongoing evaluations. A study by Adewumi, Mosito and Agosto (2019) found that teachers complained about overcrowded classes and heavy workloads that were made worse by multi-grade teaching—teaching grades 1, 2, and 3 at the same time. The teachers however, pointed out a benefit of multi-grade classrooms that learners who are delayed in grade 3 may gain from a topic presented in grade 2 or 1. However, they believed that action needed to be taken to lessen the huge burdensome workload.

Teachers must, according to Nxumalo (2018), create a balance between conflicting priorities, such as raising academic standards while simultaneously enacting more inclusive policies. Schools are persuaded to reject applicants who do not help them achieve their aim of being in the top 10 because evaluations of respectable schools are focused on results of external examinations (Nxumalo, 2018). Schools discuss whether they should change their curricula in a way that would jeopardize their academic results or if they should work to achieve academic success in a system that is very competitive, demanding, and focused on academic achievements and school rankings. Defining learners' achievement in a variety of inconsistent ways, and the use of pass or fail rather than competence to define achievement (Nxumalo, 2018) still persists. It is challenging for schools to achieve full inclusion due to these competing interests.

3.2.1.6 Inadequate collaborative support service/system

The implementation of inclusive education in developing nations faces significant challenges due to lack of formal support systems, and lack of essential staff (Zwane & Malale, 2018; Fakudze, 2012). According to Fakudze (2012, p. 74), in the case of Eswatini, a lack of support for teachers is characterized by the absence of state funding for programs that promote inclusive education and the provision of in-service training for teachers that can help them feel more empowered and, as a result, change their attitudes towards inclusive education. Although it is a policy directive, teachers are not given the support they need to upgrade their knowledge of inclusive teaching methods. Instead, they do so on a part-time basis at their own expense without being properly compensated for their qualifications once they have completed their education (Zwane & Malale, 2018; Fakudze, 2012). Conventional inclusive schools receive insufficient support in terms of staff in fields like braille, hearing, and learning difficulties.

According to research in South Africa, the department of education provides workshops, in-service training, and materials for teachers; but this support is insufficient. As a result of workshops being only one or two days long rather than lasting a full week, teachers do not benefit from them (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019). Teachers identified inadequate institutional support, such as lack of guidance and consultation, which resulted in feelings of isolation (Savvidou, 2011). To enable the successful implementation and sustainability of inclusive education, on-going support as well as technical support is required. It is believed that teachers become more dedicated to transformation when they receive ongoing help and support in implementing inclusive pedagogy.

3.2.2 Strategies related to professional and personal coping skills

Teachers described how, despite the difficulties, their experiences motivated them to put significant effort into their practice to adjust their teaching to fit the needs of learners. When the learners they teach face obstacles in learning, teachers use inclusive pedagogical approaches to address the issue of inclusion in their daily practice (Pantic & Florian, 2015). Based on their knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs, as well as the learners and learning; they decide what to do and how to respond in their classrooms. This supports the idea that classroom teachers are capable actors whose opinions on pedagogical decisions and methods of operation affect learners' results (Black-Hawkins, 2012).

According to literature, some teachers tried to be creative and original by using inclusive pedagogy, and their experiences gave them the chance to learn, and others found the experience motivating. Teachers used a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with inclusion and successfully implement it (see Molbaek, 2018; Galaterou & Antoniou, 2017; Dela Fuente, 2021; Losberg & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021; Sukbunpant et al., 2013; Woodcock & Woolfson,

2019; Brennan et al., 2019). In order to ensure that learners participate in all elements of learning as classes become more diverse, Malbaek (2018) offers adaptive grouping strategies teachers can utilize to improve learners' access to the classroom.

3.2.2.1 Strategies related to creative and/or innovation pedagogical approaches

Although teachers described facing challenges, they were nevertheless able to use their agency to reduce educational disparity by using creative and/or innovative pedagogical approaches. According to Wang et al. (2017), the autonomy and power levels inside specific structures and cultures—in this example, the classroom—determine whether agency is fostered or suspended. The teachers made an attempt to meet the unique needs and academic progress of certain learners. The strategies used by teachers correspond to the first, second, and third spaces in a three-tiered conceptualization of space, according to Soja (1996) cited by Baustien Siuty (2019, p. 1034).

According to a study by Dela Fuente (2021) on teachers' experiences implementing inclusive education with deaf learners in the Philippines, teachers were motivated to be creative and/or innovative in their teaching styles, approaches, techniques, and strategies when working with students who have special needs. In order to meet each student's specific learning needs in an inclusive classroom, teachers specifically created special instructional resources for deaf learners. Teachers created special educational tools for deaf learners to meet their unique learning demands and make up for their lack of proficiency in sign language. To connect with, discuss, or explain something to their deaf students so they might understand the lesson, teachers employed inventive methods like writing on a sheet of paper, flashcards, or the board. Additionally, they differentiated oral quizzes or tests by offering an exclusive teacher-made test, providing handouts for the students to study, using PowerPoint or even video presentations

to help them understand the concepts in a lesson, and making the most of peers who understand sign language to interpret when they have questions to ask or seek clarification Dela Fuente, 2021).

3.2.2.2 Strategies related to creating inclusive learning spaces

According to a study done in England with primary school teachers and teaching assistants, teachers used a variety of inventive strategies to carry out their agency (Losberg & Zwozdiak-Meyers, 2021). The methods included employing whole-school strategies like developing inclusive learning environments and behaviour control. Teachers described how they designed welcoming and accessible classrooms to make all students feel at home, while also giving them the opportunity to use resources like the reading area freely. Another educator emphasized the significance of giving learners access to materials beforehand, and teaching how to use them so that they can do so at their discretion when working on projects (Losberg & Zwozdiak-Meyers, 2021). The teachers went on to discuss the value of assigning students to groups of similar ability so that they can collaborate and encourage one another. This gave learners the chance to freely engage with one another, exchange ideas, and collaborate on projects without feeling isolated (Losberg & Zwozdiak-Meyers, 2021). When dividing up tasks into groups, learners' preferences were taken into consideration. These grouping techniques demonstrate the "provision of option," according to Brennan et al., (2019), which is a departure from deterministic beliefs and thinking. They also support inclusive peer interaction and favourable outcomes for everybody.

For learners who had special needs but not receiving the grade 4 curriculum, and needed individual support for the most of the day, the teachers used a separate classroom space as part of the inclusive teaching and learning strategy. According to Losberg and Zwozdiak-Meyers

(2002), the use of a separate room was determined by the intensity of the child's behaviour and emotional requirements. For instance, a learner who exhibited aggressive behaviour and outbursts might require a separate space. For a child with autism spectrum disorder, a special classroom setting was also used, which was suitable given the nature of his demands and the fact that his goals were one year level lower. These hypothetical situations show how inclusive pedagogy can be challenging to implement in diverse mainstream classrooms (Lindsay et al., 2014) and how using individualized tactics is important in an inclusive context (Brennan et al., 2019). However, the usage of separate space served to constrain difference, in part confirming what Soja (1997) calls the way people conceptualize space (second space) and illuminating power structures that regulate spatial practices. Teachers act as gatekeepers, designing classrooms for the best learning experience, and using the spaces as marks of deviation and locations for containment (Baustien Suity, 2019).

To manage conduct, all teachers employed a whole-school strategy, including an engaging rewards programme. For learners who needed more encouragement, a variety of support systems were offered, including choice cards, trips to the sensory room, soothing stations, and personalized incentive systems. The teachers discovered them to be effective when dealing with particular behavioural issues, allowing learners to be successful and feel valued in the classroom (Losberg & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021). However, inclusive pedagogy may not consider complexities between learners (Brennan et al., 2019), and individual strategies do not reflect whole-class approach. This conclusion suggests that the meaning teachers assign to physical space regulates their everyday interactions and practices and further shapes the spatial identities of those they teach (Baustien Suity, 2019). Additionally, teachers still separate learners even when they actively engage in inclusive environments (Blaisdell, 2017). This supports Baustien Suity's (2019) claim that, even when students cross real and perceived

borders, teachers still associate them with segregated environments. Blaisdell (2017) refers to this as "spacing," and it essentially outlines how teachers provide learners with the social meanings of space in a number of situations.

In addition, teachers employed a positive language while discussing the advancement of learners, regardless of ability. In that sense, all the practitioners emphasized the importance of flexibility and inventiveness in using differentiation to benefit learners (Losberg & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021). Additionally, practitioners demonstrated an openness to new experiences, a dedication to ongoing professional growth, and competence in handling a variety of requirements. Another study done in Cyprus found that teachers had a strong desire to support students in becoming fully integrated with their peers, and in developing a positive view of disability among all students (Savvidou, 2011). They put much effort into their practice to modify their instruction to better match the requirements of their students, including increasing contact hours, improving preparation, modifying their teaching strategies, and utilizing new technologies (Savvidou, 2011, p. 61). By building a positive classroom culture, teachers were able to create environments that supported inclusive teaching and learning. In South Africa, there were also a few cases of excellent practice where teachers provided special education students with after-school programmes to help them catch up with their peers (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019).

The use of various strategies demonstrates how power structures are used to create what Soja (1996) in Baustien Siuty (2019, p. 1034), refers to as the first space, which is the material, physical, and concrete construction of space; and the second space, which demonstrates how teachers use power to maintain order and control through social and material space. They did this by offering after-school classes and using separate rooms for learners with behavioural

issues. Teachers' methods for accommodating diversity in their classrooms show that they are active and deliberate social constructivists in the change of classrooms and schools towards inclusive education. The methods also show the relationship between space and social practice.

3.2.2.3 Strategies related to coping with special needs of learners

Research also demonstrates that teachers are adaptable and open-minded when looking for new approaches to creating inclusive practises to support learners (Maciver et al. 2018; Lyons et al. 2016). In order to guarantee that children with special needs are assisted properly to achieve their goals, the teachers talked about good connections and a number of strategies utilized with Teacher Assistants (Tas). Regular meetings and discussions during the planning phase, collaborative planning, problem-solving techniques, and differentiation tactics were all areas of collaboration (Losberg & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021). In order to successfully support students with special needs, teachers sought out TAs to intervene in the classroom (Baustein Suity, 2019). It is crucial to recognize the complex relationships between the spatial identities of TAs and learners with special needs.

Despite the best efforts of the teachers, there is little research on treatments that support inclusive classrooms. The interventions listed above typically concentrate on doing something "extra" or "different" for some rather than making use of what is frequently available in the standard routines of teaching and learning. Amor et al., (2019) acknowledge that rather than focusing on inclusive pedagogical techniques, the majority of interventions give different kinds of support to learners with defined needs in inclusive classrooms.

> The concept of inclusive pedagogy acknowledges the individual differences among learners while actively preventing the marginalisation of some students and/or the continued exclusion of specific groups, such as students from ethnic minorities, learners

> from culturally diverse backgrounds, students who speak a language other than their native tongue, students with special needs, and learners from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who may be adversely affected by poverty. The purpose of this list of identity markers, which is neither exhaustive nor standard, is to draw attention to some of the characteristics of uniqueness that account for variances and may work in concert with other factors to create learning obstacles that may result in underachievement (Pantic & Florian, 2015, p. 334).

The belief that every child has the potential to grow and flourish, and that no one should be denied chances based on individual talents is the basis of inclusive pedagogy, which is crucial to the realization of inclusion (Losberg & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021). It is a difficult educational venture that demands a shift in mind-set from using what is generally available in typical teaching and learning routines to doing something additional or different for individuals. In order to promote inclusion, the traditional school system and its teachers must shift their perspectives away from the widely accepted practice of providing for everyone while making exceptions for certain groups of learners (Pantic & Florian, 2015). If teachers are to become agents of change confident in their capacity to address accomplishment, including possible effects of social disadvantage, modelling this concept of pedagogy in early teacher education programmes is crucial work (Pantic & Florian, 2015, p. 342). The role of space as an enabling and/or disabling construct must also be explicitly considered by educators, and sites of resistance and transformation must be noted. It is important to talk about how space is used and how it impacts spatial justice (Baustien Suity, 2019).

3.2.2.4 Strategies to cope with professional and personal identity

Khanare (2012) asserts that learning is a social process that takes place when people engage in social activities that provide experiences that are then used to produce knowledge. In the studies at hand, educators used their experiences to develop and deconstruct their ideas of self and professional identity. The teachers' accounts of difficult situations gave them the chance to advance professionally and become more adept at their instructional strategies, illuminating the impact of social environment on career growth. Dela Fuente's study found that teachers improved their methods of instruction to give all their learners high-quality, fulfilling learning experiences (Dela Fuente, 2021). In order to communicate with their learners, the teachers increased their motivation to learn the fundamentals of sign language. Their desire to meet the needs of the students in their classrooms drove them to implement programs that were flexible and adaptive. The teachers welcomed the opportunity to gain first-hand experience working with diverse groups of students because it pushed them to expand and sharpen their knowledge of, and abilities in, a variety of teaching techniques. Despite the difficulties teachers encountered in meeting the new requirements for inclusive education, they expressed that their experiences had been motivating (Dela Fuente, 2021). Teachers found the experience to be exciting and fulfilling, and they felt a sense of fulfilment from helping to form and shape the future of their students.

According to a study by Brackenreed (2011), teachers' perceived professionalism, self-efficacy, and ability to deal with inclusion-related realities, as well as their fundamental teaching qualities, preparation for teaching, and years of experience in the classroom, are all related to their stressors and coping mechanisms. Stress has frequently been mentioned as a barrier to the implementation of inclusion in a number of research (Sukbunpant et al., 2013). According to Galaterou and Antoniou (2017) and Dámant (2010), stress levels seem to be lower

when teachers have prior experience working in inclusive school settings or have had some direct interaction with children who have disabilities. Their instant positive attitude and commitment to inclusion appear to be significantly influenced by their own experience of including people who had previously been excluded (Dámant, 2010). This serves as a reminder that each participant's responses to inclusion and their development as inclusive practitioners are deeply rooted in their unique contexts and life experiences, as well as the tight relationship between how inclusion affects teachers both personally and professionally. A teacher's response to the inclusion problem will be greatly influenced by the guiding principles present in their daily interactions (Dámant, 2010, p. 216). According to Engelbrecht et al. (2015), in order to implement effective inclusive education practices, teachers must receive additional support from teacher development in order to foster attitudes of acceptance and willingness to facilitate the necessary mind-set shifts for bettering current practice. This support must also be given to historical values, beliefs, and attitudes that are no longer appropriate in the discourse on social justice and inclusive education.

3.3 CONTEXTUAL DYNAMICS THAT INFLUENCE TEACHERS' NARRATIVES

According to published research, teachers' narratives are significantly impacted by their beliefs and attitudes, competence as teachers, school culture, support services, and spatial inequities in the delivery of education (see Adewumi & Mosito, 2019; Zwane & Malale, 2018; Adebayo & Ngwenya, 2015; Torombe, 2013; Pather & Nxumalo, 2013; Losberg & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021; Bernelius & Vilkama, 2019; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013; Slee, 2018).

3.3.1 Teachers beliefs and attitudes

Research has shown that teachers' views are reflected in how they discuss their own and their students' work, as well as in how successful they are at teaching a variety of learners (Dyssegaard & Larsen 2013 in Aas, (2022). In order to create an inclusive atmosphere, teacher attitudes are recognized as a major enabler (Themane & Thobejane, 2018). These attitudes reflect feelings and impact conduct connected to a subject based on a child's qualities, classroom dynamics, prior experiences, and teachers' attitudes towards students with special needs. As a result, the teachers' behaviour and decision-making processes are affected by their attitudes in their daily practises. In this regard, teachers with prior success working with students with special needs demonstrated greater feelings of positivity as they promoted more inclusive and welcoming environments. These teachers demonstrated increasing positive attitudes towards learner achievement after implementing more flexible strategies in mainstream classrooms (Brennan et al., 2019).

Numerous studies on teachers' attitudes have been conducted internationally, in Southern Africa, and in Eswatini specifically (Sharma et al., 2011; Avramidis et al., 2019; Ewing et al., 2018; De Boer, Pijl and Minnaert, 2011; Adebayo & Ngwenya, 2018). These studies have shown that teachers' attitudes play a significant role in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Evidence from these studies concludes that teachers' attitudes towards implementation of new policies and practices vary greatly. Whilst some teachers are positive, many teachers expressed low morale; were hesitant, anxious and concerned about implementing inclusion in practice. These studies also imply that teachers, who are the policy's primary targets, are less willing than administrators and policymakers to provide for the requirements of learners with serious challenges. When conducting training and school inspections to determine the degree to which teachers are practising inclusive teaching in their

classrooms, it has been noted that there is low morale among teachers in Eswatini. According to some teachers (Zimba, 2011; Adebayo & Ngwenya, 2018), special schools with teachers who have received specialized training in working with students with special needs, would be a better place for children with special needs or learning difficulties.

The overcrowding of classrooms, lack of understanding of their roles, lack of training in assisting students with learning barriers, lack of teaching and learning materials, and an inadequate supply of resources are some of the major causes of low morale and an unfavourable disposition among teachers (Adebayo & Ngwenya, 2015). Teachers' perceptions of their own competence in promoting an inclusive classroom learning environment have been identified as one of the major factors contributing to less positive views towards inclusion (Monsen et al., 2014). According to research, teachers have ambivalent or negative attitudes towards integrating learners with special needs into regular classrooms because they believe they lack the necessary skills to do so (De Boer et al., 2011). According to teachers in Cyprus, their teaching work was vital but not properly acknowledged or encouraged (Savvidou, 2011). Teachers' perspectives have been found to be influenced by the type, degree, and severity of learners and their exceptional needs, with teachers' attitudes towards including students with moderate special needs being more positive than those towards involving learners with more serious and complex needs (Hutzler et al., 2019). Such attitude was justified for a very long period by recommendations that students with severe requirements attend special schools. According to a study by Ademuwi and Mosito (2019) on experiences with including learners who have special education needs in a sample of Fort Beaufort District primary schools in South Africa, even teachers with qualifications in inclusive education do not practice it because the biggest obstacle to its implementation is attitude.

3.3.2 Teacher Competences for inclusion

Several research investigations have shown the significance of teacher competence for inclusive practice (Pit-ten Cate et al., 2018). The extent to which teachers can effectively give high quality instruction in a classroom, which in turn fosters learners' learning, is determined by their skills, knowledge, and specialized cognitive abilities, according to research (Pit-ten Cate et al., 2018). For example, Kunter et al. (2013) assert that teachers' knowledge of pedagogical content positively influences learners' outcomes. As a result, teachers need more versatile skills and expertise as well as a thorough understanding of the inclusion philosophy to implement inclusion in their classrooms. Pit-ten Cate et al.'s (2018) study supports the idea that when considering inclusive education, competency and effectiveness are essential. The results of numerous studies conducted internationally and in Eswatini demonstrate that general education teachers lack specialized knowledge and training on inclusive pedagogy. As a result, they feel less competent, unprepared, concerned about their ability to cope, discouraged, and less effective in supporting learners with special needs (Avramidis et al., 2019; Ewing et al., 2018; Zwane & Malale, 2018; Adobayo & Ngwenya, 2015). These studies also show that teachers are more receptive to taking part in inclusion when they feel prepared and competent to teach children with a range of abilities.

Differentiation and learner involvement have been identified as key components of teacher competence (Pit-ten Cate et al., 2018) according to studies that claim that effective inclusive practice requires teachers to be able to deliver specialized instructional practices geared towards the individualized needs of all learners. According to data from a study by Zimba (2011), teachers in Eswatini were equally concerned about their perceived efficacy, especially in an inclusive classroom without the necessary training. Another study on inclusive pedagogy by Losberg and Zwozdiak-Myers (2021) that looked at inclusive pedagogy in England's

primary schools through the eyes of teachers and teaching assistants, supported the value of continued professional development for teachers. Teachers were ready to participate in professional development to deliver more inclusive practice with greater confidence and optimism, but they did express concerns about the limited opportunities to engage with specific training courses on special needs (Woodcock & Woolfson, 2019; Brennan et al., 2019). Teachers also expressed a desire to learn more about the essential tools that might help students in various ways.

Several studies (Adebayo & Ngwenya, 2015; Zimba, 2015; Zwane & Malale, 2018) call on ministries of Education to establish dynamic pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes that will increase teachers' capacity to a level where teaching in inclusive classrooms does not adversely affect their competence. While it is important to support ongoing teacher growth, Malinen et al. (2013) caution against expecting too much success since when teachers run into problems, they easily get disheartened. Teacher training programs should, not only offer courses to expand teachers' skills, knowledge, and understanding; but also be holistic and address attitudes, promote teachers' willingness to include all learners in mainstream classrooms, and most importantly, incorporate theory and practical application. Forlin (2010) in Pit-ten Cate et al., (2018, p. 58), refers to this as "all the all-important transfer of learned skills and know-how."

3.3.3 Positive school climate and effective leadership

Building inclusive school cultures was listed as a crucial factor in the inclusion index's promotion of teachers' confidence (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Hosford and O'Sullivan (2016) found a direct correlation between teachers' perceptions of the school culture and their level of comfort and ability to teach in inclusive classrooms. In that regard, a positive school

environment and culture allowed teachers more self-assurance to cope with challenging students and employ inclusive teaching strategies. Losberg and Zwozdiak-Myers (2021) say this illustrates the need for schools to foster communities with shared cultures and values in order to give teachers a sense of support from the institutions in which they are employed.

Strong school leadership is necessary to facilitate effective and relevant instruction for all learners, and is necessary for the successful implementation of inclusive education (Carter & Abawi, 2018; Villa & Thousand, 2016; Shogren, et al., 2015). The majority of inclusive and high-quality schools, according to Schuekelka et al. (2018), have leaders who have a vision, inclusive values, motivation, autonomy, and trust in the faculty. Through encouraging collaborative processes, developing staff motivation, skills, and working conditions with respect to a diverse group of learners, school leadership is associated with promoting equity with a focus on promoting the best education for all students, especially disadvantaged students (Carter & Abawi, 2018). Another issue to consider is that removing overlapping and complicated barriers to learning and engagement in schools depends on teachers' ability to work cooperatively with others, as a component of agency (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013; Pantic, 2017a; Florian & Spratt, 2013). According to Pantic and Florian (2015), teachers who are committed to social justice and inclusion must be able to create suitable professional relationships with learners and other actors to respond appropriately to learners' various need.

3.4 POSITIONING TEACHERS AS REFLECTIVE PARTNERS

The process of implementing policies is unpredictable since teachers are both policy actors and policy subjects (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2016). When teachers execute policy reforms, they must take into account the specifics of their context, which can lead to inconsistencies, conflicts, and resistance during the implementation process. According to a 2016 study by

Singal and Muthukrishna in South Africa, teachers react instinctively to what they perceive to be their contextual priorities and the support needs of their learners. When the South African teachers chose to develop two remedial classes specifically for their learners who were not performing at grade level in literacy and numeracy, they exhibited reflexivity. Policymakers saw this as being at odds with the inclusive education ideal set forth in the Education White Paper 6 and related to medicine. Similar circumstances have been noted in Eswatini, where some schools set apart courses for learners who are not making good progress in reading, writing, or arithmetic; and other schools provide support in regular classrooms for them. In such a situation, implementing policies becomes difficult and frequently appears to be at odds with the intended policy reform. The localized nature of policy activities is illustrated by the South African instances.

There is a widespread consensus that reflexivity and reflective practice are crucial for improving teachers' knowledge of their own ideas, behaviours, and actions, as well as for fostering possibilities for professional development (Nukamto & Sasora, 2020). This suggests that experience, practice, and reflective action form the basis of professional knowledge, growth, and development. There is consensus that teachers need to have the opportunity to understand their evolving identities and how they influence (in) activity, combat or accept deficit assumptions or biases, and raise attention to, or ignore injustices. Teachers are better equipped to think about how to promote inclusive and equitable classrooms, and are better placed to be change agents when they are given the time and space to reflect, challenge their presumptions, and look into the realities of their prejudices.

The results of a study by Singal and Muthukrishna (2016) in Indian schools show that teachers do not perceive themselves as partners in policy improvements but instead discussed the policy

as it was imposed upon them. In light of this, it is crucial to see teachers as partners in the implementation of policy changes and to comprehend the context in which they operate. It is also vital to advance concepts that will guide the inclusive education movement back to its goal of making mainstream classes to embrace diversity whilst taking into consideration the historical and socio-cultural contexts and "local flavours" that are beginning to emerge.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter reviews teachers' real-world experiences as they make the transition to becoming inclusive practitioners, and draw on theoretical arguments about how their experiences and methods of teaching and learning were influenced by their many and varied social identities as well as by the opportunities and limitations presented by the context in which they work. The narratives provided a window into the lived experiences of the characters, the interpretations they gave to the events, as well as their views, beliefs, and reactions to the demands placed on them to act as change agents for a more inclusive social structure and education system. According to the chapter's literature review, reflective practice and reflexivity are crucial for improving teachers' understanding of their own ideas, behaviors, and actions, as well as for fostering possibilities for professional development.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

I position my study and myself within a larger context of a range of theoretical stances and methods, such as qualitative, interpretive, and narrative approaches, as well as a number of interrelated approaches. I critique these methods and highlight where I concur with the various methods. I outline my progression in this chapter from considering the interpretative technique to situating the study inside a qualitative research design. The chapter describes the selection and examination of research methodologies utilised in data collecting, including interviews, visuals (photo voice), and narrative inquiry. This chapter also emphasizes the necessity of participant engagement and representation, as well as significant research issues such ethical considerations, validity, dependability, and trustworthiness.

The fundamental ideas of individualization and participation, which are the foundational ideas of inclusion and social constructionism, serve as the foundation for the majority of this project's components. Embracing diversity, accepting difference, appreciating context and physical space, involving significant others, authentically expressing participants' voices, and understanding concerns of multiplicity and complexity are important guiding principles (Dámant, 2010). In the research approaches used, the concepts of participation and individualization are closely related. The methodologies take into account the participants' situatedness, context-specificity, and subjectivity, and are sensitive to their agency and autonomy. They also rely on participants' voices and resist re-othering those voices that have been marginalized and silenced by dominant discourses.

The principles of individualization and participation are consistent with the qualitative research design and interpretive approach in the following ways: they place an emphasis on understanding participants' own perspectives and situated knowledges; they articulate a view of knowledges as social constructions; and they rely on the fundamental tenet that people cannot detach themselves from reality. Reality cannot be viewed as a distinct item since people are interconnected with their environment. Reality must be understood. To avoid facts being comprehended in terms of generally applicable principles of generalization, a range of inquiry strategies are applied in a flexible manner. The use of personal narratives as a general approach for inquiry enhances understanding of the ongoing meaning-creation that takes place among participants by making people present and real in all their humanity as agents of change. Participants were able to contribute to data generation while showcasing their authentic voices actively and creatively by using visual approaches, such as photo-voice.

4.2 PLACING THE STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

This section provides a comprehensive explanation of what qualitative research is, and sheds light on how it differs from quantitative research. Qualitative and quantitative approaches represent different research paradigms (Farghaly, 2018).

4.2.1 Exploring and understanding versus examining and explaining

The primary divergence between exploring and understanding versus examining and explaining as the object of inquiry accounts for the difference between quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell, 2014; Farghaly, 2018). The scientific quest for cause and effect, an approach for verifying objective ideas by examining correlations among variables, is the basis of quantitative research. The goal of qualitative research is to investigate and comprehend human experience and the interpretations that individuals or groups assign to social human

occurrences (Surbhi, 2018; Farghaly, 2018; Wagle, 2018; Leavy, 2017; Cohen et al., 2018). Gaining a thorough understanding of a situation's characteristics, social realities, human interactions, behaviours, emotions, feelings, and personal experiences of the social world from the perspective of the research participants is the goal of understanding rather than making predictions about what might happen (Voxco, 2018; Farghaly, 2018; Creswell, 2014; Silverman, 2013, 2020; Surbhi, 2018). Furthermore, qualitative research is interested in understanding the various constructions that are present at a specific time and context because it is concerned with multiple interpretations of reality rather than just one concept of reality (Farghaly, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018; Savin-Baden & Major, 2023).

The divide between information that is "found" and knowledge that is "created" is another significant difference between quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018; Savin-Badin & Major, 2023). Qualitative research articulates a view of knowledge as a social construction and knowledge located in a context, whereas quantitative research articulates a view of knowledge as some external fact, apart from the knower (Cohen et al., 2018). The social world is seen as fundamentally different from the physical world and not reducible to it (Surbhi, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018; Savin-Badin & Major, 2023). Consequently, the meaning of human action is understood to include intents, reasons, beliefs, social norms, and values. These must be taken into consideration in order to both understand and explain it. These meanings are thought of as social constructions rather than as "givens" that apply to everyone everywhere (Surbhi, 2018). The social world is not merely out there waiting to be discovered and understood, rather human activity continually creates and remakes the world in a socially created manner (Lune & Berg, 2017. The worldview expressed by qualitative research is significant because it recognizes the value of both meaning and situational

awareness, the context of daily life and particulars, and the way that people's actions and discourse shape the world (Surbhi, 2018; Creswell, 2014).

4.2.2 Examining real-life experiences

The underlying goal of qualitative research is to understand the world from people's perspectives (Cohen et al., 2018), which is a commitment to humanism. This commitment underlies the objective of qualitative research, which is to rely, as much as possible, on the perspectives of the participants or on the events or circumstance under study (Savin-Baden & Major, 2023). This worldview articulated is significant because it takes into account the individuals' perspectives, beliefs and real experiences when studying a phenomenon. Additionally, it is crucial because it recognizes that the participants are active contributors to the creation of their own social worlds and not only study subjects (Surbhi, 2018; Wagle, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018). The goals of this study are best served by qualitative research since it explores the real-world experiences of teachers transitioning to using inclusive education policies and becoming inclusive practitioners. This is appropriate for comprehending human experience in particular contexts (Rahman, 2016). The investigation relies on the qualities of human experience and on each individual's meanings and explanations (Surbhi, 2018; Wagle, 2018).

4.2.3 A dedication to accurate representation

The notion of individualization, which recognizes each participant as a unique individual deserving of respect, is recognized in qualitative research. It is a type of research where the researcher gives the participants' opinions much weight. Asamoah et al. (2018) found that qualitative research is helpful for examining multifaceted and complicated issues like inclusion, as well as for gaining an understanding of participants' inner experiences and how

they behave in their everyday environments. This makes it possible to generate and collect culturally specific, richly contextualized data (Surbhi, 2018; Wagle, 2018; Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research also enables the researcher to comprehend the voices, meanings, and ways in which interior experiences are shaped by and within culture (Rahman, 2017). The decision to include the significant other is crucial in qualitative research, and so, the study resists re-othering the voices of teachers by using them as participants in the study, as major implementers of the inclusive education policy and active agents of change. The qualitative approach offers voice to the unheard, and assists the researcher in comprehending how the respondents see the world and value the arbitrary interpretation and comprehension of participants' perspectives, also referred to as gaining an insider perspective (Leavy, 2017, Nigar, 2020). A level of participation that is not always achievable in a quantitative research approach is ensured by accurately representing the "Other" (Dámant, 2010). The methodological decision was influenced by the researcher's epistemological position, which is based on the idea that, in order to understand teachers' experiences, the variety of spatial conditions in which inclusive education is produced, and how teachers negotiate these spaces; the researcher needs to gather data from the teachers who are actually implementing it.

4.2.4 An increased level of flexibility

According to Cypress, 2017), the emergent nature of qualitative research processes means that they have flexibility built into the research design. In contrast to quantitative research, where planning and implementation occur simultaneously and the research design is emergent, qualitative research follows a structured, inflexible, pre-set design with all procedures being defined (Cypress, 2017, p. 254). The research design can be constructed and reconstructed as the study moves forward, and some or all phases of the process may change once the researcher enters the field and starts gathering data (Creswell, 2014; Morgan, 2017). The initial plan for

the study cannot be precisely prescribed. It is adaptable because the researcher is typically not given a set step-by-step plan to follow or a set research methodology, but rather has the openness to explore new or unexpected difficulties (Green & Thorogood, 2018). Additionally, it is open-ended and adaptable in that the research topic may be changed as it proceeds and new data may be gathered when new lines of investigation are proposed (Cohen et al., 2018; Cypress, 2017). In this way, the research design is continuously improved as the study progresses and as new hints to the answers the researcher is seeking are discovered (Green & Thorogood, 2018). According to Alkatawneh (2016) and Morgan (2017), qualitative research has an emergent design, and the researcher must be aware that events may develop in a manner contrary to their expectations. Therefore, the researcher must continually decide what to do next. However, the approach selected and the tools utilized should be culture- and context-sensitive (Morgan, 2017). The inquirer "has little control and should be flexible as the design emerges, the elements of this design are placed into place" (Cypress, 2017, p. 254).

According to Cohen et al., 2018) and Farghaly (2018), the social world is complicated, made up of several realities, socially produced by various personal circumstances and perspectives, and continually changing. Due to the complexity and changeability of the social world, data generation must be done with some degree of adaptability, creativity, and imagination (Cohen et al., 2018; Surbhi, 2018). There is no absolute truth in such a universe. Rather, the goal is to depict reality from various angles rather than get at the truth (Cohen et al., 2018). As a result, meanings and truth are not easily obtained. That is why qualitative researchers talk about the "plausibility" of their theories rather than the "truth" of their conclusions. What lends believability to a claim is accuracy in the data generation process, and not a perfect "truth."

The goal of qualitative research is to comprehend the meanings that people create and how they interpret their experiences as well as the environment in which they live. Thus, it is important to acknowledge and value each participant's individuality. There is continual re-evaluation and reiteration and no fixed hypothesis (Cypress, 2017). This has an effect on the research design since it gives researchers more freedom to create, generate, and interpret data without being constrained by certain variables. In this respect, the researcher is free to make use of several methodologies to produce and understand data (Morgan, 2017; Lune & Berg, 2012). The inquirer has little control and should be flexible as the design emerges, the elements of this design are placed into place (Cypress, 2017).

4.2.5 The researcher as an instrument

The researcher is intimately involved in data collection (Savin-Badin & Major, 2023) hence specific elements of the research design may be impacted by the complicated and ever-changing connection between the researcher and study participants (Surbhi, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018). Reflexivity is a term frequently used to describe this inevitable mutual influence between the researcher and the research participants (Queiros et al., 2017; Cohen et al., 2018). Cypress (2017) posits that it is impossible to completely eliminate the actual impact of the researcher, so the aim of this study was to better understand it and make productive use of it. In order to be reflexive, researchers must provide a thorough description of their experiences and thought processes, which will guide the data gathering process (Daniel, 2019). In this qualitative research, my role as an inquirer required me to consider my role in the study, my personal background, and how these could have an impact on how I interpreted data and the meanings I will ascribe to the data generated (Surbhi, 2017; Creswell, 2014). I tried to be reflexive to make sure the research was as coherent as it should be by guarding my own biases, assumptions and beliefs that I might bring to the study.

4.3 CHOOSING AN INTEPRETIVE APPROACH

The interpretive tradition has been described as having strong roots in qualitative research. Since interpretive and qualitative research are frequently used interchangeably, interpretive research can be generically categorized as qualitative research (Putman & Banghart, 2017; Rosenthal, 2018). The qualities of interpretive inquiry this research draws from are discussed below.

The goal of this study was to offer study participants a voice, report and analyze data gathered, and understand the context without drawing generalizations (Cohen et al., 2018). The interpretive technique allows the researcher to draw conclusions on the variety of spatial circumstances that promote inclusive education, and how teachers navigate these circumstances. Insofar as interpretative inquiry shows that no particular combination of approaches can provide absolute truth, it was fitting for my research to take an interpretive approach.

The main goal of an interpretive method is to understand how people interact with their social environment, and what meanings they attribute to it (Rosenthal, 2018). The interpretive approach is concerned with comprehending and interpreting social worlds or events through the subjective ideas and thoughts of the participants (Queiros et al., 2017; Putnam & Banghart, 2017; Saven-Baden & Major, 2023). This "understanding" is an end in itself because it focuses on participants' experiences with a phenomenon in a specific context, what it means for them to be there, what is happening to them, and how they construct meaning through discourse and social interactions (Putman & Banghart, 2017). It is not necessarily intended to predict what may occur in the future. Such studies aim to investigate and establish the meanings that people attribute to their experiences, giving the reader a thorough grasp of how people interpret their

daily experiences (Farghaly, 2018). The interpretive technique used in this study allowed the researcher to interpret teachers' perceptions of inclusive education and their experiences with it, in the school settings where they exercise their agency.

The idea that human experience cannot be divorced from context is crucial to the interpretive approach. The context of the participants' lives should be taken into account in any attempt to provide a comprehensive knowledge of their opinions and behaviour. Reality cannot be examined as some entity apart from or independent of participants, since human existence and experience are enmeshed and absorbed in the context of the spaces they work in (Pilarska, 2018). Furthermore, all knowledge is derived from human activity, produced and transferred primarily within a social framework, and generated in and out of interactions between humans and their surroundings (Pilarska, 2018). This includes all knowledge and, by extension, all meaningful realities. The study setting serves as a direct source of data, and the researcher—who serves as the primary tool for data collecting and analysis—is given the chance to gain insights into, and an understanding of society through participants' responses. By using this method, the researcher was able to get into the minds of the participant(s) to comprehend and interpret what they were thinking or the interpretation they had of the notion (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

4.4 NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Narrative inquiry, an approach that enables a researcher to capture rich data through stories, was utilized to generate data directly from teachers. The principle underpinning narrative inquiry is that, creating a story about oneself necessitates creating a story about choice and action, both of which have moral and ethical elements (Nigar, 2020). We engage in ongoing dialogic exchanges and experiences with both our environment and ourselves as we move

through life (Jha, 2018) and putting our experiences into meaningful contexts is one approach to structure them. We constantly create narratives to categorize and organize our life experiences, but we are also constantly exposed to narratives from the social context in which we live. We generate narratives to make sense of the actions of others as well as narrative representations of our experiences for ourselves and others (Jha, 2018). The goal of narrative inquiry is to honour lived experience as a source of significant knowledge and insight through the study of human lives (Clandinin, 2022). Creating a logical order out of experience, storytelling is for the most part a natural approach for most people to relate their experiences Through narratives, comprehending and exploring experiences through partnership between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social contact with milieus is achieved (Jha, 2018; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Temporality, sociality, and place are the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry (Jha, 2018; Caine et al., 2019). To conduct a narrative inquiry, commonplaces must be simultaneously explored, and this is what sets narrative inquiry apart from other techniques. The three commonplaces give researchers the ability to examine the relational complexity of people's lived experiences both inside and outside of an inquiry as well as to see the potential of these lives in the future (Clandinin, 2022).

i) *Temporality*

Temporality notes that narratives change according to experiences within a certain time frame (Dewart et al., 2019). Thus, there are constantly transitions between past, present, and future circumstances for individuals, places, and events (Clandinin et al., 2007; Dewart et al., 2019). Paying attention temporally directs the inquirer to the past, present, and future of the individuals, locations, objects, and events being studied. Researchers must take into account the temporality of their own lives as well as the lives of their participants, as well as the

temporality of places, things, and events in composing and continually updating our autobiographies as we go along.

2. Sociality

Narrative enquirers pay attention to both personal and social circumstances at once. According to Dewart et al. (2019), sociality includes both personal and societal circumstances. The social environment refers to the context or circumstances, surrounding forces and existential conditions in which people's experiences and events are taking place (Dewart et al., 2019; Clandinin et al., 2007; Clandinin, 2022). Part of how to understand these social situations is in terms of cultural, social, institutional, and linguistic narratives. The inquiry interaction between researchers and participants' life is highlighted by a second aspect of the sociality commonplace. The relationship between the narrative inquirer and the inquiry cannot be broken.

iii. Place

Place is the physical environment, the exact concrete, physical, and geographical bounds of the place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events are unfolding over time (Dewart et al., 2019). Given that events have an influence on every area, place specificity plays a crucial part in narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2022; Jha, 2018, Caine et al., 2019). Understanding this cliche requires acknowledging that all occurrences take place somewhere. Since teachers, like other people, are storytellers who live storied lives both individually and collectively, the use of a narrative as a research strategy in this study was relevant and effective because it allowed for the systematic examination of individual experiences and the interpretation of how they develop their understandings of inclusive education. As a researcher, I employed a highly

interactive procedure that entailed probing and requesting clarification, to obtain stories rich in evidence.

4.4.1 Tenets of narrative inquiry

Three fundamental assertions describe the narrative research approach (Jha, 2018; Caine et al., 2019; Clandinin, 2022). The first is that people arrange their worldly experiences into tales. Second, according to narrative experts, the stories that people tell are influenced by their past and present experiences, their values, the audience they are telling the stories to, as well as the situation in which they will be delivered. The third claim speaks to the several voices that appear in narratives. Narrative research focuses on how people give meaning to their experiences by telling tales about them (Jha, 2018; Caine et al., 2019; Clandinin, 2022).

In different social contexts, at various times, and to various addressees, people narrate and retell their stories of experience for themselves as well as for other people (Pino Gavidia & Adu, 2022). As we obtain new experiences and interact with others, our viewpoint on our past experiences evolves through time (Pino Gavidia & Adu, 2022). It is impossible to consider stories as merely abstract constructs, removed from their cultural context. Rather, they need to be viewed as having social roots and being experienced and enacted by people in cultural contexts (Jha, 2018; Caine et al., 2019). This means that in narratives, the context is crucial. As a result, human knowledge and individual identities are constantly being created and altered. The phenomenon of inclusive education, in this case, is an example of a world experience that is always building and changing in the lives of teachers. As already stated, it depends on the person's previous and present experiences, values, the audience, and the timing and location of the storytelling. Every narrative you write or hear about is framed in terms of your own experiences and background. Therefore, human knowledge of the world is relative. Although

the idea of an objective reality or truth is denied, research from this perspective may provide some genuine perceptions of reality (Pino Gavidia & Adu, 2022).

According to several researchers (Pino Gavidia & Adu, 2022; Jha, 2018; Caine et al., 2019), the interaction between the researcher and research participants is collaborative and dialogic. The need for time and space to create a caring environment where both the researcher and the research participants feel at ease is crucial when talking about this issue. A non-judgmental and a sense of equality among participants are particularly crucial in narrative inquiry because teachers have historically felt that they lack a voice in the field of educational research. It could be challenging for them to feel confident enough to share their story. The desired outcome is for the researcher and the narrator to share an understanding of the intersubjective narratives that emerge during the research process (Clandinin, 2022).

4.4.2 A critique of the narrative inquiry approach to research

Although data collected through narrative inquiry demonstrates the richness of human experience and the multi-layered character of people's lives, several disadvantages are highlighted by several scholars (Ntinda, 2019; Zhang, 2019; Greenier & Moody, 2021; Fazal & Wah, 2023; Clandinin & Murphy, 2007). The constraints of stories as basic unique products of human experience, may compromise their objectivity in communication (Ntinda, 2019; Zhang, 2019). While narrative inquirers collect a significant quantity of data from participants, only a small portion of that material is actually disseminated, therefore narrative researchers are edged to decide why they choose to make particular stories visible in their study material (Greenier & Moody, 2021; Clandinin & Murphy, 2007). The final research document must be carefully checked to ensure that neither the researcher's voice nor the voices of the participants have been erased. This is due to a warning that a method of analysis that includes grouping

stories into coded piles could defeat the researcher's objectives by detracting from narratively thinking about experience (Chun & Clandinin, 2022; Ntinda, 2019).

According to Zhang (2019) the sociality of narrative inquiry raises ethical issues regarding the relationship between the researcher and participants. A problem may arise if the research subjects and the researcher have differing interpretations of some occurrences, or if a research subject challenges the researcher's interpretive authority. The query regarding whether research participants always have a greater understanding of how they are functioning than the outside observer is closely related to this conundrum. It might be challenging to determine whether a given story is a reflection of the truth or whether the storyteller has altered it. The problem raised here should be resolved by including the viewpoints of both the researcher and the research subjects in the research report (Fazal & Wah, 2023). It is important to accept the statements of the people whose practices or behaviors are being explained as the accurate explanations of the occurrence in question. The multi-voicedness of the narrative can be more apparent this way if the researcher and the study subject have a common understanding of the narratives that arise during the inquiry process. This study took hid of the recommendation that researchers should acknowledge that their interpretations and the accounts of participants are socially placed and immersed in reflexivity (Pino Gavidia & Adu, 2022; Hickon, 2016). Reflexivity allowed me as a researcher to be consciously aware of my impact on the research and research process (Pulla & Carter, 2018).

Another finding about the interpretive function of the researcher is that many of them have have an insider position given that they have prior teaching experience (Fazal & Wah, 2023; Nilssen et al., 1996; Moen, 2006). Since the surroundings are so familiar, it can be difficult for them to see anything at all when they enter the school to collect their data. The use of theory

can help researchers gain new information and understanding, as well as help them comprehend various parts of social life (Moen, 2006, p. 63). Researchers that take a narrative method routinely employ theory when exploring the topic and justifying their interpretations (Gudmundsdottir, 1992). The ongoing interaction between theory and empirical data makes it possible to grasp and gain new insight. In this study, the stories that occurred were told and interpreted using a theoretical framework.

4.4.3 Why narrative inquiry is ideal for this study

The goal of this qualitative research methodology's knowledge-seeking endeavour is to expand our understanding of people's experiences across time and space (Dewart et al., 2019). Given that stories provide a rich background for reflection and the reconstruction of one's own unique personal, historical, and cultural experiences, narrative inquiry allowed the researcher to gather stories (narratives) that participants told about their experiences of the phenomenon (inclusive education). Through narrative inquiry, the researcher was given access to the intimate experiences of informants who would share their experiences. Giving voice to the teachers whose experiences had previously gone untold in education research—in this case, in the education research on Eswatini—was helpful. The subjective voices of the participants addressing the contextual dynamics and problems relating to the position and space provided and impacting inclusive education in their schools were also effectively captured using narrative inquiry. It was also utilised to talk about the significance of the participants' own personal experiences enacted in cultural contexts (Zhang, 2019). The narrative inquiry approach allow me as a researcher to take into account my interpretive lens through which I viewed the teachers' lived experiences and further some shed light on the inner mental models of teachers on inclusive education (Bahrami et al., 2022).

4.5 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

According to Kamper (2004) cited in Muzari et al. (2022), a sample is a subset of a population from whom data will be gathered. Sampling is a method or set of criteria used by a researcher to systematically choose a smaller number of individuals from whom the data for this study were gathered (Sharma, 2017). Finding rich and textured information was the main consideration when choosing the sample (Cohen et al., 2018; Lune & Berg, 2012), as the right sample would produce the richest data and offer reliable and insightful information about teachers' experiences implementing the inclusive education strategy. Purposive sampling was used in the research to identify information-rich participants who are most likely to be aware and illuminating about the phenomena under study. From three schools in the Hhohho region that serve students with different learning needs, a deliberate sample of 6 teachers was chosen to participate in the study. The six teachers were purposively sampled because I wanted to investigate the teachers who had been exposed to the idea of inclusive education, had the chance to consider applying the newfound knowledge and skills in their classrooms and schools, and who were demonstrating interest in, and dedication to the training. Since there were 100 participants, I was unable to use the entire group because it would have been an excessively large sample, and because some of the 100 teachers' commitment to continuing their professional development in the area of inclusive education and their implementation of what they had learned varied during the training and follow-up inspections. In order to better understand inclusive classrooms and schools, I wanted to look into teachers who might be named and defined as trying.

The participants in this study should be viewed as teachers who are transitioning to become inclusive practitioners (Denzil and Lincoln, 1994). The following requirements had to be met by my sample of 6 teachers:

- They attended training workshops organised by the Special Needs department and demonstrated commitment to learning about inclusive education.
- They returned to their schools and made efforts to implement what they had learned in their schools and classrooms.
- They were identified as resource teachers for inclusive education and were actively involved.

Table 1 The biographical details of the selected participants are shown in the following table.

#	Participants	Type of School	Gender	Teaching experience	Qualification
1	Principal	Primary school	Female	32	Primary Teachers Diploma, BA Degree in Education (elements of Special Needs)
2	Teacher	Primary school	Male	10	Degree in Humanities (History and Religious Education), Post Graduate Certificate
3	Teacher (resource person)	Primary school	Female	27	Primary Teachers Certificate, Certificate in Deaf Education
4	Teacher	Primary school	Male	10	Primary Teachers Diploma, (studying for a degree in Education)
5	Teacher (resource person)	Primary school	Female	15	Primary Teachers Diploma, Honors specialising in Inclusive education
6	Teacher	Primary school	Male	10	Primary Teachers Diploma

A participant's voluntary involvement was sought, and it was made clear that they might withdraw at any time if they so desired (Cohen et al., 2018; Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher also explained the entire process and purpose to the participants to make sure they understood the motivation for the study. Participants expressed their willingness to participate in the inquiry through signed consent forms that were received from them. Due to the participants' varied educational and socioeconomic experiences, they contributed a plethora of knowledge that was useful in addressing the research objectives. To maintain the participants' privacy and identity, pseudonyms were employed throughout the study (Cohen et al., 2007; Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell, 2008).

4.6 UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

There are 170 primary schools in the Hhohho region of Eswatini, and the sample of teachers and institutions that took part in this study were a part of those schools. Primary school education is seven years of schooling which covers Grade 1 to Grade 7. One of the four regions in the nation is the Hhohho region. Urban, semi-rural, and rural geographic contexts make up the schools and participating teachers. Their primary language is SiSwati, and English is also used in their schools as a second language. Although Siswati and English are both utilized in schools and classrooms, Siswati is the official language of instruction. One school is located in Mbabane, an urban region around two km from Eswatini's capital. The second school is located more than 10 km from Mbabane in a semi-rural area of southern Eswatini. The third school is more than 100 kilometres from Mbabane in a rural location. Participation in the inclusive education pilot project, which got underway in 2006, was limited to the first and third schools. In 2012, the third school was chosen as a representative of inclusive education. A number of teachers from the second school participated in regional workshops on special needs and inclusive education. In addition to poverty being a major socioeconomic issue in the neighbourhoods surrounding the schools, all three schools had been exposed to inclusive education and have been working to implement it since 2010. All three schools had learners with different learning needs in their classrooms.

4.7 ACCESS AND ENTRY

The Ministry of Education and Training's central office granted permission for the study to be conducted. Following that, the relevant schools' principals and teachers were contacted to inquire about their interest in taking part in this study. I emphasized the participants' freedom to opt out at any time, and sought their voluntary participation (Cohen, 2007; Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The participants' response was favourable after the aim of

the study was made clear. They felt secure and at ease about taking part in the research. Being a quality assurance officer made it easier for me to acquire access to the schools, and the teachers felt valued when asked to participate in this study because of my engagement, ongoing access, and relationships with the schools and participants. Participants expressed their desire and preparedness to contribute to this study through consent forms that were received from them. However, it was still necessary to renegotiate the terms for later access with specific professors for interviews.

4.8 ETHICAL ISSUES

The key ethical issues of harm, consent, privacy, data confidentiality, and responsible reporting are at the centre of ethical conduct in research (Lune and Berg, 2017; Creswell, 2013; 2018). From an ethical standpoint, concerns like anonymity, secrecy, human dignity, permission, and privacy are of utmost importance. Research should uphold the ideals of providing privacy by granting protection and respecting the views of the participants (Muzari, 2022).

4.8.1 Ethical clearance

Despite ethical considerations in narrative studies being typically thought of as responsibilities negotiated by the researcher and participants at all stages of the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This narrative study adhered to the legal and procedural aspects of ethics held by the University Board, and as advised by Lune and Berg (2017). The following steps were taken in compliance with recognized ethical principles. The researcher received ethical approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Getting approval from the MoET to enter the schools where the research was conducted was another ethical requirement that this study satisfied. In order to accomplish this, a copy of the research proposal and letters requesting authorization to carry out the study in the chosen schools were delivered to the MoET Director

of Education. In a letter sent to all of the participating schools, the Director of the Ministry of Education informed them that authorization and consent had been requested from the Ministry and had been granted. A doorway into the schools was provided by the Director's letter. A copy of the letter was given to each school's head teacher. The two participants changed their views and refused to sign the consent papers, necessitating the withdrawal of one school that had been initially nominated. The researcher had to locate a different school in the same area that matched the requirements for a semi-urban school.

4.8.2 Informed Consent

The researcher obtained permission from the participating schools' principals. From each school, the researcher approached the head teacher requesting a meeting to discuss the study's objectives. Additionally, the researcher asked the head teachers to invite two teachers who were active in the implementation of inclusive education to take part in the survey. The researcher addressed concerns like the freedom of the research subjects to withdraw from it at any time without suffering any bad or unfavourable effects (Leavy, 2017). The reason the participants had been chosen to take part in the study and its goal were made clear to them. Under no circumstances were the participants compelled to provide information that they did not want to. Each question was meant to elicit a personal response from the participants. Every time the researcher wanted to use an audio recorder or another type of speech or image-capturing technology, she had to get the participants' permission. To preserve the autonomy of each participant in the research project, all six individuals signed the consent forms.

4.8.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

The wellbeing of the participants, the school, and their right to anonymity were all well-protected. I was conscious that I wanted to provide safe spaces for experience sharing and

story-telling where teachers could share their stories, acknowledge conflicts, discuss meanings, and express their own interpretations of events. They could also explore the advantages and disadvantages of their experiences. I was ever conscious of the participants' fragility and sought to preserve their privacy and safety. In no case were the names of the participants or the schools made public. Throughout the research process, pseudonyms were utilized. Concerns about confidentiality and anonymity were considered as participant experiences became apparent during data production and analysis. All participants were given the assurance that their identities would never be divulged, and all replies were handled with complete confidentiality (Lune & Berg, 2017).

4.9 MY JOURNEY OF DATA GENERATION

According to Lune and Berg (2017), qualitative research is described as a multi-perspective method that uses a variety of inquiry strategies. Combining several approaches allows academics to get a richer, more comprehensive data (Lune & Berg, 2017). In this collaborative dialogic relationship between the researcher and the research subjects, a variety of data-collection techniques were used to gain insight into the phenomenon from participants in their natural environments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This is because participants are the ones who were actually experiencing the inclusive education phenomenon (Bisman & Highfield, 2012). Focus groups, individual semi-structured interviews, and interactive picture voice techniques were all used in the data generating process. The explanation of these data production techniques is provided below, along with the justification for their investigation and selection.

4.9.1 School visits

School visits acted as an informally structured type of preliminary fieldwork with the goal of re-establishing contact with the principals of the schools and potential participants, as well as

reacquainting myself with the surroundings of the schools in connection to my research and the participants. At various points throughout the research process, the conditions of admission had to be renegotiated with the principals of the participating schools and the teachers. Following agreements over the teachers' availability, all the sampled teachers were able to take part in all of the data generation activities.

4.9.2 Interview methodology

Interviews are required when researchers feel they need to speak with people in person in order to pose oral questions, elicit responses, and engage in conversation and create ideas on a topic that may be of mutual interest (Lune and Berg, 2017). The main criterion of an interview is to give respondents the opportunity to share their thoughts, experiences, and personal narratives in relation to a societal issue (Lune & Berg, 2017; Wahyuni, 2012). The creation of a welcoming environment is necessary for the success of such a partnership. In this study, it was discovered that semi-structured open-ended questions were very effective for eliciting opinions, sentiments, attitudes, and thoughts about inclusive education; a topic relevant to the participants' experiences. There are many different interviewing techniques, such as structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews (Mahat-Shamar et al., 2021). Semi-structured interviews were preferred in this study.

4.9.3 Semi-structured interviews

In this qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were deemed most relevant as they let my participants openly offer in-depth stories of their experiences with inclusive education. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research technique used to comprehend some facets of participants' social world views (Kumar, 2011 as cited by Duma, 2019). They are ideally suited for understanding people's perceptions, experiences, and how they come to attach

particular interpretations to things (Mahat-Shamar et al., 2021; Lune & Berg, 2017; Creswell, 2013; Blandford, 2013; Alves, 2020). They have the advantage of digging for more in-depth replies as necessary. Both individual and focus group interviews used semi-structured interview schedules to provide the researcher the flexibility to delve deeper into fresh suggestions made by participants that the researcher had not anticipated (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2013). The researcher was able to examine any particular situation and ask more in-depth questions of participants or respondents, thanks to the semi-structured questions. In addition, semi-structured interviews permitted the researcher to record participants' ideas in their own words, to clarify questions for those who did not understand them, to conduct a full analysis of the topic, and to unearth other difficult issues (Cohen et al., 2007; 2018).

Due to the small and homogenous population sample, and the researcher's desire for in-depth information, semi-structured interviews were preferable (Alves et al., 2018). I gave structure and direction throughout semi-structured interviews while yet having some flexibility. I was able to elicit personal information from the participants by probing them. After yes or no responses, probing was utilized to continue the inquiry and allow the participants room to elaborate on their responses (Roulston & Choi, 2018; Lune & Berg, 2017). Focus group interviews enabled dialogical and live debates to occur in a socially vibrant context, which improved the depth and authenticity of the data gathered (Berg, 2009). Focus group interviews also used photo-voice, which asked participants to record the quiet moments, locations, and spaces of their experiences (Berg, 2009), to spark conversation.

4.9.4 Individual Interviews

Individual interviews help to understand the environment from the respondents' point of view and shed light on how important social practices are in revealing society's reality. Prior to the

interview sessions, the dates, times, and days of the interviews, as well as their duration and the methods to be used for recording them, were all well thought out, planned and communicated. In order to allow the respondents to freely discuss their perspectives, the dialogues were steered through pre-set questions (Kamble, 2022; Duma, 2019). All six participants were interviewed using the same interview guide, which listed the themes and sub-themes to be covered (Welman et al., 2010). The research questions served as a guide for the themes. The interviews involved direct interaction with the teachers in their regular environments. Individual interviews made it possible for people who were shy to express their opinions openly.

I made sure that rapport and trust were created to make it easier for respondents to express their thoughts (Kamble, 2022). I opened the interviews by identifying myself and the subject of my study. I reassured them that our discussion would be informal, that there would be no right or wrong answers, and that our goal was to learn about their personal academic success stories (Duma, 2019). To give the interview participants the freedom to express themselves, the interviews were conducted in both siSwati and English in that they were allowed to respond in either English and/or SiSwati. To ensure that they felt comfortable answering the questions, the participants were helped to understand questions that they were unable to, for instance, through asking the question in siSwati. A variety of probing tactics, including the silent probe, echo probe, back channel, and tell me more, were used when participants were unable to elaborate on their responses (Lune & Berg, 2017). The interviews took place in a classroom or office on the school grounds during the middle of the week during business hours. Before starting the real data generation, the researcher explained the interview process to all of the respondents. All of the participants gave their consent for the interviews to be recorded, with confidentiality and privacy guaranteed throughout the entire research process. The researcher

collected notes on the interview responses. Sincee the effectiveness of the discussion depended on a solid report, cooperation and experience in handling worries and inquisitive interrogations, a tape recorder was employed. The notes were combined with the transcriptions of the recorded responses. The individual interviews lasted roughly an hour.

4.9.5 Participatory Techniques of Photo Voice

Next stage of data production involved a photography exercise called a "phot-voice," in which each teacher at each school received a disposable camera to record the quiet moments, locations, and settings of their experiences (Berg, 2007). In this study, photo voice exercises were used as starting points for the focus group interview that came next. According to Wang and Burris (1997, p. 369), photo voice offers a method through which individuals can "identify, represent, and enhance their community through a distinctive photography approach." By allowing the participants to express their experiences through visual images, this technique enables researchers to better understand how people solve difficulties by creating meaning (Strack et al., 2022). Participatory research aids in the creation of information in close collaboration with those who are touched by it and it also enables participants to understand the goal of the study and to have ownership over it (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell, 2013). The approach is centred on providing individual community members with cameras and the related theoretical and physical infrastructure. Then, the individuals are asked to record visual depictions of their daily activities so that researchers can learn about previously unnoticed practises and resources, enabling the participants to more effectively engage in critical discussion about the challenges and opportunities it faces (Cohen et al., 2018).

The researcher used a participatory technique employing photo voice because it was simple to use and best suited for gathering data from participants through visual images (Strack et al.,

2022). Participants were able to communicate with one another and best discover and depict their own reality by themselves (Krisson et al., 2020). Other research techniques could not generate data in the manner that this type of study could. Participants were encouraged to fully express themselves on their experiences with inclusive education because of the research's interactive approach.

The majority of teachers today use smartphones, which come with cutting-edge hardware and a variety of apps, including a high-quality camera and video capability. All the participants had smartphones, which was a fortunate bonus. The activity was action-based and non-intimidating, and participants were able to use their smartphones' cameras to take still pictures (Cohen et al., 2018). This provided a lot of enjoyment and an opportunity for the participants to participate in the construction of knowledge (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; De Lange & Stuart, 2007). A total of 6–8 distinct and captivating photographs of the settings and settings for inclusive education were created. The images were a discussion tool (Young & Barrett, 2001). Participants were able to express their feelings about the phenomenon through photo voice. It further increased the participants' confidence and sense of self-worth. Participants were asked to select two images from a set of six to eight that best exemplified inclusive learning environments in their respective schools. The images were then delivered to my phone through Bluetooth, email, or WhatsApp. For record-keeping purposes, the pictures were made available prior to, during, and after the interviews.

4.9.6 Focus group interviews

According to Lune and Berg (2017), focus group interviews expressly incorporate group interactions as part of the data-collection procedure. The focus group interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide, and throughout the discussion of the

images, each participant was given the opportunity to communicate the meanings they assigned to the locations represented in the photographs. Participants expressed their opinions on why they took certain photos and what they showed. Participants in the critical reflection forum openly shared their personal interpretations of the social reality portrayed in their images. The focus group shared a narrative about inclusive education as a whole. There were two tiers to this. The group members' stories were validated by the participants, and they also contributed to the story by sharing their own experiences with a related topic. The use of this visual photo-voice methodology can be characterized as participatory because participants actively contributed to the data production. Through the use of images, participants were able to describe their experiences. Additionally, via conversations of these images, their worldview of the geographies of places for inclusive education was developed.

The participants were encouraged to participate enthusiastically and effectively in a fairly neutral environment. One of the regional education administrations in the Hhohho region was asked for an office space by the researcher. Four of the participants had to be driven to the regional office by the researcher. The focus group was motivated in part, by the participants' ideas and sense of ownership. The participants were eager to share their personal perspectives on inclusive education as well as to describe the meaning behind the selected images and what they represented. For the conversations, SiSwati and English were utilized interchangeably so that participants may express their viewpoints without being constrained by language. Because they were excited, the participants took the time to talk and ask each other questions, especially in areas where they thought they were picking up positive habits. The researcher was able to learn from the participants about their perceptions on inclusive education in their schools by bringing them together. Every person engaged fully in the conversations and freely shared their opinions. The researcher made notes on the responses while simultaneously recording the

participants' spoken responses. The remarks were added to the transcription of the recorded responses.

To supplement the individual interviews, a focus group interview was done (Leavy, 2017; Cohen et al., 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The participants' spoken comments were taped and typed into their own narratives, which were then evaluated and analysed. The images were saved on a computer disc so they could be used later and inserted into the thesis at the appropriate places. The images corroborated their experiences, and photo-voice methodology was also used as a triangulation technique.

4.10 VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

All studies must adhere to certain standards for validity and reliability in order for the results to be reliable and useful (Cypress, 2017). Although the value and logic of research within a quantitative inquiry have been eloquently operationalized using constructs like reliability, objectivity, and reliability, they are not always appropriate for qualitative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Cypress, 2017). The standards established by Lincoln and Guba (1994) are widely used by qualitative researchers as guidelines for measuring study quality and determining whether a study is deserving of readers' attention. The criteria include determining whether or not research findings represent a reliable conceptual interpretation of the data, the extent to which findings are applicable to people in other contexts or have the potential to transcend a particular research context, the quality of the integrated processes of data generation and analysis, and the degree to which findings are supported by the data generation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 296). The four criteria have been enabled in the research in various ways; these are discussed below.

Truth and knowledge, according to qualitative and interpretive researchers, are not an impersonal, external reality. The concept of truth is held to be subjective, co-created, and actively built by people within their unique social and personal circumstances. Multiple strategies are used to collect data, and the researcher serves as the participant in the study and the main means of gathering data regardless of the source (Cypress, 2017, p. 254). The reliability and validity of research studies must be carefully considered by the researcher due to the ease with which the researcher's subjectivity can taint the interpretation of the data, and due to the frequent contestation or scepticism of research findings by the scientific community. This is crucial for qualitative research (Cypress, 2017). Since subjectivity is a defining characteristic of qualitative research, extreme rigour is required. To ensure that data gathering, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation were carried out in accordance with respectable scholarly standards, rigor and transparency are used at every stage of the research process (Duma, 2019).

Triangulation was used in this study to increase validity. In triangulation, researchers use a variety of data sources (Lune & Berg, 2017). The process of triangulating data from different sources entails corroboration of information from various sources to provide light on a theme or perspective (Lune & Berge, 2017; Creswell 1998). I used the Lincoln and Guba (1985) triangulation technique to combine data from individual interviews, photo-voice recordings, and focus group interviews. In addition, I ensured that interpretations were supported by facts and provided thorough contextual descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I included detailed descriptions of the participants' responses as well as enough background information about the research venues. Further precautions included being explicit about the scenario and context, relaying reality as it was experienced by participants, and maintaining a high standard of honesty in presenting the procedures and results (Cohen et al., 2007). Participatory methods

improved the study's validity even further (Cohen et al., 2007; Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell, 2007).

In order to ensure the consistency between what actually occurs in the natural environment and what I, as a researcher, recorded in my data (Cohen et al., 2007), I provided a detailed description of the study so that other researchers might repeat it in various circumstances and analyse the results. I summarized the data and described how teachers adopted inclusive education in their classes and schools, including their procedures and experiences. I also used participant quotations. Transferability was improved by employing the purposive sampling technique, offering a thick description and robust data through the precise and complete participant descriptions, and frequently referencing to the text (Cypress, 2017, p. 258).

It was crucial that I could prove the research was reliable since I wanted to make sure it was credible. I was extremely cautious with my positionality since I was both an insider (as an interviewer and researcher) and an outsider (as a Senior Inspector and non-member of the school). Therefore, taking positionality into account was crucial in deciding on a methodology and the philosophical premise in terms of ontology and epistemology (Flores, 2018).

Additionally, all relevant data for the study were generated, identified, and analyzed with great care. The study made sure that there was a connection between the research instruments created to direct the researcher throughout data gathering, and the methodologies employed in order to increase trustworthiness. Furthermore, the researcher made an effort to build rapport with the participants and handle power dynamics in a way that enabled them to openly share their real-life experiences and the contextual dynamics influencing inclusive education in these primary schools. In order to encourage participation without fear of criticism, victimization, or losing

respect from the researcher or the administration, the researcher's independence was emphasized. The audiotaped information was faithfully transcribed for later examination in order to make sense of the data and to write a concluding report that is true and correct. Cypress (2017) defines analysis in qualitative research as the categorization and arrangement of information. During the analysis phase, every effort was taken to synchronize the methodological and analytical materials and to document every aspect of the analysis (Cypress, 2017). In order to investigate the procedures used in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, an audit trail, which was created through the documentation of the actual interview notes, was also created.

I constantly kept an eye out for any biases, presuppositions, assumptions, or opinions that I might bring to the study through reflexivity and bracketing. I also understood that no reduction at all is feasible. Research bias is a common problem in qualitative studies since it is more exploratory and open than quantitative studies. Researcher bias, according to Cypress (2017), "often results from selective observation and selective recording of information as well as from allowing one's personal ideas and opinions to affect how data are perceived and how the research is conducted" (p. 259). I engaged in critical self-reflection to identify any potential prejudices I might have. I tried to put aside my own strongly held perceptions, prejudices, and beliefs while bringing my personal expertise and understanding of the phenomenon into the study. In order to understand the participants' narratives, experiences, and meanings; I attentively listened to them.

4.11 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTEPRETATION

According to Flick (2013) the culmination of qualitative research is data analysis since it determines the significance of the research findings (Flick, 2013). As opined by Denzin and

Lincoln (2000), data analysis is an intellectually creative art or handicraft as opposed to a mechanical process. Berg (as referenced in Kamble, 2022) proposes three concurrent flows of activity in the process of data analysis. These three concurrent flows of activity include data reduction, data display, and conclusion and verifications. Data reduction is the process of making data comprehensible, accessible, and usable, as well as the extraction of themes and patterns from it (Kamble, 2022). It seeks to understand how participants interpret a particular phenomenon by looking at their knowledge, facts, beliefs, feelings, and experiences. It should be presented in a way that makes the study's goals clear and offers suggestions (Harding, 2018; Cohen et al., 2007; 2018). I started with a large amount of data and organised it into manageable units before searching for significant patterns and distilling it down to a small number of underlying themes in people's descriptions of their experiences (Lester et al., 2020). This is crucial since qualitative data sometimes grows large and difficult to handle. Given the large amount of data, this exercise was time consuming yet a rewarding experience. Some researchers would rather contract this laborious task out. I made the decision to complete this taxing activity on my own because I wanted to comprehend and observe the process as it developed while taking the theoretical framework, research question, and research design into consideration (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

Individual, focus group, and individual photo voice interviews (or photographs) provided the data for this study. To properly capture the subtleties of the participants' descriptions, the data was transcribed in its entirety rather than concentrating on a few key areas (Noble & Smith, 2014). Inductive data analysis was used to analyze the data, and the research conclusions were revealed by frequent, significant events that predominated in the raw data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This indicates that the evolution of the coding and topic was driven by the data themselves (Lester et al., 2020; Lune & Berg, 2017). The analysis involved identification of

key words, phrases, or major themes from the transcripts. I looked for those that stood out to me as significant units in relation to the study topics. This necessitated reading each prominent (representative or dissident) narrative line by line before using it as an example when discussing the study's findings. Then, the transcripts' edges were marked with codes that identified and categorized these relevant units. Identical ideas or concepts were coded together and put into categories. The thematic approach was used for data analysis. Finding conceptually informed themes across the same categories was the task of the second stage of data analysis (Creswell, 2013). This gave the researcher the chance to critically connect themes that had developed from the empirical data and to examine them in light of the theories currently being held in the area in which the study aims to make a contribution to knowledge. In order to provide conclusions that could be easily understood, both thematic and content analysis were applied during the data analysis process. Identifying patterns and links both within and between categories allowed for the grouping of information (Harding, 2018; Cohen, Marion & Morrison, 2007). Throughout the entire process, I had to keep reminding myself that analysis ultimately entails breaking material down into smaller pieces (Creswell, 2007).

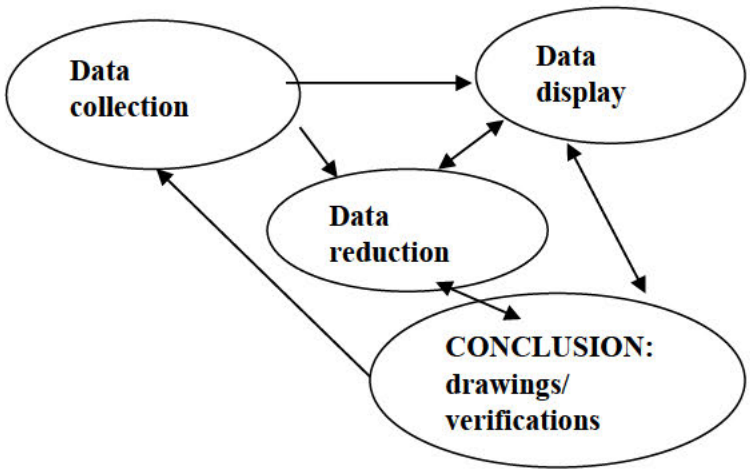

Figure 1 - Thematic data display network (Attride-Sterling 2001

Using the aforementioned methodology immensely helped in creating themed categories drawn from the data and the data display. This was in line with Braun and Clarke's (2006)

recommendation to employ visual displays when classifying codes according to themes. This was carried out following the reduction of raw data extraction to categories and codes in the first, second, and third data coding cycles. The data was further reduced, arranged, and combined by using the data display to sort the codes. The formation of codes and categories was the outcome of the third step. The themes were produced after further analysis of the categories. The picture voice, the theoretical framework, and the literature study were then combined with the themes to provide the basis for the findings and discussion, which were subsequently backed by the data transcriptions. According to Harding (2018), providing precise citations of what informants have stated is the "gold standard" for qualitative research (p. 2). To do this, quotations were used (White et al., 2014), and they were presented in a respectful and believable manner, ensuring that participant confidentiality was protected (Harding, 2018).

The notions of "space" and "location," as viewed through the theoretical framework of this study, are significant to the teachers' experiences with inclusive education. The impact that the participants' awareness of their location within the school space and place has on their experiences as teachers in their schools was given specific consideration in the data analysis of the participant's narratives. By concentrating on the meanings of the words and expressions participants used to convey or make sense of their experiences, as well as the reasons they chose to use those particular words and expressions; the inductive data analysis technique was applied in this instance to analyze the data effectively (Hurley et al., 2021).

4.12 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

The presence of the researcher during the data production process is one of the main drawbacks of using qualitative interpretative research. The participants' responses were somewhat

influenced by my presence during data generation, which was inevitable due to the data generation techniques and tools used in this study. This was brought on by the disparity in power between the participants and the researcher who happened to be in charge of ensuring that inclusive education is effectively implemented in the schools. This limitation was overcome by using a different data generation technique that did not require my presence during the data generation process: taking photographs of inclusive education implementation at their schools and the locations within the schools where inclusive education occurs. This strategy allowed the participants to choose images that they felt reflected substantial implementation of inclusive education and they could talk about during focus group discussions, in addition to providing a higher involvement of the participants in the data gathering process. In addition to choosing the photos and discussing the themes and topics, they also contributed in some measure to the data analysis. The validity of the data produced through this approach was also enhanced by the increased participation of individuals.

4.13 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I described a method of inquiry that would allow me to more easily comprehend inclusion and inclusive education from the viewpoint of the teachers, while also allowing me more freedom in terms of the overall research design. The chapter described my journey of thinking about and choosing narrative inquiry and interpretive approach elements. It also described how I chose and designed data generation methods from a variety of options, to capture participants' points of view and perspectives on their experiences with inclusive education. The selection of individual and focus group interviews with visual techniques was supported by a strong case. Participant diversity was respected, anonymity was guaranteed, and confidentiality was upheld at all times (Harding, 2018). The use of action learning in

conjunction with participatory learning gave participants a reason to have their picture taken, which helped me understand the context of a teacher's real-world experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

A PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to investigate the geographies of spaces for inclusive education through the narratives of six teachers in three primary schools. The study used a semi-structured interview schedule as part of its qualitative research methodology. The approaches used for data generation were one-on-one and focus group interviews. During the focus group discussion, a participatory technique called "photo voice" was used. The six primary school teachers' accounts provided enough information to address the study's questions.

Stage one generated data from participants using semi-structured interview questions informed by key research questions: What stories do teachers tell about their experiences of inclusive education in three schools in Eswatini? What dynamics influence inclusive education in these schools? How do teachers negotiate and navigate the complex and varied spaces which impact on the implementation of inclusive education in these schools? Stage 2 generated data from participants using photos of memorable moments and/or occasions that served as models of inclusive education in their schools, and a discussion on why they took those pictures.

In qualitative data collection, the researcher does not wait to do analysis because organization and analysis proceed simultaneously (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Cohen et al., 2018). To ensure order in the data display, the findings are organized according to the emerging categories that were sought after. The research's findings—narratives chosen from the data gathered during the various stages of data generation—are presented in relation to the study's primary objective. In order to preserve the teachers' true voices and give them the opportunity

to speak for themselves, their stories were captured through direct quotes of their narratives. Using the inductive method, it was possible to draw conclusions on the subject matter from the frequent or important themes in the raw data (Thomas, 2006, p. 238; Cohen et al., 2018). I began by trying to identify and make a list of words and expressions frequently used in the transcribed narratives. In the process, I realized that this was not linear, as words and ideas were interlinked. I therefore, had to go back and forth looking for connections between words and expressions. I discovered, during the data presentation process, that it was not easy to speak for another person's viewpoint.

The first step in transcribing the recorded individual and focus group interviews was reading through the transcripts over and over again. As a result, I was able to become familiar with the data and immerse myself in it. After data presentation, the second step involved subjecting the data through a thorough data reduction involving winnowing out all non-essential or redundant elements. In that regard, the data presented in this chapter was obtained through further probing the study questions. Data was analyzed in the context of the teachers' experiences of inclusive education in the participating schools, the spatial conditions under which inclusive education is produced, the contextual dynamics that influence inclusive education and the strategies used to enhance its implementation. The debate, together with the photo voice, were based on the themes that began to emerge. Thirty-six images were created by participants, of which twelve were utilized to illustrate specific story passages scattered throughout this chapter at important moments.

5.2 FINDINGS

The data structure and preliminary interpretation with reference to the teacher's experiences in becoming practitioners of inclusive education is summarized visually in the figures that follow.

The codes and categories that were generated from the data are summarized in Table 5.1. The overall themes that arose from these categories are depicted in Table 5.2. This chapter includes the real voices of participants while presenting the facts under these overarching topics. Verbatim replies from participants are given where applicable, and are italicized and indented. This chapter includes participants' photographs because they serve as evidence of participants who spoke to their pictures during focus group interviews. Interpretation and discussion of this data is presented in the next chapter, where more detailed interpretive and analytical discussion is made.

Table 2 Codes and categories which emerged from the interview stage of data generation and photo-voice.

Stages of data generation	**Categories identified**
Stage 1: Individual interviews • What stories do teachers tell about their experiences of inclusive education • What dynamics influence inclusive education • How do teachers negotiate and navigate	• Catering for all learners with and without disabilities • Experiencing challenging moments • Tensions and contradictions • Transforming experiences • Inclusive spaces inside and outside the classroom • Coping mechanisms • Inclusion benefits on teaching and on teachers • Level of internal and external support • Power dynamics related to national policies and standards • Collaboration within the school

the complex and varied spaces which impact on the implementation of inclusive education?	• Seeking help internally and externally; consult others • Seeking divine intervention • Persuasion and sacrifice • Adapting to situations • Applying differentiation
Stage 2: Photo-voice • Photographs that depict inclusive education • Speaking to the photographs	• Catering for learners with disabilities • Modifying the physical environment • Including learners with disabilities in and outside the classroom • Building and promoting inclusive culture and ethos

Table 3 Themes and subthemes (categories) that were developed after the data had been coded sorted and reduced.

Themes	**Sub-themes (Categories from Individual interviews and photo-voice)**
1. Teachers' constructions of inclusive education	1. Understanding of inclusive education 2. Varied spaces for inclusive education
2. Teachers' lived experiences	Teachers experiencing challenging and successful moments, including dynamics which influence the experiences
3. Catering for diversity in the schools and classrooms	1. Teachers as key agents of change: Catering for diversity within the classroom 2. Building a culture of collaboration amongst teachers and learners 3. Creating internal and external inclusive spaces 4. Professional and personal coping skills

4. Developing an alternative sense of self	1. Positive gains: transforming the school and community; 2. Transforming our curriculum – transforming ourselves

The findings are discussed under the four main themes namely: (i) teachers' construction of inclusive education, (ii) teachers' lived experiences, (iii) catering for diversity in the schools and classrooms and (iv) developing an alternative sense of self.

5.2.1 Teacher's Construction of Inclusive Education

5.2.1.1 Understanding of inclusive education

Inclusive education is said to have different meanings in different contexts. In this study, the data generated revealed that participants had varied understanding of inclusive education. Some of the participants held the view that inclusive education was about bringing together children with and without special needs to learn.

> *It's where all children come together to learn in one school, whether they have special needs or no special needs or but they come to learn together.*

Other participants were of the opinion that it was about integrating children with disabilities into regular schools, and addressing the deficits and disparities they exhibit.

> *It's about taking all learners with different disabilities to be included in mainstream classroom.*

> *I understand that it caters for all types of children or learners in the school, the deficiencies they have, and we include them with the others. It's about catering for all the differences that children have.*

Participants' conceptions of inclusive education focused on bringing together learners with and without special needs or disabilities in the same classroom or school setting, regardless of their varied needs or disabilities.

5.2.1.2 Varied spaces for inclusive education

Teachers believed that their schools were inclusive because they had learners with disabilities in their schools and learning spaces have been modified to accommodate these learners. Inclusive spaces included paved pathways, modified toilets, classrooms and sports ground.

> *In the classroom, besides the resource centre because we know it is happening here, it is also happening in our classes. Even in our community- because at Mbasheni the community is now aware that we are having a resource centre.*

> *It does happen in the classrooms (uhm) and even in the sports part (ok) it does happen…We have children that are very good in sports (uhm) some are very good in running ya athletics (ok) so, some of them they shine, so, they are no more looked down upon…*

> *During teaching and learning (yah), during or…school trips (mmm) we do cater for them (ok). During sports (uhmm) yes though kuma sports we don't have enough, enough equipment (ok) and also in taking care of them nje transport wise, (ok) Yes, the Ministry of Education has offered transport (mmm), even though nayo its unreliable but it's there.*

The following images (Images.1a, b, c and d) portray the teachers' understanding of inclusive education as linked to special needs and disability, and the spaces linked to inclusive education.

Figure 2 - Pathway and child on a wheelchair.

I took these pictures because it is a sign that shows that this is an inclusive school. Before, there were no ramps. So, this just depicts inclusivity in my school that now we are including these learners on wheelchair in the mainstream. They depict inclusive education in terms of the bathroom for these learners - now they have got their own toilets, one for boys and one for girls those on wheelchairs.

Researcher: Who is included in these pictures?

"The children on wheelchairs, even those who cannot see properly, even those who are just normal they are able to access"

Figure 3 - Modified toilets confirming the school is inclusive.

"I took this picture...this child came in grade 1. We noticed that he has a problem with the eyes. Now he is in grade 7. He is learning and passing well. He was given glasses".

Figure 4– Learners with visual impairment included in a mainstream class

I took the second picture of grade 3 which is full of learners with disabilities. This one has an intellectual problem, but you cannot see that she is not well when you just look at her until you start working with her.

Figure 5 – Learners with and without special needs and disabilities learning together in a mainstream class.

The results showed that teachers believe inclusive education occurs both within and outside of the classroom, during instruction and learning, as well as when learners engage in extracurricular activities like sports. Classrooms are used as spaces for formal teaching and learning where learners follow a given syllabus, a set timetable and time for each subject, sat in rows under the control of the teacher.

5.2.2 Teachers' lived experiences: Challenging and positive moments

The findings revealed that every teacher who took part in the study had first-hand experience with and was directly involved in the implementation of inclusive education. The findings also showed that teachers face a wide range of difficulties and complications, which led to conflicts and inconsistencies. At the same time the participants experienced successful moments which inspired them to implement inclusive practices. A number of contextual dynamics influenced the participants' experiences and feelings towards inclusive education.

5.2.2.1 Challenging and successful moments and dynamics that influenced their experiences

5.2.2.1.1 Attitudes and beliefs

Participants reported experiences challenging moments due to negative attitudes and beliefs amongst some teachers and community members towards children with disabilities and special who are believed to be bad luck, a misfortune and a curse, and should be hidden was cited as a challenge. Being involved with them was seen as attracting bad luck and so, teachers directly involved in promoting inclusive education felt isolated. Findings revealed that some teachers and parents believed that children with special needs cannot do well, cannot learn, and are not capable.

> *they are useless"; "batidalwa so they can't learn.*
>
> *...some of the teachers may be, I would say who do not like having these children in our school. So the attitude of other teachers because I think maybe they feel like these children should be in special schools.*

Some parents held the opinion that educators should not include learners with special needs in their classes because they risk stigmatization from both the teachers and the other learners.

> *Parents believe kutsi it is not right to expose the child because he be stigmatized kani the time of keeping the children in secret places (mmm) is over so they believe kutsi wam'khombisa bantfu utoba stigmatized. Kantsi no.*
>
> *The community says it's a misfortune to have these children in your community, in your school and that leads to people hiding the children and by so doing they are infringing the rights of the children. And I was saying there should be awareness on that part because it goes with the myth and it's a misfortune in that family which is wrong.*

It is worth noting that, while negative attitudes were cited as a challenge by most of the participants, few indicated that even though such attitudes and beliefs were still in existence

they were observing positive change in their school. This finding was confirmed by the following response:

> *So far, here in school there are no such stories about it except may be some few years back where there was that myth that maybe those with challenges cannot do well but now I think things are coming up, ok.*

Another conclusion was that although learners with disabilities and special needs were accepted in the schools. The definition of their inclusion was based on the prevalent language of normality. In the way that teachers crafted the identities of learners with disabilities, discourses that view diversity as a deficit persisted. One instructor described a pupil in his class in this manner,

This is a girl she is sitting. Ngimkhetse because she is part of my class and is the only one who is sitting on a wheelchair and is the only one who is a depiction of inclusion in my class. And she is a lazy somebody, and nguye lesikhuluma ngaye kutsi the mother uyamletsa

Figure 6 – Teacher and learner who uses a wheelchair depicting inclusion.

5.2.2.1.2 Tensions and contradictions which emerge amongst teachers

Findings revealed that there were tensions among the teachers directly involved in facilitating inclusion in the schools and the rest of the staff. Some of the tensions arise from the belief that some of the teachers working in the Resource Centre were getting special treatment compared to the teachers in the mainstream classrooms as highlighted below:

Another thing lokutsi, angati, it's like this Resource Centre has brought a division amongst the teachers. Some of the teachers from the mainstream, not all of them, some of them they feel that ahhh...the ones that are in the Resource Centre ok, why don't they take all the children with the learning disability and put them in their classrooms instead of transfering them to the mainstream. That is the first problem. Number 2, some of the teachers they don't like the Resource nje. They feel like these ones they are...they have a special treatment, attention. As in like they are different from us kantshi we are one because phela these teachers were teaching in the mainstream before the Resource Centre. Nalokutsi ke how were they chosen to teach in the Resource Centre. There are three teachers in the Resource Centre, two came from outside and one from inside.

Participants' excerpts conveyed that there is no unity among the staff in the resource centre and those in the mainstream classes.

Some of the teachers in the mainstream, not all of them, some of them they feel that ...the ones that are in the resource centre...ok...why don't they take all the children instead of transferring them to the mainstream. That is the first problem. Some of the teachers they don't like the Resource nje, they feel like these ones they are...they have a special treatment, attention as in like they are different from us kantsi we are one because phela these teachers were teaching in the mainstream before the Resource Centre was built.

According to the excerpt above, the role of the resource centre is not clearly understood by some of the teachers in the school. Some of the teachers are not receptive to the Resource Centre and therefore, do not use the skills and knowledge available at the centre. However, this was not the practice among all the teachers, and seeking help from others was mainly influenced by the personality of the specific teacher as one indicated by the following excerpt:

Well, mine ngulokutsi here at work I am friends with the people who are working at the resource centre. So, whenever I come across a problem more especially in class, I don't just stil and say ha...yati kuyangehlula keloku. I approach the teachers in the Resource

Centre. Like go to Mrs Ngatha...ok...I am having this problem in class when I am teaching this learner, ngingenta njani to help the child. Then makanako in mind she will simply tell me, if may be there is a book lakanganginiketa yon, uyangiboleka leyoncwadzi leyo, then she will open the book sifundze kanye kanye. Then, from there I realize that ok mine I have missed here, then besengiyahamba ngiyowenta leyo change (P 2, individual interview).

This belief has divided the teachers making it difficult for them to work together to accomplish one common goal – inclusion. The findings show that there is a lack of agreement among the school's teachers on inclusive education, and the function of the Resource Center in its implementation. Furthermore, there were unusual beliefs that government was trying to close one of the special schools under the Roman Catholic Church because government no longer liked the missionaries.

Ah, sometimes they say that government is against St Josephs' because St Josephs' was the only school and they say no she's trying to just crush St Joseph's off because long ago vele during our times when we have disabled child we used to take the child there (mmm) but now they are paying some children are being kept at home, some would say that ok government don't like ema Roma yah.

Findings revealed that some teachers believe inclusive education was a way for government to get sponsors and not really to ensure that each child has access to education.

Government is getting some sponsors maybe in other countries (mmm) but finding that she can't help the children but ke in my case I think.

On another note, participants reflected that they were not adequately consulted in decisions relating to making their schools inclusive. Participants' excerpts indicate that decisions are made without their involvement, yet they are active and key players in the process of making schools inclusive.

Le inclusive inaka bantfwana thishela ayimnaki kakhulu so far. Iyamnaka kakhulu nje umntfwana, thishela ayikakamfaji.

Thishela ayikamfaki because nakungenteka nje sitfole thishela lodzinga umthoyi wabothishela kute leyakhelwe bothishela. I think in preparation for the teachers kutsi nje if we can hire teacher lokanje kute ipreparation yakhe kulokunengi loku...anything nje kani we must prepare kutsi if a teacher comes lokanje sitokwentani nje, sitocalela phansi again.

5.2.2.1.3 Challenging moments due to severity of impairment

The respondents highlighted that it was difficult to teach learners with special needs and disabilities to some extent. However, what was more challenging was the expectation that all children should be admitted in mainstream schools even those with severe impairments. In addition to this, there was lack of special education personnel in the schools to support teaching and learning for learners with disabilities and special needs. The situation was made worse by the fact that they had no formal training in inclusive education but relied on workshops. The information received through workshops was not adequate because the workshops were few.

5.2.2.4 Challenges due to high teacher pupil-ratio

Teachers' narratives foreground their feelings of being overloaded and overwhelmed by the high teacher-pupil ratio. Participants reported that they were expected to cater for all the children, yet the teacher-pupil ratio remained high. The intake of learners was very high thus, increasing the teaching load. Free Primary Education (FPE) was mentioned as a contributing factor to the high enrolments in classes.

In terms of the lesson now it's difficult to focus on the children. Like in my class, I've got 69 kids. I've got nje, I was making inangu, a statistics recently checking nje kutsi how many children need special attention and they are close to twenty. So you don't have the time because the syllabus is there and another thing mine I think these children

they need their own syllabus or curriculum which is totally different from the one from NCC which they give to the other learnersbecause it's not effective to them bona they don't need like the reading comprehension they need seven paragraphs they need two or one and they don't need these kind of questions "describe, discuss" they need things they are going to recall.

Figure 7– Class depicting very high teacher pupil ratio.

5.2.2.1.5 Inadequate teaching and learning resources

Participants reported experiencing challenging moments due to inadequate teaching and learning material and funding. As shown in the narrative excerpts, the teachers' struggles were exacerbated by the lack of time to provide for the special needs child, the shortage of specialized teachers, and the pressure to complete the curriculum.

Not having enough time to cater for the child. I think that may be if our government can give us extra teachers so that if the other teacher is teaching the other pupil, then the other teacher would be helping this one with the same material because I believe that some of those children- they need extra time and the way we are teaching in class it's like we are in a rush rush. Because it happens sometimes that you see that this child is not able to write or maybe she writes and mixes some of these letters. So, when you spend more time on this child, others will be seating. They would have finished their

work then waiting for you to come and mark their work. So, more time is being spent on one child.

Lack of finance was mentioned as another obstacle to properly including learners with disabilities into extracurricular activities, which in turn, would affect how they interacted with the child.

"Sometimes shortage of funds like the child I was talking about, she likes to visit where there is sports. Even if its training I have to make sure a car is prepared you see to make sure it's ferrying her to the sports which is a distance from the school at Eveni. So sometimes it calls me not to appear when there is no transport for the child. I have to make sure I don't appear, I have to run away from the child which is not good. So, I run away and make sure I connect somewhere and go to Eveni which is not good".

The excerpt above indicates that non-availability of resources was affecting the morale of the teachers and the way they related with the children.

5.2.2.1.6 Varied experiences due to parental involvement

Findings revealed that some of the participants had challenging moments due to parents and or guardians not working hand in hand with the school, while other participants had positive experiences working with parents. Challenging moments included parents who were not supporting teachers in terms of proving the necessary information about the children.

I think what is contributing to the frustration maybe I would say the parents of the child are not working hand in hand with me; so, I can know exactly what the problem is because what I am talking about is just something I have discovered myself.

The feeling from the respondent was that much time was wasted trying to figure out what challenges the child has, and yet such information could be easily solicited from parents.

Some parents are not working together with us even if we ask them. I remember that one that was noted by the nurses (mmm) the nurses called them to come to their REO office (mmm) but they didn't even today (yah) to just talk about the child (yah) what they see so there's no working hand in hand with some of them they say no sometimes come uncleaned not even washed the face but labantfwana need to be cared (yah) for because they are just so---it's a challenge to work with a child who is in that situation (mmm) they don't treat them well (yah ok) they don't take care of them well.

Eish parents, they are not supportive at all (mmm) they just let the learners to school whatever happens it is all about the school (mmm).

Findings also revealed that participants experienced challenging moments because they struggled to convince some parents that their children need special support. This was usually the case with learners who do not have visible disabilities. The following narrative excerpt highlights the frustration of the participants.

Some of the parents, even if you can assist the child, you know that the child, if the child can have more time may be the child would be helped. But the parents could not see that. Even if you try to talk to her, no phela this child is behind to other children. So, they still say no, she can speak, she can walk, she can write, so what is the problem. My child, she has to go to another class. So, that is where most teachers have that problem, the parents not understanding kutsi their child, especially the ones whom they think they are normal, they cannot see it, so that were the challenge is.

I think maybe the School Committee needs to understand the role of inclusive education so that maybe when we request things maybe we try to explain to them they understand what inclusive education is.

Participants from an urban school mentioned having enjoyable experiences with parents who are interested in their children's education. The parents offer transportation, visit the school to see how their children are doing, assist their children at home, and supply the resources needed for learning.

We had one who stays at Herefords that was far, the parents were ferrying the child every day. The father had to come stay at school until the school knocks off and take the child back home.

Eh, 20…2014 when I was teaching… 20, 2012 from 2012 up to 2014 I had a child in my class who was visually impaired. So, I had a one to one with the parents trying to kutsi how can we help her, so that she can be able to see what I write on the board and to improve her visuals. So, unfortunate enough, the school was not able to provide the materials and we also involved the Ministry of Education (ok) eh, unfortunately nabo they were not able to provide that. Luckily, the parents were able to get all that we said they must get, like the magnifying glass, they just bought everything that we asked for. (ok) So the child was able to learn well. And during the examination for the child in Grade 7, for the child we spoke…we wrote a letter to the exams counsel and asked them so that they can increase the (font) font for the child, so she was able to write and she made it like the other children.

Parents come to school, hire transport for their kids. Others come to school to check on them. They are part and parcel of what is going on in the school. But as of now it's those that are affected that are involved. The others, it is only that may be in a meeting the principal has to do some introduction of the program to inform the parents.

Findings indicated that participants experienced challenging and successful moments related to community involvement. Challenging moments were involved communities that do not give much assistance to the learners such that the learners become targets for abuse when they walk to and from school.

A child who was disabled vele nje atisanganele they raped that child where there is maize. She is even having a child now but they don't know the father. So, we have a challenge kutsi when they come to school they will notice the time when they come especially ukhandze kutsi lo uhamba yedvwa. So ba exposed ku lababantfu. We even

asked nje kutsi what happened did they find the father of the child. Those are the challenges that we have because vele we can't walk with the along the way and labantfu labatibhemele nensangu bayakudvonsa nako mangable kutawujabula kusasa will wait vele kutsi angifuni kuhamba nalab because I experienced something yesterday.

5.2.2.1.7 Inadequate capacity for teachers

Most participants expressed experiencing frustration and difficulty in adapting themselves to new policies because of inadequate training in catering for diversity in an inclusive classroom. They highlighted inadequate skills and competencies, which enhanced implementation of inclusive education successfully. Participants revealed that even though the workshops organized by government, in particular the Ministry of Education and Training in collaboration with other government departments were useful, teachers believed that receiving official, in-depth training would give them the tools they needed to teach in an inclusive classroom. The narrative excerpts indicate that there is little training in inclusive education, and this contributed to some of the teachers not liking inclusive education.

The training is just not adequate, we have been mentored, we have not been trained after all, that is when you find we have challenges as the learners are diverse, they are not the same some working with them we find out that challenges are there".

Not to have enough knowledge, ok, they don't have skills these teachers to help unless that one is having a motherhood (mmm).

I haven't done any training…ok. That is why I do not like inclusive education.

5.2.2.1.8 External expectations and demands

Participants reported that another challenging experience was the expectation from the Ministry of Education and Training that learners with special needs should use the same curriculum as

other learners and the expectation to finish the syllabus. Given the pressure of completing the syllabus, the teachers found themselves not fully providing the required assistance for learners with exceptional needs. The participants highlighted that the current syllabus and curriculum content constraints such as prescriptive requirements to complete the content, made it difficult for them to adapt their teaching strategies to accommodate all learners.

The findings revealed that what made it difficult was not the fact that the child had challenges but the pressure to finish the syllabus thus learners with challenges are left behind. According to the participants, the learners are not difficult to teach but the expectation to finish the syllabus made it difficult for the teachers to support a learner who needs more time.

> *Yes, siyafundzisa nje bantfwana basale (mmm) uve kutsi usele kelomntfwana lo but ngijake kucedza syllabus mine (mmm).*

The pressure to complete the syllabus creates tension and contradictions making it difficult for the teachers to consistently modify the pace for selected learners. This experience led to limited access to the whole curriculum for learners with different learning needs. This shows that the limitations and opportunities that arise from outside the walls of the school, in this case, the policies and expectations from the MoET, have an impact on the decisions made by teachers within the school. The findings confirm that schools are in fact powerfully complex spaces that are part of everyday life.

5.2.2.1.9 Stakeholder involvement

Findings revealed that participants experienced challenging and positive moments working with different stakeholders. Nearly all the participants expressed satisfaction with the Ministry of Education and Training's support.

> *They are doing ok, especially the inspector who is concerned vele about them".*

However, they all indicated that there was more that could be done especially with ensuring that transport for learners was reliable and consistent. It transpired from the findings that the MoET provides transport for learners with disabilities who attend the urban mainstream school. However, this transport was so inconsistent that the learners missed lessons:

> *Another challenge is the transport issue of our children. It is so so sensitive. You find that mine nje in my class a chill will abscond for a week- not be in class because the Ministry of Education kombi has not come so the child will abscond for a week. So, some parents who are needy cannot afford to hire the taxis and another thing parents now have got too many expenses because one child nje has to….the parent is now hiring a taxi to and from every day because there is no transport. So that is the challenge so far for the inclusive.*

On another note, participants reported that the MoET provides teaching and learning material. The Ministry further contributed funding towards construction of the resource centre, accessible toilets for learners, ramps and pathways in some of the schools.

> *We sometimes get learning material from our local regional education officer. Of late, we have Braille.*
>
> *The MoET provides material and equipment for the children, like we have Perkins Braille.*
>
> *The Ministry of Education isiphe ema donors yasakhela a lot of things in the school. Infrastructure includes ema toilets…Micro Projects usakhela ema toilets.*

However, the participants expressed their unhappiness with the developments, in particular, the location of the ablutions. According to the findings, the participants felt that the ablutions were not properly positioned and therefore, not easily accessible to the learners on wheelchairs. The participants felt they should be consulted when such projects are implemented in their schools.

The involvement of the School Committee as a parent body was not satisfactory to the participants. The participants highlighted that the School Committee was not involved because they were not clear of their role in the implementation of inclusive education.

I haven't seen the involvement of the School Committee.

I think maybe the School Committee needs to understand the role of inclusive education so that maybe when we request things maybe they try to explain to them they understand what inclusive education is.

Participants highlighted positive experiences with the involvement of community members who assist the learners on their way to and from school, and even made suggestions to the school on the welfare and protection of the learners.

Sometimes, we had blind learners. They assist them crossing the road even if they find the child, lost child they do contact us that a child that a child is lost, so we took her. So, they help a lot.

Like the one who is blind - they used to remove him because sometimes you find that he came late, so sekute umntfwana la then will be helped by the other parents labamnonako kumletsa la esikolweni kumsusa nje endleleni noma sekuchamuka imoto. And nabo utobeva ngalelinye lilanga sebatsi you must talk to this parent walabantfwana abosheshe amhambise phela nalabanye umkhandza seketa yedvwana maybe ngabo nine.

The concept of involving everyone in the implementation of inclusive education was seen as key to the success of inclusive education.

5.3.1 Supporting diversity in the schools and classrooms

The discourse of inclusive education for every learner has increased the demand on teachers to design learning environments that promote stimulating processes. As reported earlier, all the teachers experienced difficulties in their schools and classroom. Despite the challenges, participants reported having exercised their agency in their daily practice by employing inclusive pedagogical approaches when the learners they taught encountered barriers to learning. In the process, participants reported personal development and growth. Although not entirely inclusive, there was evidence that inclusion and difference occasionally occurred, as practitioners became more inclusive.

5.3.1.1 Teachers exercising their agency: Accommodating diversity within the classroom

Participants reflected back on their involvement in a process that allowed learners who were previously excluded from mainstream schools owing to their disability, to participate in learning and regular school activities. Their narrative excerpts mention the many teaching techniques they employed to enable learners with special needs and disabilities to participate actively and succeed in their classes. In their excerpts, they discussed how they used their agency to overcome obstacles that previously excluded them and, in the process, achieved success.

> *Sometimes, we make different work for her, not the normal one because yena vele at the end of the day is not come here to learn to pass Grade 7 but she has come here to learn what she can learn so you must separate work for her, light one ok, then just write or sometimes, I encourage them to just give them oral if they said she's responding very well but can't write, then I urge them, that teachers you can ask them oral questions then you write for them although they say what about in Grade 7. Then, I try to explain*

to them that they are trying as head teachers kutsi when we register them, we must show kutsi that this one will be written by a teacher...like in the case of Sibobelo we read and do the Brailing for examination because he was a little bit having some difficulty. So, I was the one who was reading then answering but we had a problem in Maths it needs an extra scale, but I think the subjects that he did well are the subjects which do not need practical much"

By admitting all kinds of children with special needs uhmmmm, by improving the infrastructure of the school. Ok, we also improvise using teaching material to cater for those who will need special attention.

Uuuuhm, I can say there was one child- they thought that the child cannot perform very well, so most of the teachers did not want to help the child, but I had to place the child in a class (mmmm) and then try to help that teacher in that class, to educate her all about the children (mmm) about the child. Now, the child is coping because she was from another school where they said she, she must do something else not learning (mmmm). So, when I do the follow up helping that child, I find out that there is progress in that child. And sometimes we do ask other teachers to come and help (mmm)- try to educate them about the inclusion and how are they going to help the children especially those, if the children are in that class so we try to help the teacher. If you have a problem, I go to that class to help ok and teach the teacher how to work with that child (P 1, individual interview).

*Ok, I once had a learners in Grade 7. This learner was blind by the name of *Khumbuzile. So, there was a lot do for her because fine she started in the resource centre but then they taught her Braille. After she was able to learn Braille, they transferred her to the mainstream. So, in the mainstream we had no material for this child so as a teacher I would always make sure that I contact the teacher from the resource teacher centre especially those who are good in Braille. I would maybe come with the book, we try to make notes on a certain topic and also the classwork. Actually, I used to do that prior to going to the classroom so that the child may feel included in*

the class. Even when I was teaching, I made sure she had the right material in class. Now she is doing Form 2.

A learner in a mainstream class using Braille material prepared by a teacher during a lesson.

Figure 8 – A learner in mainstream class using braille material prepared by a teacher.

*In Grade 7 when I was having the boy the *Sibonelo one ...mmm I used to do oral for him because he had difficulty. At first, we were using the charts with large prints large letters, but after uma sekwehla le sight (mmm) then we used to put him in on the table, at the table side giving ema oral questions then he writes.*

Eh, 20…2014 when I was teaching… 2012 from 2012 up to 2014 (mmm) I had a child in my class who was visually impaired so I, I, had a one to one with the parents trying to kutsi how can we help her, so that she can be able to see what I write on the board and to improve her visuals so fortunate enough, find that the school was not able to provide the materials and we also involved the Ministry of Education (ok) eh, unfortunately nabo they were not able to provide(uhum) that and luckily the parents were able to get all that we said they must get, like the magnifying glass, they just bought everything that we asked for. (ok) So, the child was able to learn well. And during the examination for the child in Grade 7, for the child we we spoke…we wrote a letter to the exams counsel and asked them so that they can increase the (font) font for the child, so she was able to write and she made it like the other children.

In some instances, we modify the pace for teaching and learning to accommodate those who need more time to grasp concepts.

A teacher in a mainstream class giving individual support to a learner who has been identified as having learning difficulties.

Figure 9– Teacher giving individual support to a learner

5.3.1.2 Building a culture of collaboration amongst teachers

The research found that that efforts to build a culture of collaboration within the school were made by teachers. Teachers who have done special needs education provide support to teachers who have learners with special needs in their classrooms. Supporting teachers in mainstream classrooms was more prevalent in one school that has a resource centre and staff designated to teach in the centre. Participants' excerpts reflect their experiences on how they were promoting collaboration amongst teachers.

> *So, when the children come we first assess them and then we check their background, then we place them to the right stream. From other schools, they say they cannot cope with that child we have to assess the child first and then place her where she should be. We have three teachers at the school that cater for children with special needs, and then they do the placement, ok, then when we place them, we have to do a follow up with the teachers to check if the child is coping or that they learning or they just put them there.*

> *We have a lot of remedies for those children who need special attention, more especially Braille, and we have tried to...to mentor each other on how to take those children who fall under the category of maybe of those who have challenges.*

By admitting all kinds of children with special needs. Uhmmmm, by improving the infrastructure of the school. Ok, we also improvise using teaching material to cater for those who will need special attention.

According to the findings in this research, some teachers make an effort to collaborate in order to support learners with special needs in their classrooms. Consultations amongst teachers were reported mostly in schools that have resource centres. Teachers in the mainstream classes work closely with teachers in the resource centre to share knowledge and skills on how to support all learners in their classrooms. However, participants indicated that seeking help from the resource centre was a personal decision and not necessarily a practice followed by all the teachers in the school.

The teachers are working hand in hand; that is, the teacher in the mainstream and resources centre. I am talking about the work of the child. So, the teacher in class would prepare work in the class, come to the teacher in the resource centre, they talk about the work of the child. If the child has written class work, then they come back to the resource centre for transcribing the work. Yes, which means the teacher in the mainstream does not work alone.

5.3.1.3 Using separate spaces for inclusive education: The Resource Centre

The Resource Centre, found in only one of the primary schools, was also presented as space that promoted inclusive education. The research found that teachers in the mainstream classes viewed the centre as a source for information and expertise. The Resource Centre has three teachers fully attached to it. One of the teachers first taught in a mainstream class in the same school and was then assigned to the centre when it started operating. The other two teachers were employed by the school as teacher assistants to ensure that learners with visual impairment are included. Both teacher assistants had visual impairments and assisted with brailing teaching and learning material. The three teachers are responsible for assessment and

placement of learners in mainstream classes. The three teachers also follow up the learners once they are placed in the mainstream classes. This was confirmed by the following narrative excerpt;

> *We have three teachers at the school that cater for children with special needs, and they do placement, then when we place them we have to do a follow up with teachers to check if the children are coping or are they learning or they just push them aside. We also ask the parent to take the child to the doctor for more information and how we are going to help the child…we refer them to the Psychiatric Centre in Manzini. So, they do the assessment and then we come back and try to help the child…so they bring the report from there.*

The presence of a Resource Centre in one of the three schools provided unique and positive experiences for the teachers. Narrative excerpts reveal that teachers in this school consult other teachers and or the head teacher when they face challenges in their classrooms as reflected in the responses below:

> *Well, mine ngulokutsi here at work may be ngulokutsi I"m friends with the people who are working at the Resource Centre. So whenever I come across a problem especially in class I don"t just sit and say ha, yati kuyangehlula ke loku. I approach the teachers in the Resource Centre – like go to Mrs *Dlamini…ok, I"m having this kind of problem in class when I am teaching this learner, ngingenta njani to help the child. Then makanako in mind she will simply tell me. If maybe there is a book lekanganginiketa yona, uyangiboleka leyo ncwadzi leyo. Then she will open the book sifundze kanye kanye then from there I realize that ok mine I have missed here then besengiyahamba ngiyokwenta leyo change. That is the first step. Another one, ok like if I have another problem nje I go to the head teacher just nje to make her aware that I am having such a problem. If she has something to say naye uyangisita.*

> *Sometimes, if for example, lets site the case of *Lebo, you need to attend to the issues physically, emotionally and you need other people, consult others, bring the issue, share the problem and maybe you will come out with a solution (P 6, individual interview).*

Participants revealed that individual and peer support is also used as a strategy to cater for learners who lag behind. All participants indicated that they also used peer support in and outside the classroom. The images below are an example of peer support in and outside the classroom.

The picture shows a learner helping a peer with special needs during a Maths class.

Figure 10 – Peer support as a strategy to depict inclusive spaces.

The picture shows a learner pushing a friend who uses a wheelchair during break time.

Figure 11– Peer support to depict inclusive classrooms.

It's the child and the teacher. Sometimes, he comes too close to see kutsi ubhala kona. Khandze kutsi ubhala kona. Noma letibuko tingasasebenti nyalo sesitibuyisele emuva sibonile kubhala sekuphindze kuya ntjintja ntjintja ngoba nje uma kubhalwa itest uyafundzelwa ngoba tibuko takhe atikho. Kepha uyabhala aphase. (Focus group interview)

Figure 12– Learners with special needs doing work in class and teacher giving them support.

The research showed that learners are eager to assist one another and actively involved in adopting inclusive education. The learners were said to be friendly to the learners with special needs,

> *"...some of the learners have friends, they are friendly to them, they have friends this side (Resource Centre) or in the classrooms they help them. Those in the wheelchair they push them. If the child is astray, they go collect, we don't they just bring the child - I found so and so there doing what in class".*

The learners look out for each other, and they are also the eyes, ears and hands of the teachers. The respondents also highlighted that they also encourage the learners to play with each other and also help each other when walking back home and boarding transport. The learners are keen to help one another in and outside class, especially during break.

> *In my class, I do have a child in Grade 5 she is using a wheelchair. So, they love her so much. Just because she is on a wheelchair- they are not neglecting her. So, they are always with her every time. She does not have a special friend, everyone is a friend to her such that even if she comes to school they help her pushing the wheelchair. Even*

if it is time to go the toilet, maybe one learners will stand up come to me and say, "teacher I am sorry Phetsile wants to go to the toilet". Then I say its fine you can take her to the toilet.

The data reveals that peer support promotes an inclusive environment and ethos in the school. The learners help each other in the classroom and also look out for each other along the way when coming to school and going back home.

The children we encourage them kutsi guys take care of those who need help those on wheelchairs, those who need the toilet, transport everything, those who need kuphakelelwa at break time".

5.3.1.4 Creating internal and external spaces for inclusive education

Pictures taken at the school show the various locations that participants used as sites of inclusion. However, pictures of classrooms dominated the places in which inclusion takes place. Classrooms were used as spaces for formal teaching and learning where learners follow a given syllabus, a set timetable, sat in rows under control by the teacher. The teachers take the lead and use peer support and individual attention to enhance teaching and learning. The narrative excerpts that follow demonstrate how participants used their agency and power to create both internal and exterior inclusive settings to improve teaching, learning, and social inclusion. The participants' excerpts reflect that the teachers mostly exercised their power on the sitting positions for learners in the classroom; that is, who should sit where. The following photos and excerpts reveal how teachers used classroom spaces to maintain order and control over the processes of teaching and learning.

I took this picture to demonstrate kutsi eklasini indlela labasebenta ngayo laba lengatsi bayakhona (normal children) *they (*normal children*) are usually paired with those lengatsi abakhoni kahle (disabled children) to pull up laba labangakhoni besebente together as a team*

Figure 13 – Sitting arrangement as a strategy to promote inclusion.

The teacher has already given the classwork so the child who is visually impaired asked a question from the friend something that she didn't understand. So, she is explaining this one. The teacher has already instructed the peer to help because she feels they work well together.

Figure 14 – Peer support during a class activity as a strategy for inclusion.

Figure 15 – Peer support during a class activity.

The school grounds and infrastructure, such as the assembly square and school feeding areas, ablutions (toilets), pathways and ramps; were also zones for inclusive education. The disabled zones of the school grounds and assembly provided a scope for the development of positive disabled identities. It is noteworthy to observe that certain areas in mainstream schools might be positively or negatively connected with difference and 'otherness' and perpetuate it. One of these spaces was toilets for learners with disabilities.

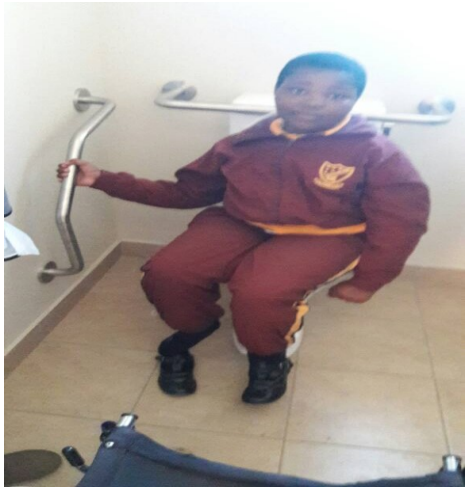

Figure 16 – Modified ablutions to promote inclusion.

The teachers viewed the accessible toilets as an enabling space for learners with physical disabilities because they promoted independence on the part of the learner. Learners saw playgrounds as positive spaces because they had more freedom to express themselves there. Additionally, playgrounds gave learners the chance to develop informal cultures and social relationships. Positive effects result from the interactions in the playgrounds, and had implications for eradicating distinctions between 'disabled' and 'non-disabled' learners. The intention of the pathways and accessible toilets was to improve mobility and promote independence among learners with physical disabilities. However, children without physical disabilities were also allowed to use the pathways. The respondents revealed that before the construction of the ramps, learners using wheelchairs had to be carried to the assembly square by big boys and, in some instances, were excluded from assembly.

Before, they would not be able to attend assembly because there was no proper place for the wheelchairs.

The excerpts below are an example of the inclusive education zones related to sports, assembly and school feeding.

I am preparing something for the children more especially the ones that are in the resource centre. I have a project. It hasn't started yet but I have the material because I want to make sure that when the others are going for sports they should also enjoy being at school. I want them to play volleyball. I went to the office to ask for the pitch so the head teacher agreed and then I have the volleyball kit specifically for children. I got it from the President for volleyball. Now, its second term and we have sports so when they are going for sports. I will be taking these ones. I am not a sports teacher, but I am having an interest.

During assembly, they are fully participating in all the activities sometimes playing a leading role...maybe you find they are a choir starting those songs in assembly, participating maybe sharing the word of God, maybe when we are participating in athletics you find them cheering up the other learners (P 4, individual interview).

They are not separated, they just eat together and you can find that some are helping. The one nje is having six fingers sometimes she cannot hold well. I don't know what happened. You find that they are helping her (P 3, individual interview).

This year I had some futsal games in Lobamba. So, we had a wheelchair somebody. The teachers were saying how am I going to go with this one because she is a fan, and she can't lose the game because she is always part of the team at school. So, I arranged a car for the girl, a special care to take her to Lobamba. But because of funds she ended up using the same bus - 2 sprinters. We included her in those buses. But ammhhh there was no problem she was there she was a fan, and everything went well. I could feel that was part of inclusion and I could see the child was very happy about it. I also learnt something about it because...aahh...she is now a friend to me instead of being a pupil who was away from me. She is really now a friend because normally, when she

has a problem she will come to me from those games. I think that part did something in her mind and spirit.

5.4.1 Professional and personal coping skills

Participants' narrative excerpts reflect their experiences of what they did to cope as they transitioned to become inclusive practitioners.

Sometimes, you do research on how you can help those kids, you find yourself going an extra mile trying to cover up your shortcomings.

There is nothing much except try to adapt to that kind of situation".

I think being a Christian, I think that is the main thing that keeps me going. I always say we are the image of God; so, what I would like to be done to me I have to do it to somebody else. So, that's how I keep going.

5.4.1.1 Reflective practice: Creating a different sense of self

This section includes narratives where teachers consider the benefits of implementing inclusive education while also considering their own sense of identity and the changes and transformations they are going through as they transition to becoming inclusive practitioners.

5.4.1.1.1 Positive gains: transforming the school and community

The participants highlighted that since inclusive education accommodated everyone, learners did not need to go to special schools away from their families and friends. Everyone was accommodated in the local community school, and that promoted socialization and unity amongst the children because they learnt and played together. Schools have been transformed, and some of the schools' infrastructure has developed through modification of existing structures and construction of accessible infrastructure. Furthermore, the ethos and culture in the schools has gradually changed to embrace diversity.

Figure 17- Examples of some improvements made in the school infrastructure as part of the implementation of inclusive education.

5.4.1.1.2 Transforming our curriculum and transforming ourselves

Participants reported greater knowledge and abilities, a favourable impact on their personal and professional life, and enhanced teacher and learners' morale. The respondents felt that they were better teachers now and were still willing to learn more. The accomplishments improved the morale of both teachers and learners, which benefited the implementation of inclusive education.

The following narrative excerpts reflect ways in which inclusion transformation has impacted on teachers, and the extent to which participants' perceptions of learners with special needs have changed since they started implementing inclusive education, and directly interacting with the learners. They understand the learners better and have more passion to teach – especially where they experience success. Their personal and professional lives have changed for the better, and their morale improved, especially because of the successes they had experienced from some of the learners.

It changes your life, and you have more passion, more passion teaching.

What I like about inclusive education is that it is including every child in class no matter, owk even if she is a slow learner, we have that child in class. So, I like inclusion because it's not like we are going to teach these children in separate classroom. We have them in our classrooms, teach them and have more time with them. Again, even in the school environment they are being included. At first, they tend to not have an understanding…. there is socialization between the children not to say this one is from resource.

It just improved my morale as I have said that at first, yihh I thought this thing it is something that is come to hurt us because we are not trained but now you can see that although the child not benefiting much in writing knowledge but that the child is exposed with the children and learning. Sometimes, you can find him speaking in English "good morning". If he/she was at home, where was he going to learn? I think that to me it is right.

I like the fact that the teachers, they gradually get to understand the role of inclusive education to learners. It's no longer maybe like a few years back where it's like, it was like a foreign element…inclusive education….not they get to understand it better. As a teacher, it can make me be able to understand the diversity of the learners, be able to help them maybe understand their weakest points, strongest points, their challenges and all the stuff. That's how it makes me to be a better teacher.

It has given nje me….let me talk about me. It has given myself an opportunity because It was the first time since I arrived at the school the time they have introduced it in the school kutsi to face ema situations of la ma special kids. And it changed the way you see things ekutsi children are diverse and it make you kutsi take things personally kutsi take this thing if it was your child or if it was your relative or if it was you how would you want the people to treat you. And another thing, it has helped the school to improve in terms of infrastructure so that now these learners ba accommodated so we got some improvements through inclusive education, and we are still expecting more because

there is a lot that has to be done and we are still going to learn more as teachers from teaching these kids.

Inclusive education to me has raised the morale in other children and that is what I like about inclusive education. And it has removed certain myths which we have as Swazis. Others said you see people who are disabled so you don't have to go to school and all those myths have now gone away. It is good to work with them because they show you what they like and what they don't like. They don't actually fear to say, "teacher I hate you for this and that".

5.5 CONCLUSION

According to the major themes that emerged from the data, this chapter has offered authentic narrative excerpts of participant experiences becoming inclusive practitioners. The reflections of the participants highlight a variety of trying and rewarding experiences that are a part of this ambiguous and transitional space towards becoming inclusive practitioners, as well as how they use their agency to navigate the difficult situations by embracing the shifting nature of teaching and larger social formations. Participants' narratives reflect that the challenging and successful moments, teacher identities and practices were, not only informed by their knowledge-base and professional teaching (Walton & Kenny, 2022; Van Lankfeld et al., 2017), but also informed by multiple and intersecting identities of teachers as social beings, and the opportunities and constraints to what was possible in the context in which they worked. The narrative excerpts from the participants should help us grasp their perspectives and voices from this time of transition.

More in-depth analysis and interpretation of this data in light of the recurrent themes, is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

There is a wealth of literature demonstrating the difficulties of putting inclusionary principles into reality in classes and schools, and the fact that there needs to be a significant shift in the policy focus to affect how schools operate on a daily basis (Nilholm, 2021; Yeo et al., 2016). There is evidence that Eswatini Primary and High School teachers struggle with implementing the inclusive education vision in their day-to-day teaching practice (Maseko & Fakudze, 2014; Adeboya & Ngwenya, 2015; Zwane & Malale, 2018). Research also highlights that understanding individual teachers' realities and experiences should be looked at in the context of spatiality of inclusive education (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011, 2012; Armstrong, 2007; Waitoller & Annamma, 2017). This study seeks to respond to the call for research projects that examine teachers' day-to-day experiences in relation to the spatiality of inclusive education (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2016). It is also an attempt to give a foundation for developing informed ideas and teacher training programs that are based on the 'real' versus the 'ideal' about the whole process of implementing inclusive education strategies successfully in schools.

The goal of this study was to learn more about how teachers traverse and negotiate the geographical contexts in which they create their conceptualizations of inclusive education, as well as their experiences on their transformational journeys toward inclusion. I was able to produce data that reflected teachers' distinctive, context-specific, and lived experiences of inclusive education policy, as well as the difficulties and successes involved in their transformation into inclusive practitioners by using authentic personal narratives as the main

strategy of inquiry. The previous chapter summarized these findings under broad themes that appeared in the participant narratives and photographs.

In light of the research questions, relevant literature, and the theoretical framework that guides this study; the participant narratives are discussed and interpreted in this chapter. I looked into teachers' real-world experiences, the forces that shaped and are still forming their conceptions of inclusive education, challenging and encouraging moments, how they dealt with the tensions and contradictions they experienced as inclusive practitioners, what gave them agency, and how they envisioned the implementation of inclusive education in Eswatini in the future. The themes and sub-themes that serve as a foundation for this study's theoretical underpinnings and review of existing literature are shown below.

Table 4 Themes and sub-themes

Themes	**Sub-themes**	**Understanding of inclusive education**
1. Constructions of inclusive education	Defining inclusive education Spaces for inclusive education	Narrow view of inclusive education Varied spaces for inclusive education
Themes	**Sub-themes**	**Dynamics that influence the experiences**
2. Lived experiences	Challenging moments	• Tensions and contradictions amongst teachers • High teacher pupil-ratio • Inadequate teaching and learning resources • Absence of parental involvement • Inadequate capacity for teachers to teach learners with special needs and disabilities. • Unrealistic external expectations and demands • Limited stakeholder involvement
	Positive moments	• Experiencing change in the attitudes of teachers • Support from Ministry of Education and Training • Parental involvement and participation • Collaboration between the school and community
Theme	**Sub-themes**	**Innovation / Creativity (teachers exercising their agency)**

3. Catering for Diversity in the schools and classrooms	Using variety of teaching strategies and methodologies Making accommodations and modifications Using space to cater for different learning needs	• Used variety of teaching strategies and methodologies suitable for the learners" abilities and needs • Giving the learner separate work; oral instead of written work • Providing specialized material such as Braille • Providing notes on a specific topic • Individual and Peer support • Seeking help from other teachers – building a culture of collaboration amongst teachers • Constructing internal and external spaces for inclusive education • Using separate spaces for inclusion e.g., Resource Centre
Theme	**Sub-themes**	**Opportunity and Inspiring**
4. Developing an alternative sense of self	Transforming the school and community Transforming the curriculum Transforming ourselves	Positive gains • Opportunity for growth • Improving coping mechanisms on a personal and professional level; • Transforming the school and community; • Modifying our curriculum; and transforming ourselves.

The themes shown in the table above have been drawn from the findings presented in chapter 5 to communicate how vivid and significant the experiences of teachers within the inclusive schools and spaces that they work in are. Interestingly, the themes and sub-themes showed that the participants had both difficult and rewarding experiences. They tended to become creative and innovative in their approaches, techniques, and strategies for teaching learners with special needs as a way of exercising their agency as key role players in redefining teaching based on how they construct inclusive education. This helped them become adept at providing effective, high-quality education. The participants' experiences were made all the more motivating by the chance provided for them to think, grow, and receive first-hand teaching-learning experiences that honed their abilities to educate learners with a variety of needs.

6.2 TEACHERS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

There is evidence from the findings that participants' presentations of their diverse perspectives on inclusive education were marked by tensions between their views on special education and

the reality of inclusive education. The findings from this research give clear evidence that some participants thought inclusive education meant teaching children with and without special needs and disabilities together, while others thought it meant integrating children with disabilities into regular classrooms and addressing any deficiencies or differences they may have. Even though participants stated that inclusion was about all children learning together, which seemed to show that they had grasped the broad understanding of inclusive education; a deeper interpretation and analysis of the participants' narratives revealed that their understanding was narrowly concerned with learners categorized as having special education needs and/or disabilities. The limited perspective portrays inclusive education as being about integrating learners with 'disability' into regular classrooms to learn alongside those who are not impaired. Participants' narratives indicate that their schools were inclusive because they had children with disabilities in their schools, and that learning spaces such as classrooms and toilets had been modified and pathways constructed, which reinforced the narrow understanding of inclusive education. The teachers were still concentrating on a more deficit-oriented approach to learning barriers.

This notion of inclusive education can be attributed to the fact that it originated from several disciplines, such as special education. Its first implementation centred on giving impaired learners access to regular classrooms. The continuum of support recommended during pre- and in-service training, whose outcomes typically do not focus on a deeper understanding of inclusive education and diversity, could also serve as the foundation for the deficit-oriented approach. Participants' narratives show that this legacy continues to inform teachers' understanding of inclusive education in the participating schools (Pather, 2019; Slee, 2019) and no doubt such understanding encourages a binary view of learners; those who are 'normal' and those who are 'not normal' who need to be corrected or treated; and those with 'learning

disabilities' and those without. Furthermore, it encourages the 'othering' discourse, which defines pupils with additional learning needs special needs as 'an addition' to the usual class (Knight et al., 2022). The results also show that the "mechanism of objectification" that holds people in constructions of difference still exists (Foucault, 1977, p.187 in Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011, p. 360).

Although the EDSCE policy of 2018 supports a broader socially constructed approach to diverse educational needs in its definition of inclusive education, teachers still hold to the limited belief that inclusive education is the physical placement of learners with disabilities in need of special support in mainstream classrooms. Although the EDSCE policy of 2018 supports a broader socially constructed approach to diverse educational needs in its definition of inclusive education, the narrow view of inclusive education as the physical placement of learners with disabilities in need of special support in mainstream classrooms still prevails among teachers. Language does not necessarily reflect the world, but generates and regulates life. This implies that the way participants make sense of inclusive education will inform practice (Burr & Dik, 2017; Mokoella, 2020). Ideologies are created through language, and it is these ideologies that shape how we perceive the world (Burr & Dik, 2017; Mokoella, 2020).

The teachers' understanding which placed emphasis on special needs that are linked to disabilities within mainstream education somehow reinforce the idea that inclusive education is special education renamed (Engelbrecht, 2018). This limits the teachers' understanding of 'special needs' as disabilities, rather than a norm of diverse learning needs within inclusive education. This understanding maintains schools as spaces where certain learners, both with and without special needs, have exclusive constructs. Furthermore, this understanding perpetuates schools' spaces where learners with special needs are channelled to be able to fit

into areas that have been created for them by normative discourses. According to Ngcobo and Muthukhrishna (2011), the classrooms and schools exhibit a spatial convergence of special education and general education programs that reinforce differences.

A closer investigation of the findings demonstrates that teachers' constructions of inclusive education, to some extent, continue to inform decision-making in schools on how inclusion should be implemented. Participants' narratives mirror other research findings that decisions on which version of inclusive education to implement in specific school contexts are actually decided by teachers rather than by idealistic policy imperatives (Engelbrecht, 2018). Lipman (2013) argues that, while education policy is crucial for changing the symbolic meaning of locations, spatial inequality actually originate from human behavior. Therefore, in order to modify the symbolic meaning of schools places to be inclusive, the various forms of collective political and social transformations should incorporate teachers who are social constructs of what occurs in the schools.

The discrepancy between the teacher's understanding of inclusive education and the policy's requirements brings to the fore the issue of power and agency into discussions about inclusive education. The definition and form of inclusive education that should be used in a particular school are decided by teachers in order to meet the demands of implementing inclusive education (Artiles et al., 2011). The definitions and understandings of inclusive education are rooted in the historical and cultural context in which teachers operate. Subsequently, the way teachers tend to adopt inclusive education methods in their classrooms is directly influenced by their knowledge of inclusive education. Perhaps, it is helpful to take notice of the point that Dámant (2010) raises, that "…individual teachers' discourses and understanding of inclusive education are constructed differently by different individuals. This is why it is of

utmost importance to consider the context in which each teacher is embedded, the particular constraints and contradictions which arise in each teacher's life and their individual means of negotiating these making sense of them" (p. 217).

We learn about the socially constructed meanings that teachers express through the participants' narratives. It is also beneficial to pay attention to the issue brought up by Schultheiss and Wallace (2012), that in order to comprehend teachers' interpretations of inclusive education, we must take into account the origins and history of commonly held presumptions, as well as the necessity of contextual sensitivity. The participants' narratives re-inforce the idea that inclusive education lacks a clear conceptual focus, at least in part (Slee, 2018). The paradigm shift that Ainscow (2020) refers to as an "inclusive turn" is essential in order to place more emphasis on school growth, and not just integrating at-risk groups of learners into current mainstream school settings.

6.3 TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES: CHALLENGING AND POSITIVE MOMENTS

Participants' narratives indicate that the notion of inclusive education increased the requirement for teachers to create educational spaces that encourage stimulating and learning processes. Although there is widespread agreement that inclusive education is a desirable practice, and that learners with diverse abilities have a right to participate in general education classes (Baily et al., 2015); teachers face a variety of difficulties when putting inclusive education into practice. In their attempts to adopt inclusionary practices in their schools, participants' stories show that teachers face a variety of difficulties and complications as well as positive moments.

6.3.1 Challenging and positive moments

An interpretation of the participants' narratives show that their experiences created identities and practices informed by, not only their knowledge base and professional teaching, but also participants' multiple and intersecting identities as social beings, and the opportunities and constraints on what was possible in the context in which they worked (Ruszynyak & Walton, 2022). Each participant's responses to inclusion and their experiences in becoming inclusive practitioners are deeply rooted in their unique, distinctive, and particular circumstances and life experiences (Dámant, 2010). The participant's accounts of their experiences are consistent with other research findings that indicated that more complex contextual issues relate to the conceptualization of inclusive education, parental involvement, resources, crowded classrooms, collaboration, and support systems (Mpu & Adu, 2021; Dela Fuente, 2021; Zwane & Malale, 2018; Adebayo & Ngwenya, 2015; Thwala, 2015; Engelbrecht, et. al, 2015). Overall, findings reveal that additional complex contextual issues on several system levels have been identified as having direct and substantial effect on the way in which teachers describe their teaching experiences. The above-mentioned contextual challenges constrain the harnessing of teachers' creative/innovative minds to develop teaching tools for effective quality education, to shape a brighter future of every learner, and undertake inspiring teaching.

Participants' accounts of difficult times brought about by attitudes, beliefs, and stigma are consistent with other research findings that show that teachers were affected by deeply ingrained assumptions and beliefs about ability, disability, and difference (Jordan, 2018). Additionally, society's initial attitudes and responses to the idea of inclusion still exist, which causes some teachers to react negatively to the introduction of inclusion (Dámant, 2010). The participants' narratives indicated being overburdened by the demands made on them by system changes since they lacked the necessary skills or training to manage diversity in their classes,

particularly learners who exhibit serious difficulties. It is difficult and demanding to move inclusion from the field of disability into the realm of diversity, which "... now incorporates a more extensive spectrum of concerns and discourses" (Thomas, 2013, p. 474). Such a radical change in schools is time-consuming for teachers, especially when the goal is to implement a coherent reform from top to bottom of the system. According to the results of the study on the spatiality of learning environments, teachers urgently require training on curriculum and evaluation procedures that will be sensitive to diversity in their classrooms.

6.3.2 Experiencing Tensions and Contradictions

Teachers' experiences in complicated circumstances characterized by tensions, contradictions, ambiguity, and fragmentation emerged from the participant's narratives. The philosophy and practice of inclusive education have given rise to increasing ambivalence and uncertainty. The return to separate schools for children with disabilities is being called for at these schools, which reject its ideas and practices (Imray & Colley, 2017). The stories reaffirm that people (in this case teachers, parents, and communities) in a school setting work together to invent and construct realities and that schools are contact zones where values, ideologies, and practices intersect in frequently unequal relations of power—domination and subordination. Some of the conflicts and tensions that surfaced between teachers and parents suggest that professional communities of practice inevitably have power to define normative forms of belonging that demand that participants adopt specific identities that signify membership (Artiles & Kozelski, 2007, p. 360; Reeves, 2018). The results show that even at these schools, the implementation of inclusive education is accompanied by conflicts and even resistance because of incoherence and opposing interests (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education 2014a, 2014b; Norwich 2014; Arduin 2015).

The idea that learners with difficulties do not belong with their peers who do not have difficulties, is maintained by the creation of segregated spaces like the Resource Centre. As a result, teachers who work at the Resource Centre serve as the intermediaries between the distinct space and regular classroom settings while simultaneously being 'spaced' with their learners. The stress among teachers is amplified by the added strain of being 'spaced'. When it comes to choosing which learners should cross the boarders, how they should be taught, and how long they should stay, teachers in the Resource Centre and mainstream classes act as a kind of border control that upholds the status quo of school operations (Baustien Suity, 2019). Teachers working in the Resource Centre or those who have been assigned as resource teachers for inclusive education must shoulder the responsibility of inclusion due to the weight of the imposed gatekeeper persona.

The transformation required to achieve an inclusive education policy should go beyond just reframing instruction to include a major challenge, to the established social connections structure inside the school setting. To accommodate such a fundamental transformation, educators, parents, and community members must drastically alter their existing ideas, values, norms, behaviours, practices, and relationships. From a practical approach, inclusion should interact with realities of education and schooling to include diversity and respect the democratic claims of participation for all. A highly important step for changing presumptive power connections in daily life is deconstruction and rebuilding, according to Krucke and Neubert (2017, p. 9).

Despite the tensions and inconsistencies in their schools and the participants feeling overburdened by the numerous expectations placed on them, several participants observed improvements in their schools. A closer look at the participants who reported positive change

showed that these particular teachers had been actively involved in, not only implementing pedagogical reforms in their classrooms over a long period of time, but also actively involving parents and community members in the transformation process, which is known as family-school-community collaboration. Their efforts were now beginning to bear fruit, demonstrating the significance of include everyone in a certain geographic area (in this example, schools) when analysing and coming up with solutions to end exclusion (Waitolla & Annamma, 2017). Teachers and parents can collaborate to deconstruct and recreate just school environments as this transformation process recognizes that space is socially constructed and mediated by human action. In addition, the stories shed light on the social, physical, and cultural variations that exist in schools, explaining why the teachers had varied experiences in some instances.

6.3.3 Caught between Policy and Competing Reality

Although participants said they were aware that every learner, irrespective of differences, should be able to access mainstream schools and classrooms and that they were ready to welcome them in, they also said they faced competing priorities in which schools are expected to raise academic standards while at the same time being required to develop more inclusive practices. According to participant accounts, schools were being influenced to reject learners who would not help them reach their goal of being in the top 10 in keeping with external evaluation scores. There are inconsistencies in the way the Ministry defines learners' success, and using the phrases pass or fail to define success leads to conflict and inconsistencies in classrooms. Due to the pressure to finish the curriculum, teachers discovered that they were not entirely able to serve learners who had special needs. Participants stressed that it was challenging for them to modify their teaching techniques to accommodate all learners due to the current syllabus and prescriptive requirements to fulfil the context. This finding suggests that policies, do place boundaries on teaching practice for teachers (Liu, Wang, & Zhao, 2020).

The strong culture of administering high-stakes exams and deeply ingrained presumptions and ideas about intelligence, aptitude, and difference, constrains teachers' as key change agents to create inclusive schools and classrooms. Dámant (2010) noted that "it is natural and hardly surprising that many teachers reflect on experiencing difficulties in reconciling the ideological contradictions and tensions that emerge between the old and the new and unfamiliar" (p. 218). This explains why studies on the implementation of inclusive education have come to the conclusion that Eswatini's education policy is out of touch with the realities of the classroom and school (Zwane & Malale, 2018; Adebayo & Ngwenya, 2015; Thwala, 2015).

According to the participants' narratives, the Ministry of Education and Training and other external expectations and restraints have an impact on teachers' decisions within the school. Therefore, a significant portion of how each teacher responds to the inclusion problem rests on elements ingrained in their daily experiences. The results of this study support other research findings that teachers are constrained in their ability to be flexible in addressing their own learners' needs and context by the prescriptive approach to policy requirements, which includes time allocations to complete the syllabus (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Msibi & Mchunu, 2013). Participants' personal accounts challenge fundamental beliefs about how society is organized and how power relations (forces outside of school) operate. These narratives also highlight how these beliefs are supported or challenged in the context of the local school, and how these issues should be discussed moving forward as we put the inclusive policy into action. According to Kozleski et al. (2014), recognizing these connections inside and between these systems makes it easier to comprehend how inclusive education might be implemented in certain school settings. The findings in this study indicate that, although inclusive education policy is promoted as a human right, it remains a practice deeply rooted in classroom and cultural context which is created primarily at national and local level. It is therefore, important for policy

arbiters to understand that inclusion manifestation in context, is frequently different than the ideals laid out in international and national laws.

6.4 CATERING FOR DIVERSITY IN THE SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

Although legislative changes are significant, inclusive education ultimately depends on improving instruction in regular classes and schools (Srivasta et al., 2013). As a result, the effectiveness of teachers and the quality of their inclusive instruction have drawn significant attention worldwide. It is the teachers' ongoing personal interpretations and dynamic interactions with the contextual issues that determine how inclusion is enacted in their classrooms. This is despite contextual issues shaping the experiences of teachers and the larger school context within which inclusive education is implemented. Research on the disparity between education policy and practice has shed light on the techniques used by teachers to interact with policy regimes that challenge, not just the status quo, but also their own personal and professional identities. Participants who were asked to reflect on their practice described how, despite the difficult times, their experiences motivated them to put a great deal of effort into tailoring their instruction to fit the requirements of their learners. The difficulties inspired them to be inventive and imaginative in order to guarantee the inclusion of learners with special needs into their classrooms and schools.

The participant's narratives show that teachers are aware of the obstacles experienced by learners who were previously excluded as well as the need for curriculum revisions. As a result, educators have been expanding and modifying the curriculum to make room for learners with special needs. The use of Braille, oral assignments rather than written ones, peer support, individual attention, and both internal and external classroom space—such as seating arrangements and the resource center—as well as the development of collaboration between

teachers and learners—are examples of adopted teaching and management strategies. Their tales demonstrated the success of their efforts by describing how learners with special needs actively participated in the teaching and learning process, and made good progress in terms of performance and transition to the next grade. It is important to highlight how the participants' perceptions of inclusive education relate to the activities they take in the classroom.

In addition to what Engelbrecht et al. (2015) refer to as systemic contextual elements, teachers' understanding of inclusive education played a significant role in how they made adjustments as a means to implement inclusive educational practices in their classrooms. The adjustments were made in response to their particular knowledge of medical deficit-based special education needs, which centres on educating the individual learner rather than the class as a whole. Their activities and interactions with learners in the classroom reflect their understandings and beliefs: "*This is the girl she is sitting…. she is a lazy somebody….*" The comments showed that the teachers saw the learners as different from the majority of learners, and believed they should learn something different, as they said, "…. *I was making inangu, a statistics recently checking nje kutsi how many children need special attention and they are close to twenty. So, you don't have the time because the syllabus is there and another thing mine I think these children they need their own syllabus or curriculum which is totally different from the one from NCC, which they give to the others learners because it's not effective to them bona they don't need like the reading comprehension they need two or one and they don't need these kind of questions "describe, discuss, they need thing they are going to recall".*

The results are consistent with previous research findings that teachers' understanding of inclusive education and the teaching and learning support strategies that follow, show how they respected and addressed a variety of learning needs, and that their response was grounded in

the pre- or in-service training they initially received based on a deficit approach of obstacles to learning and development. Their teaching methods produced opportunities for dual learning that were not sufficiently made available to everyone. Because of this, not every learner could participate completely in all classroom activities as a member of the entire group (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). By aiming to provide something different from that which is typically provided for the majority of learners, they endeavored to provide additional and different places for people who suffer barriers to learning in an effort to give meaning to inclusive education practices (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). In contrast to inclusion in the true sense, where all learners have access to equitable learning opportunities that support them in participating meaningfully and reaching their full potential. Dámant (2010) suggests that teachers adopt teaching strategies that simply adopt the rhetoric of inclusion and implement what she refers to as token inclusion.

The teacher's narratives also showed how teachers used what Soja (1996) refers to as social and material space to maintain order and control in a classroom setting. Although the goal is to encourage inclusion, the reality is that societal values related to difference are actually incorporated in the classification of learners and the management of educational institutions and curricula to (re)produce exclusion. Participants' narratives reveal that learners are classified according to their perceived learning needs, and efforts focused on helping the various learners fit into the current educational framework rather than changing the framework to better serve the needs of all learners (Corcoran & Kaneva, 2021). The procedure 'others' the learners, excludes them, and further marginalizes them, which negatively affects their academic performance, retention, and social inclusion (Messiou, 2017; Soja, 1996) and undermines the very goal of inclusive education. The results of this study assist us in igniting fresh perspectives

that should undermine widely held beliefs about the function that space serves in efforts to promote inclusive education (Baustien Suity, 2019, p. 1034).

6.5 DEVELOPING AN ALTERNATIVE SENSE OF SELF

The participant's narratives make clear that teachers' conceptions of themselves and their professional selves are not static, but rather involve the construction and reconstruction of meaning through experiences as they undergo change to become inclusive practitioners. Historical classifications that segregated and marginalized particular individuals have impacted how teachers in this study saw themselves and others. Teachers in Eswatini are largely the offspring of a culture that was historically characterized by segregated educational institutions and organizational structures where exclusion was the rule. Since the old divide of either general or special education is frequently used to socialize teachers' responsibilities, inclusive education becomes a new identity that they must navigate (Miller et al., 2020; Naraian, 2010; 2017). The values upheld by the communities and schools where participants were raised and socialized are in contrast to the principles of inclusive education, which means that participants' individual values are largely the product of socialization in accordance with societal norms and rules. Adopting an inclusive pedagogy requires profoundly challenging both the practitioners' own values and beliefs as well as those of the communities they work with (Dámant, 2010). In order to effectively transition to inclusive education, teachers must make modifications. It is possible to call into question the principles upon which its effectiveness is predicated (Kanno & Stuart, 2011 cited in Reeves, 2018), which is referred to as "a fundamental dislocation with the past" (Parker & Harley, 1999, p. 190). Disengagement from the past is neither simple, automatic, nor something that happens overnight. Since teachers constantly engage in the construction of alternative identities across time and situations, the process is rarely simple or straightforward. Projects for inclusive education should incorporate a critical transformative

agenda that involves assisting teachers in making a difference in line with their sense of purpose, while also working to change their own beliefs and attitudes in order to implement agendas like inclusive education (Pantic & Florian, 2015, p. 338).

The teachers' narratives force us to acknowledge that, generally speaking, school reform—which entails removing systemic obstacles to education for all children—is more difficult and complex than other educational reforms. The difficulty comes from the fact that it includes a far deeper transformation in areas like ideas and values, rather than just a superficial switch from one style of service supply to another (Alves, 2019). In order to effectively implement inclusive education, teachers must be prepared to reflect on their long held ideas and values. Reflexivity, which is the ability to watch one's own actions and social context, involves methodically analyzing one's own practices and institutional contexts, is essential. Teachers must be able to consider how such fundamental changes affect both their own values and beliefs as well as those of the communities they serve. By establishing the theoretical framework in this research, one can hold the belief that changing from inequitable to inclusive education necessitates that teachers challenge their established professional identities and challenge segregated schooling practices. This process is ongoing and does not occur overnight. According to Miller, et al. (2022), such incremental formal and informal changes occur at the individual level over time.

6.5.1 Positive Gains: Transforming school and community

It was evident from the participant narratives that the adoption of inclusive education resulted in benefits for the school and community. Children with special needs and disabilities were able to attend school in their communities rather than special schools far from their families because inclusive education aims to accommodate every child in the community. The fact that

the learners are learning and playing together has a positive effect on the learners' socialization and sense of community, according to the participants' observations. This in turn, encourages social inclusion in the larger school community. According to Messiou (2017), creating inclusive communities, both inside and outside of schools, is crucial for helping marginalized populations feel a sense of belonging. Parents, teachers, and students should all be considered stakeholders, and current practises should acknowledge this (Schuelka, 2018). The policy process should also be seen as a flow of meaning, negotiation, and interpretation at each level.

6.5.2 Positive gains: Transforming the curriculum and transforming self

Teachers' professional identities are a continuous process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences, just as inclusive education is neither static nor finite. This idea corresponds with the notion that teachers' professional development never stops and can be seen as a process of lifelong learning. This is a requirement imposed by the dynamic classroom environment. Through their efforts to create inclusive learning environments, teachers increase their ongoing learning. Teachers must be given the freedom to make these adjustments as they create their own interpretations of what the changes mean, as they are key players in education reforms and change is a personal experience. The personal stories show that educators have moved past their original beliefs about the values of inclusive education and are now actively thinking about how to anticipate and prepare for inclusion-related challenges (Miller et al., 2022).

According to the participant narratives, a chance was given for them to learn and receive first-hand teaching and learning experiences, which led to enhanced knowledge and skills and had a beneficial impact on their personal and professional lives. Teachers used instructional techniques to promote learners' learning and enhance education as an example of agentic activity. They and their learners' morale both increased as a result of such an event. This

suggests that encouraging inclusion in school is more about social learning processes within a specific setting than it is about introducing certain approaches (Ainscow, 2020). The results of this study support the findings of another study showing participants' experiences in inclusive classes gave them the chance to grow, hone their teaching techniques, and are motivated to pick up new abilities (Dela Funte, 2021). It should be mentioned that, in order to alter education systems and schools, teachers must undergo a personal transformation in how they view themselves and others, as well as a professional transformation (Dámant, 2010). Such transformation is a process that necessitates ongoing transition and change. According to Slee (2013), teachers must negotiate a range of contextual elements while filling numerous responsibilities that frequently contradict dominant frames of teacher practice in order to develop and maintain inclusive education. The results of this study show that during the transition to inclusive education, teachers are confronted with a variety of contextual tensions and contradictions that shape their realities. These tensions and contradictions primarily revolve around navigating between the old and familiar, the new and unfamiliar, the 'real' and the 'ideal', what is and what should be, and the power relationships that are textually mediated. This state of transition calls for further investigation, interpretation, and comprehension.

Despite the difficulties they had adapting to the new requirements for inclusive education, the participants narratives show that they maintained their optimism as they described their experiences as motivating, which helped them as teachers as well as the school, community, and learners. The participants' attempts to exercise their agency were clear when they showed adaptability and openness in trying out novel approaches to problem-solving and removing obstacles from the physical and social context of the classroom to support inclusive practise. Since they were able to shape and mould the future of learners with various needs, being able to support the learners provided fulfilment to their position as teachers. Observing their

learners thrive and go on to the next grade greatly improved their morale and helped their schools implement inclusion in a positive way. Poon, et al., (2016), cited in Dela Funte (2021, p.105), "affirmed that positive attitudes of teachers had an impact on their commitment to providing inclusive learning".

6.6 CONCLUSION

The data was interpreted and discussed in greater detail in this chapter in terms of the major themes and sub-themes that emerged. The interpretation and discussions of the findings leads to the realization of the complexities involved regarding how teachers engage with inclusive education, create their personal and professional identities in light of inclusive education. It further highlights how teachers navigate the tensions and contradictions that arise in the process of becoming inclusive practitioners in the various spaces of inclusive education. The interpretation and discussion further illustrates that 'national policy does penetrate all layers of the policy onion and has an extremely significant effect on teachers' (Liu, Wang & Zhao, 2020). The degree to which teachers encounter both difficult and rewarding circumstances depends on a variety of factors, including their knowledge base and instructional strategies. Instead, they are equally informed by a wide range of complicated dynamics that are both internal to the school and external dynamics that reach into the school. In addition to the opportunities and limitations of what is feasible in the school and larger setting in which they operate, they are informed by the numerous and overlapping identities of teachers as social beings.

The findings make teachers aware of the diversity that exists both within individual teachers and between different teachers and schools. They also show that not all teachers are equally receptive to the idea of inclusion, and that even though many teachers understand the

fundamentals of inclusive policy, they have not yet personally adopted it or are not putting it into practice. Teachers have not yet moved beyond just integrating learners who were previously excluded or marginalized in order to adopt a new way of thinking that includes showing evidence of expression, valuing difference, and improving the responsiveness of daily instruction to all learners. The stark reality that fragmented and distorted practices and moments of inclusion coexist with exclusion is what emerges from this research, according to Dámant (2010).

Given the various contexts they operate in, and the varying degrees of understanding, commitment, and efficacy; it is obvious that teachers cannot be seen as being uniform and mechanistic in their function as essential agents of change (Dámant, 2010; Campbell, 2018). In order to offer constructive criticism that will give the possibility of an improved, more critical, and effective inclusion; it is important that teachers remain constantly aware of the differences that arise in their experiences with, understandings of, and implementation of inclusive education. It is really concerning that teachers are responding to pressure to adhere to policy expectations of what inclusive practitioners should look like and do by continuing the trend of inclusive rhetoric. Equally concerning is the fact that outside forces like the Ministry of Education and Training continue to impose policy and practice requirements on educators and institutions of higher learning, perpetuating the dominant discourse of change with little consideration for the effects of those practices on teachers, who serve as key mediators in the formulation of policy and the implementation of inclusive pedagogy.

The process of putting the principles of inclusion into practice in classrooms and schools should be aided by a deeper knowledge of the perspectives and voices of the teachers provided by these narratives. Giving teachers a voice and expecting them to actively participate in the shift,

however, might not be sufficient. When conceptualizing and organizing teacher development and support, an inclusive education reform must consider the realities and experiences of teachers. Giving teachers a voice and then expecting them to participate well might not be sufficient, though. When conceptualizing and organizing teacher development and support, an inclusive education reform programme must be mindful of the realities and experiences of teachers. Teachers must work together with administrators, families, the community, and policymakers to implement lasting and sustainable inclusive education practices. Teachers alone cannot increase access to inclusive education.

CHAPTER SEVEN

REFLECTIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The move to the new education policy on inclusive education – creating inclusionary spaces in Eswatini, was seen as vital in addressing the historical systemic inequitable special education practices which created a dual educational landscape that promoted the exclusion of a certain group of learners from mainstream education. The goal of laws and regulations that were passed was the promotion of one educational system—an inclusive educational system—that guarantees equitable access to education for everyone, is firmly committed to eradicating prejudice, and removes barriers to high-quality teaching and learning. The creation of exclusionary learning spaces, different curricula and pedagogies was central to the system of education in Eswatini, and this created particular identities among educators, which were learned, maintained and protected over years. It is worth noting that the paradigms from which inclusive education and special education emerged are distinct, with each paradigm having its own assumptions, values, norms, behaviours, practices, and relationships.

This shift towards inclusion requires teachers to create inclusionary spaces which necessitates teachers changing their identities and embracing a different way of thinking, and a different set of beliefs, values, practices and relationships that involve evidence of expression and valuing of difference, and making everyday teaching and learning more responsive to all learners. Research shows that everyday realities of teachers' are fraught with contradictions and tension between "real"- action or what is and the "ideal"- what could be and the textually mediated power relations. The steps required to advance policy and practice are still unclear to the field

(Ainscow, 2020, p. 7). It is alleged that the transformative policies are inconsistent and disjointed from other facets of social and educational policy, which encourage exclusion in both overt and covert ways in school settings.

The framework for inclusive education, not only poses difficulties for the Ministries of Education, but also places greater demands on teachers, who are at the forefront of such environments (Dela Fuente, 2021). Teachers are challenged to embrace new personal and professional identities. Some learners are still marginalized, and it appears that this has something to do with who and what was/is valued in each political, social, and economic system at the national level as well as at the school level. According to Kozelski et al (2014), teachers—school bearers and/or gatekeepers—construct the idea of who belongs and who does not, potentially upholding the status quo. This confirms the idea that schools are landscapes of power, richly textured, power-laden spaces of daily life. The issue of power and agency has thus, entered discussions on inclusive education due to discrepancies in how inclusive education is understood and how it is implemented in varied school settings. In this regard, it is crucial to understand the context of teachers' perceptions of, and engagement with, inclusive education, as well as how and why they make particular decisions. It is also crucial to examine how they negotiate spaces to exercise their agency as they choose, interpret, and modify policies in accordance with demands and circumstances of the context (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2016. p. 202).

This is the context that prompted this investigation into teachers' experiences on the transformational paths toward inclusion, and how they negotiate and navigate the spatial conditions under which they construct their understandings of inclusive education; the interpretations they make of their experiences, including the conflicts, problems, and tensions

they experience. This chapter serves as the thesis' final chapter that summarizes the most important research findings and makes recommendations for future research. It also considers how this research adds to our understanding of how teachers can change to become inclusive practitioners, and how they can put inclusive education policy into practice.

7.2 A SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS OF THIS RESEARCH

The key points of the research project's findings are highlighted in this section. From the analysis and interpretation of participant narratives, each of the subsections listed below presents a significant finding. It was possible to uncover the lived experiences of teachers and the power dynamics that, over time, defined and shaped their sense of self and their teaching practices. These practices are still influenced by the historical exclusion of certain groups of learners, through the various participatory methodologies used in the data generation and interpretation processes. The key ideas are organized into four subtopics, including the semantic space of inclusive education, inclusive education experiences, inclusive education efforts and hopes, and inclusive education theory.

7.2.1 The semantic space of inclusive education

According to Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018), the semantic space of inclusive education refers to ‘thinkings’, ‘understandings’, and ‘meaning-making’ through the use of language, which includes expressions and concepts that characterize what is occurring in practice. Language and meaning contain ideologies that direct policy thinking and action (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). Based on the discourses, contextual dynamics, and linguistic factors at play, the research's findings demonstrate that inclusive education has many different meanings and conceptions, as well as reflects frequently clashing ideologies. Analysis of classroom practices shows that teachers still have a tendency to focus on learners with special needs and

recognizable forms of disability in their definitions of inclusive education, despite there being an increasing awareness of diversity within the schools and communities as reflected in the participants' understandings of inclusive education. The participant's narratives make it abundantly evident that traditional "special education" beliefs and pathological discourses impact perceptions of inclusive education. Furthermore, these semantic spaces serve as inter-subjective spaces for the daily work that takes place in schools, classrooms, and communities.

Teachers' conceptions of inclusive education are shaped and guided by the normative presumptions of the traditional deficit approach. The language they use in association with inclusive education has the ability to "other" specific learners and perpetuates social inequality (Walton, 2018). The findings in this study confirm that in schools, there is still a pervasive and exclusive 'othering' of some learners' groups. What this research illuminates is the realization that the question of power exists in these school settings: who should decide what inclusive education means, and which kind of inclusion is practiced in a school? The transformation process must take into consideration these power relationships in inclusive education's semantic realms. What it also illuminates is that the language of inclusive education appropriated by teachers (firmly rooted in the ideological framework of the mainstream discourse on special education) creates dilemmas for inclusive education practice (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018) and solidify concepts that marginalize and oppress some learners. It also highlights how important the semantic space is to advancing a social justice and inclusive education agenda. Policy makers, school administrators and teachers need to be aware of how language can be used to perpetuate meanings that exclude particular learners. In this study, some teachers exhibit a non-reflective ideological bias towards ideas and concepts related to special education. Therefore, the transformative process should empower educators, school administrators and teachers to become space invaders; to disrupt the language and

meanings attached to special education, and apply a reflexive ideological inclination towards dominant ideas and perceptions in special education. It is necessary to challenge fundamental presumptions and ways of thinking about difference (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018).

7.2.2 The lived experiences of inclusive education

The findings from this research remind us that teachers are a product of a dual system of education wherein exclusion and segregation of certain groups of learners was prominent, and that such historic educational arrangements that marginalized certain groups have, over the years, influenced teachers' sense of self, their level of agency, and their comprehension of others. It is evident from the participant narratives that the introduction of inclusive education directly confronts and opposes the teachers' conception of exclusion as well as the prevalent historical notion of segregation based on difference. Teachers unavoidably find themselves in a challenging situation as a result of the transformation, where they must modify the way they think and redefine both their own and others' identities, while also juggling conflicting social pressures and two very distinct identities. It is evident from the narratives that teachers were interacting with the new policies and attempting to comply with the demands of the policy expectations for inclusivity. However, their perceptions of inclusive education, teaching methods, and management techniques frequently centred on rhetoric and with little appreciation of the value of difference and increasing the responsiveness of regular education to all learners. The participants' narratives make it abundantly clear that conflicts, inconsistencies, and even resistance arise between teachers, and between teachers and parents, as inclusive education is implemented in these schools. This demonstrates that schools are contact zones where values, ideologies, and practices collide in frequently unequal power relations, and that educators, parents, and communities collaborate to create reality. The findings from this study demonstrate that the implementation of inclusive education is

frequently influenced by cultural, historical, economic, and political contexts in which exclusion is pervasive and has become crystallized in the practices, tools, and ways of thinking of local communities (Kozleski et al., 2014). This fact highlights a number of contextual factors that have an impact on how schools and teachers do their work (Ainscow, 2020).

The conclusion that comes from this research is that meaningful inclusion necessitates a fundamental departure from one set of presumptions, beliefs, values, norms, behaviors, practices, and connections (Landsberg et al., 2016). This is a journey which should involve, not only innovative teaching and learning techniques are being taught to teachers, but also an internal transformation; a redefining of the teacher's concept of self, of others, and of the community. The research also concludes that becoming an inclusive practitioner does, not only depend on the teachers knowledge base and educational practices, but is also often informed by the multiple and intersecting identities of teachers as social beings, and the opportunities and constraints to what is possible in the school spaces and wider context in which they perform their agency as they select, interpret and modify policies in line with contextual demands and circumstances. By and large, school reform is challenging and therefore, inclusive education is not merely a shift from one paradigm to another and that educational reform is not just a clear – cut process between the two paradigms, nor is it just dependant on teachers, but rather involves an interaction of multiple interpretations based on individual teachers' histories, cultures and the geographies of spaces they work in. This study makes a crucial point that social inequity and exclusion are common experiences that require collective agency to change, involving parents, teachers and learners as stakeholders (Benson, 2020). Therefore, inclusive education should focus on the group as a whole rather than just one instructor or school. Inclusive education is a "cultural product that has unique and specific configurations depending on its spatial and temporal context" (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2014, p. 7 as cited by

Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). A project focused at transforming schools, therefore, ought to make use of indigenous, cultural, and local strengths.

7.2.3 The doings and hope for inclusive education

Although there are many causes for concern on the implementation of inclusive education, the research's findings imply that some of the 'doings' of inclusive education practice offer reasons for optimism, belief, and investment in the field's growth. The study's findings showed that some methods show some degree of agency on the part of the teachers in their attempts to meet the demands of inclusive education policy. Despite their exclusionary nature, these attempts must be viewed in light of other contextual realities such as inadequate professional development; lack of human, material, and financial resources; competing goals (such as addressing diversity and high stakes exams); and others, such as big class size and inadequate parental involvement. Some of the teachers expressed that, although there were initial feelings of frustration due to the many demands placed on them and the tensions and contradictions that emerged; they realized a glimpse of hope and calling to embrace and being inclusive education practitioners at the level of the school and the larger community. The findings presented evidence that, although many teachers had accepted the 'rightness' of the notion of inclusive education with very limited expression and valuing of difference in a manner responsive to all learners; some teachers were genuine in their commitment to the process of inclusive education. Their sincere commitment extended to enhancing opportunities for learners who were previously excluded and subjected to discrimination, as well as offering an alternative definition of education—one in which diversity and difference are celebrated rather than viewed as a problem, and which promoted equality of opportunity and inclusive pedagogy. As social actors, teachers exhibit agency and a reflexive approach in addressing environmental barriers to inclusion, which is a noteworthy discovery. These educators expressed their

determination to carry through their transition to become optimistic inclusive practitioners. Regardless of the various definitions of inclusive education, they were still committed to experimenting with new methods of operation, removing obstacles from the physical and social environments in which they worked, and fostering equitable and effective teaching and learning in classrooms for learners to benefit from inclusive education.

The participant narratives make it abundantly evident that numerous schools and classrooms are engaged in the fight for inclusive education. This raises the possibility that teachers, who are crucial change agents, can negotiate and navigate the contexts, tensions, and contradictions that make up their realities and lived experiences, in order to exercise their agency in choosing, interpreting, and changing inclusive education policies in accordance with the demands and circumstances of the context. Teachers exhibit agency as policy actors as they attempt to interpret and modify policy imperatives to align with their fluid understandings and beliefs to meet the challenges they face in situated contexts (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011 as cited by Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018, p. 5). There is evidence that the teachers' negotiations about their personal and professional identities are influenced by several variables that define the negotiation's course. They act in accordance with their agency within structural contexts that result in exclusion and work against the inclusive educational agenda. Therefore, unlike the content of educational knowledge, which continues to change as a result of curriculum revisions, their identities fluctuate through time. The participants' narratives make it abundantly clear that teachers' professional identities play a significant role in defining them as people; and that their sense of personal identity, the ideology of becoming inclusive practitioners, and their desire to become teachers and improve the lives of children, are all inextricably linked. Given the varying levels of comprehension and dedication, the realization that some teachers have changed, leads to a greater appreciation of the diversity that exists both

within and even across teachers. The results support the notion that individuals' perceptions of reality are varied and subjective. Therefore, it may be incorrect to assume that teachers are generally against transition. Furthermore, given the various contexts they operate in and the power dynamics that are constantly in play, teachers should not be seen as a homogenous group in their function as crucial change agents. Given the various contexts and dynamics, could it be that there isn't a gap between policy and practice but rather different interpretations as a result of teacher abilities, cultural constructions of difference, and resource availability in the school communities?

Some teachers have demonstrated signs of growth and development at both a personal and professional level. These teachers were faced with new challenges because of the introduction of inclusive education, which included the need to learn some fresh approaches to teaching and learning. Positive experiences have increased some teachers' morale, which has inspired them to further their careers and perfect their teaching techniques (Dela Funte, 2021). There is a sense of something new emerging in certain teachers, a new sense of being, and a willingness to participate in an ongoing cycle of analysing, upsetting, and altering the social systems that result in unfairness. There is evidence of willingness to embrace an expanded conceptualization of inclusive education which Suity, (2019) refers to as critical inclusion. This is an on-going process where teachers are actively involved in building and reconstructing information, behaviours, and experiences within the concept of the self (Hollin, 2011). What has emerged through this research endeavour is the need to recognize teachers as human beings who have emotions, are actively involved and engaged in the process of transforming the education system to be inclusive, whilst reconstructing, negotiating, navigating and striving for meaning and new sense of self in a wider social world and immediate spaces they work in. It is crucial to remember that transition—in all its complexity, unevenness, and multiplicity—occurs

despite the untransformed educational institutions affected by systemic socio-political factors, and regardless of how unsure and unstable the reconstructions of self are. As they react to the social realities and imperatives in their society, teachers are also capable of adopting different identities and a reflexive stance (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). The key question is how the transformative process can help teachers at all levels adopt a more reflective stance so they can challenge exclusionary and discriminatory systems and structures, engage in power dynamics, and strengthen their ability to act as change agents to overcome the many obstacles and develop creative local, indigenous solutions to inclusive education. To attain the goal of providing all learners with an inclusive and equitable education of the highest standard, radical reconstruction of education systems should take these issues into consideration.

7.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

This section examines the conclusions that can be drawn from the most important aspects of the research's main findings and presents conclusions and knowledge that could inform both policy and practice. Furthermore, the findings present knowledge that have an impact on how teachers should change their identities and practices to become inclusive practitioners and how the knowledge generated in this study could inform both policy and practice. This section also discusses the consequences of inclusive education policy implementation at a systemic and institutional level; exploring the necessity for a systems thinking approach to the inclusive education ideology.

7.3.1 Developing teachers to become inclusive practitioners

The phenomenon of inclusive education involves a diverse group of learners and the acceptance of difference. The historical exclusivity and social inequality structures and systems must be considered by educational policies that support the philosophy of inclusive education in order

to better comprehend teachers and their actual experiences. Understanding the power dynamics that have excluded, marginalized, and silenced the interests of particular groups of learners must necessarily serve as the foundation for these policies. The reality that teachers are a product of a society and an education system immersed in exclusionary practices and segregation of certain groups of learners must be considered. Such historic educational arrangements have, over the years, influenced the teachers' sense of self, their agency and how they understand others. We also cannot overlook and ignore the fact that teachers in Africa are products of historical events of non-participation in education policy development, exclusion and discrimination of certain groups of learners, and that the policy's portrayal of teachers as inclusive practitioners is frequently at odds with what teachers actually face on a daily basis and with their own personal, cultural, and professional identities. The pervasive nonparticipation culture, social exclusion and marginalization which has influenced how education is provided over years and even shapes and informs teachers lives, has effectively compromised their participation and authentic sense of agency over their lives (Dámant, 2010) and the future of Eswatini inclusive education landscape. Teachers are caught between personal and professional identities that have been shaped by historical expectations of helplessness. They become passive recipients of policy prescriptions, rendering them immobilized to actively make contextual choices and taking personal and professional responsibility for creating transformed learning spaces and communities. In the same vein, we cannot overlook that some teachers made deliberate efforts to interpret the inclusive education policy in their context and that the policy acted as guidance for their teaching practice. Some teachers have been actively involved, demonstrating various ways of exercising their agency to cope with a top-down policy change.

Some of the questions that arise are: what potential there is for Eswatini to successfully reform the very identity of specific educators and institutions? How might an inclusive education policy help teachers, as gatekeepers, take a more critical position and be better prepared to challenge systems, structures, and tactics? How can the hitherto passive and excluded policymakers take part in creating and implementing inclusive education policy and pedagogy? What needs to happen for educators to put their preconceived conceptions of education aside and adopt a modern viewpoint on inclusive education that does away with archaic clichés and systems used to explain learners' challenges in classrooms? Does the school's ethos and culture encourage privilege and disadvantage? Do certain school buildings and settings facilitate injustice and exclusion? How do teachers handle diversity? How can teachers be assisted in transforming and freeing themselves, both individually and collectively, to become invasive creatures capable of responding to inclusion in novel and inventive ways?

The core of any in-service training and teacher capacity development activities for teachers should be a discussion, established as part of a transformative agenda. To improve practice, teacher development should focus on building capacity of teachers to re-interpret policy discourses as space for their innovative teaching practice because space for critical thinking at the macro level is opened through their interpretation. Through interpreting the policy, they will create space in the classroom to exercise their agency. Furthermore, it should empower teachers to 'claim authority to reclaim, re-envision and re-enact realms in the power system of structure thus helping to fully understand teacher agency across different levels and contexts of inclusive education policy (Liu, Wang and Zhao, 2020). Dialogue should also centre on the lived experiences of teachers and how power is embedded in the school geographies. Consequently, policies and practice should draw on these experiences and expertise of the

teachers who actively participate in implementing inclusive education in the classroom and school settings.

The Ministry of Education and Training's commitment to ensuring that teachers are equally involved in the mission of reconstructing knowledge toward the development of inclusive pedagogy should be largely reflected in the development of teachers. Such dedication will inspire educators to work toward social justice education frameworks and act as genuine agents of change. "A social justice framework has the potential to build teacher's competences to engage in ideological critique of inclusive education policy, their identities and their own practices and that of others" (Bell, 2016 as cited by Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018, p. 8). Teacher development should focus on teacher agency in relation to the role they play in inclusive education policy as well as their capacity to act and make their own choices in response to policy changes (Liddicoat, 2018). Teachers transitioning to becoming inclusive practitioners need participatory processes that give them the chance to find and use their voices on contextual dynamics and issues relating to the position and space affecting inclusive education in their schools, and to have their experiences and opinions acknowledged, valued, and attended to, as well as contribute to socially just education. Future implementation strategies must use this participatory methodology to ensure that any pedagogy is developed with teachers and not for them, as is often said. Barriers to participation, access, and development must be addressed at all levels of the education system if the change of the educational system in Eswatini is to go beyond the rhetoric of new educational policies.

7.3.2 Theorising inclusive education

The need to apply a theoretical lens to inclusive education to transform educational practices in more inclusive ways cannot be overlooked. Inclusive education focuses on whole school

transformation to cater for diverse and specific needs of individuals. It includes identifying, minimizing and or eliminating barriers to access, learning, participation and achievement; building an inclusive ethos and culture; developing inclusive policies; creating enabling environments, curriculum and assessments to cater for the needs of all individuals; and ensuring that each individual achieves to his/her maximum potential. Inclusive education embraces principles of valuing diversity, eliminating social exclusion, promoting active participation of individuals, adapting curriculum to meet each learners' unique needs, and creating accessible teaching and learning spaces where every individual is valued and accepted. In an inclusive environment, individual learners have a sense of community, participate in group learning, and have access to high-quality educational options.

One of the major concerns of social constructionism theory is to focus on social contextual issues and uncover perceived social realities. The social constructionism theory enabled this research to emphasize participants' experiences with inclusive education, its practice, and its enactment as being essentially contextual, placed, social, and local in character (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). The theory also emphasizes how inclusive education's practice and its overlapping and interrelated dimensions occur within "site ontologies" that may facilitate, impede, or restrict inclusive education's "performings" (Mahon et al., 2017). The Ministry of Education and Training is thus, challenged by this theory to recognize and comprehend the dynamic spatiality, structures that have the ability to exclude or include, and the positioning of teachers within these. The spatiality of inclusive education calls into question the Ministry of Education and Training's decision to place more emphasis on preparing individual teachers than on giving them the tools to challenge the special education ideas that guide the implementation of inclusive education policies. Adopting a spatial lens necessitates

persistently questioning and confronting the power structures inside education departments to uncover potential for change.

This theory was useful in investigating the meanings and implementation of inclusive education to unearth important insights on social problems. The theory questions the assumptions made within education departments concerning the realities of teachers' experiences as they transform to become inclusive practitioners – where the realities emerge from the narratives of the teachers themselves. An effective way to translate policy into practice stresses the importance of critically looking at inclusion and inclusive education, disrupting exclusion, acknowledging and understanding spatial meanings, understandings, beliefs and practices, while taking advantage of the wealth of local resources and keeping in mind any gains made (Dart et al., 2018; Phasha et al., 2017). Issues surrounding spatial conditions under which inclusive education is implemented are increasingly becoming very crucial for the successful implementation of inclusion. Teachers are at the center of what (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996 cited in Liu, Wang & Zhao, 2020) refer to as the 'policy onion' therefore they need space, planned or planned, to enact their urgency. Therefore, the findings of this study add to the knowledge in the area of space within the broader phenomenon of inclusive education (Benson, 2020).

7.3.3 The need for systems thinking approach for inclusive education

Every level of an education system, that is at national, including the school and classroom levels, makes policy. Policies shift at each level of implementation and most importantly, policy and practice do not exist in isolation (Benson, 2020). Shifting to more inclusive working practices necessitates changes throughout the education system, from substantial changes in schools and classrooms to changes in the values and ways of thinking of Ministry of Education

policymakers, who provide a clear vision shaping an inclusive culture and ethos (Ainscow, 2020). At the heart of transformation is the need to apply a systems thinking approach for inclusive education and to breakdown the traditional ways of thinking around inclusion, diversity and difference Sterman (2000, p. 4), cited in Rebs, Brandenburg and Seuring (2019, p. 1265) emphasizes the need to develop a systems thinking perspective - a critical tool in addressing many social challenges faced by the world, i.e., "[...] the ability to see the world as a complex system, in which we understand that "you can't just do one thing" and that "everything is connected to everything else."

Understanding how different components interact will be helpful in achieving a goal because education systems are very complicated systems. A variety of interrelated components in a larger education system have an impact on how each teacher considers inclusive education while forming their personal and professional identities, keeping in mind that teachers themselves are complex systems. Applying a systems approach to inclusive education offers a chance to understand the internal and external factors that affect its implementation and how educators navigate these intricate and diverse areas. Investigating inter-relationships (context and linkages), views (each actor has a unique perception of the problem), and boundaries (agreeing on scope, scale, and what can constitute an improvement) in practice is encouraged by systems thinking. Since a given perspective cannot be easily adopted by someone whose life experiences have taken place in a different social location than that occupied by the perspective holder, or who does not share the same set of experiences, history, and social knowledge; perspectives are crucial to the discussion of inclusion (Systems thinking - Learning for Sustainability). The education system is very complex and messy therefore, to understand how various settings interpret inclusion in different ways, multisite research is necessary to

better comprehend this complex system of meaning-making. This will help produce a multisite analysis replica that offers a more comprehensive knowledge of inclusion (Benson, 2020).

The systems thinking approach also acknowledges that, how educators go about constructing an inclusive education system is inevitably a product of their mental models and paradigms. The underlining mental models are the root cause and they shape the structures that create the system, schools and classrooms we become part of. Therefore, if we desire a paradigm shift, we must empower educators to employ a systems thinking approach to implementation of inclusive education policy and programming. Embracing a reflexive stance should therefore, empower educators to become aware of how their thinking shapes and constructs a system of education that is inclusive – with regards to what they see, do and the learning spaces they create which then gives feedback to shape their thinking through an ongoing feedback loop. Furthermore, applying the iceberg model uncovers all the layers to see how the outcomes of inclusive education derive from some underlying systems structures and mental models upheld over time.

7.4 WHAT CONTRIBUTIONS DOES THIS RESEARCH MAKE?

The input this study makes is linked to the overall purpose of investigating teachers' experiences on their journey to transformation, how they negotiate and manage the physical contexts in which they develop their understandings of inclusive education, as well as how they construct their personal and professional identities in light of inclusive education. This research sheds light on how they make sense of the context-specific lived experiences, how they establish their personal and professional identities in light of inclusive education, as well as how they negotiate and manage the physical surroundings in which they develop their understandings of inclusive education. It facilitates knowledge and the understanding on spatial

conditions which will largely determines transformation of education in Eswatini. It also makes it possible for other researchers to conduct more critical studies on how inclusive education policies are implemented by teachers and how classrooms are socially structured to allow teachers to use their agency and authority to put inclusive pedagogy into practice. Furthermore, this study contributes to the discussion on whether inclusive education is practical in Eswatini by highlighting the factors that give rise to optimism about its effective implementation.

7.4.1 Participants' voices enabled

The purpose of this research is to foreground the authentic voices of teachers and to investigate their experiences in order to gain a better understanding of how teachers construct inclusive education, learn to exercise their agency, and define themselves within the context of educational transformation towards inclusive education. The methodologies used were designed to give teachers a chance to reflect on their own personal experiences in particular school settings. It was hoped that this would reveal the contextual forms of knowledge and beliefs that teachers employ to give meaning to their experiences. This would, in turn, shed light on how the teachers negotiate the variety of spatial conditions that produce inclusive education. The methodologies gave participants the chance to express themselves subjectively on the contextual dynamics and problems related to the position and space available, and impacting inclusive education in their schools. It was also used to examine the meaning of the personal experiences of the teachers (Creswell, 2008). The narratives offered a chance to hear from the teachers themselves as they shared their experiences which explain and interpret events both to ourselves and to others, in order to make sense of the world and the things that happen to us.

Telling a story about oneself involves telling a story about choice and action (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007 as cited by Dhemba, 2018; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). We engage in ongoing dialogic exchanges and experiences with both our environment and ourselves, as we go through life (Bakhtin, 1986). Creating meaningful narratives out of our experiences is one approach to structure them. We constantly create narratives to categorize and organize our life experiences, but we are also constantly exposed to narratives from the social context in which we live. As a result, we generate narratives to explain our experiences to ourselves and others, as well as narratives to interpret other people's actions (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Stories are constructed, rhetorical, and interpretive; not just abstract structures removed from their cultural context. Therefore, they do not reflect the world as it is (Riessman, 1993). As a result, they must be viewed as being experienced and enacted by people in cultural contexts (Bruner, 1984).

The findings of this study provide insight that the experience of the world, in this case, the phenomenon of inclusive education, is a continuously developing narrative that is constantly forming and changing form in the lives of the teachers. This is because human knowledge and personal identities are constantly constructed and revised. The research's methodology provided participants with opportunities and suggestions to broaden their perspectives, record and consider their previous and present experiences, and further participate in critical reflection of the internal and external power dynamics that impacted those experiences. They were created to support and promote discourse that fosters critical thinking, allowing participants to freely share their own perceptions of the social realities that contribute to a shared narrative of inclusive education. As a result, they were created to seek out opportunities for change in participants' day-to-day experiences of self and knowing. This gave teachers the chance to keep an eye on their own behaviour as well as systematically reflect on and evaluate their own practice in the context of the constantly evolving teaching and learning environments.

7.4.2 Significance of the research to a wider audience

There is some degree of shared reality or shared underlying mental models and structures with a larger audience of teachers, even while the narrative data created obviously belongs to the individual teachers within the research sample. Lived experiences described by specific participants in this sample are frequently the outcome of interactions between interrelated components of structures that exist independent of the persons under investigation. The various narratives, interpretations, and discussions that result bring to light significant issues regarding how teachers are navigating their personal and professional identities as well as their working environments in light of the principles and practices of inclusive education. These narratives will be significant and helpful to policy arbiters and other educators in Eswatini and other nations who are facing the task of formulating and executing policies and those involved in developing teachers to become practitioners of inclusive education.

This research adopted an interpretive approach due to the premise that human existence and experience is immersed and absorbed in the unique context of the spaces they work in. Therefore, reality cannot be researched as some entity separate from or independent of participants, but rather considered, evaluated and interpreted (Berg, 2009). One of the limitations of interpretive approach, is relativism of perspective, the inability to generalize data to other context. This study speaks to teachers' experiences implementing inclusive education policy and should be ‘transferable’ to other settings (Houghton et al., 2013) beyond the specific experiences of the participants in this research sample if it is to be of any use to a larger audience of teachers and educators involved in the policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. By relying on the notion that interpretive research can include characteristics of specific individual realities and greater ‘transferability/generalization’, I was able to reconcile employing an interpretative method with the demand for some degree of

transferability. Knowing that what might be effective for some people in each situation is likely to be effective for others in a situation similar to theirs allowed me to continue situating my research within an interpretive stance without necessarily giving up on my interest in pursuing the research's wider relevance. The examination, comprehension, and addressing of teachers' reality and the spatial contexts under which they convert to become inclusive practitioners could have a significant impact on the successful implementation and outcome of inclusive practices in Eswatini.

7.5 CONTRIBUTING TO CRITICAL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION RESEARCH

This study went beyond only recording the meanings individuals assigned to their experiences interacting with inclusion and inclusive education. Since participants in this study were encouraged to actively engage in their own learning and growth, it can be said that this study drew on many of the concepts that underpin participatory research. Narrative inquiry promoted an understanding of the meaning-making process in which participants continuously engage and encouraged the participants to be active in considering and reflecting on their experiences and embracing new perspectives. It also made the participants present and real in all of their humanity as agents and provided space for them to not only tell their stories in order to contribute to deconstructing, constructing, and reconstructing meaning. Participation in this research and the critical reflection that it required, involved participants in considering critical issues that they had not been given the opportunity to think about and develop before. This research has the potential to encourage the reflection, and construction of new ways of understanding participants' lived experiences, and thus, has the potential for making positive contribution to the personal and professional lives of teachers as well as improving practice.

This research needs to be fully interpreted to assert claims about processes and structures in order to be relevant to the broader field of policy formation, implementation, and assessment and to inspire action that will affect the world. This study respects and appreciates the significance of the unique subjective meanings and variations among participants on a micro-level. However, taking a critical stance moves this research beyond a focus on just the micro-level interactions of individual teachers to acknowledge that there are relations and elements that shape social relations, placing the experiences and context of the individual participants within a larger macro-level educational system context. The interpretive approach made it possible for this study to share the lived experiences of each participant as well as the dynamics and systems of interpreting and making sense of the workspaces they use. This study primarily enables us to understand how people experience and interact with their social environment and the variety of spatial conditions that produce inclusive education. The critical approach enabled this research to examine the power dynamics between teachers as individuals with other individuals, and between teachers as a group and with Ministry of Education and Training. It also considered what influences these power relations historically, how they are perpetuated and maintained, how they impact on teachers personally and professionally, and how these could be transformed.

Through the use of narrative inquiry, which has been a valuable starting point, the participants' subjective perspectives on the contextual dynamics and issues linked to the position and space effecting inclusive education in their schools were established. Additionally, narrative inquiry provided people with a solid foundation from which they could contribute to the advancement of knowledge and possibly even take concrete steps to alter their world. The research design and technique were successful in establishing a setting where the participants' voices were heard, their authentic voices emphasized, and had the chance to reflect on their own

subjectivities and strategies for claiming their identity and authority. The methods that were used to generate the data were successful in promoting and ensuring the participants' active, imaginative, and genuine participation, providing opportunity for critical self-reflection on both internal and external structures, systems, and dynamics that might have sustained traditional, exclusive, and unequal power relations. This study has the potential to be a transformative endeavour that empowers participants to alter their classroom environments and renegotiate their personal and professional selves to create inclusive learning and teaching environments.

The findings of this study basically provide a tool for thinking, providing a fresh perspective, new information and knowledge to policy makers and practitioners that could make it easier to understand the dynamics that influence inclusive education policy enactment. The findings illustrate that national policy penetrates all layers of the policy onion and has an extremely significant effect on teachers and their practice. Space is crucial for teacher agency exercise at all layers of inclusive policy, and that the opening and closing of spaces is what manifest the interaction process between structure and agency. To function as change agents, teachers need spaces whether planned or unplanned. It is hoped that the findings will encourage individual and a community of teachers to not only participate in the inclusive education policy processes, but also inspire them to find effective methods they can employ to create spaces for their agency exercise.

7.6 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

In order to identify broader application of the findings to various settings, and further empower individuals to modify their spaces for themselves, the research's goal is to comprehend the varied realities of teachers beyond the specific stories they present. The limitation of this

research is that it cannot be regarded a developmental tool unless it enables the participants to move beyond critical examination of their experiences to planned action of a transformative kind. Although the interpretive technique helped me comprehend how the many participants interacted with their social environment, and how they viewed and perceived it, as well as the value of their experiences, it is not possible to provide conclusive proof for the complete range of this research. I cannot claim that the research altered or will alter the realities of the participants as they exercise their agency in the school and community settings in which they work and live, or that it has in any way motivated all sample members to act differently than they have always done, or that it is altering teacher development and practice, or policy implementation. These could be topics for additional research.

7.7 POSSIBLE AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The worry that the implementation of the inclusive education policy in Eswatini is vital but does not touch on teachers' personal and professional identities, their context-based realities, or their regular experiences should be considered in further research. My decision to adopt a research focus that looked into teachers' lived experiences, the contextual tensions and contradictions that make up their realities, and how they negotiate and navigate the spatial environment was motivated by my concern that Eswatini teachers faced challenges in implementing the vision of inclusive education in their daily classroom practice, and that policy implementation does not appear to take teachers in their contexts and realities into consideration. Further investigation of teachers' transformations into inclusive practitioners and their implementation of inclusive education would embrace this focus. The methodologies used in this study, which included the use of narrative inquiry and visual methodologies as prompts in the data generation, could guide future work examining teachers' lived experiences and the implementation of inclusive education to better understand the power dynamics and relations

that characterize teachers' lives and contexts, both personally and professionally; and how these teachers could be effectively supported and enabled to shift the dominance dynamic.

While the Hhohho region was the focus of this study's sample of urban, semi-urban, and rural primary schools, additional study might be done with different participant groups there. Further studies could concentrate on teachers from other regions, school principals from urban, semi-urban, and urban schools, Ministry of Education and Training officials, inspectors from the special needs department, and higher education institutions experience inclusive education policy, constraints, tensions, contradictions, and opportunities that emerge from their experiences, as well as how they might be redefining and negotiating their personal and professional identities. These would produce data that would be compared to data from this study in order to identify similarities and differences, as well as the consequences of those differences, and to provide a more comprehensive knowledge of the effects of inclusive education on a wider range of people. This study also created a place for future research to explore the process of empowering teachers to take part in their own self-transformation and become space invaders, changing their classrooms and schools in the process. Participatory methodologies could be used in further research to give participants ongoing opportunities to engage in the process of taking action that is different from that in which they have always engaged and to change their spaces for themselves by directly examining classroom and school practices to make them more inclusive, while also allowing participants to not only narrate their experiences and the meanings they attribute to their experiences.

7.8 CONCLUSION

This study has made an effort to recognize the various points of view and experiences that participants bring to the environments in which they operate, as well as the forces that shape

these environments' dynamics and participants' interactions with them. The participants were given the opportunity to share their stories and have their voices heard by appreciating the uniqueness of the circumstances, lived experiences, and geographies of the individual teachers as critical actors, change agents, and as individuals. Spaces must be created, as this study aimed to do, to explore how teachers comprehend exclusion, social justice, power dynamics, and their experiences with these issues, as well as how these dynamics interact to affect their lived experiences as they change to become inclusive practitioners. According to Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018, p. 8), spaces should be investigated as a social and political construct since schools are places of struggle where the social, political, and educational institutions interact to produce and maintain exclusions, inequalities, and marginalization. In order to investigate and facilitate how such clashing points are negotiated, transformed, and turned into strategies of power; such spaces must be created, as was the goal of this research. This knowledge ought to be the cornerstone of empowering teachers to advance the goal for inclusive education. Giving all teachers a voice and providing them with opportunities is consistent with the ideologies of social justice and inclusive education, and may serve as a springboard for research into, understanding of, and engagement with, the lived realities and experiences of teachers, as well as the spatial contexts in which they undergo transformation into inclusive practitioners. Teachers need to be critically aware of their own and others' attitudes, beliefs, values, and global views about difference, as well as how power can operate to oppress, exclude, and 'other'; given that all teachers are called to be agents of change in the era of inclusion and inclusive education, regardless of their histories and geographies (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018, p. 8). It is imperative to redefine and reorganize how individual teachers view and describe themselves in light of the needs and conditions of context.

This research goes beyond simply reporting on transformation in the abstract, to actually looking at what is. This is made possible by the authentic narratives of teachers' experiences of becoming inclusive practitioners. This research has sparked a critical reflection process within the Ministry of Education Special Needs department to identify potential facilitators and hindrances to contextualizing and implementing inclusive education in Eswatini's classrooms. In line with the focus to help Eswatini move beyond the mere rhetoric of inclusion to effective implementation and outcomes of inclusive practices, this research has helped to uncover the contextual tensions, power dynamics, and contradictions that make up the realities and lived experiences of teachers. I also hope that this research has sparked in each participant, critical reflection that will lead to the growth of their transformative potential to become inclusive practitioners, and to fully embrace their roles as important agents of change and space invaders. I hope that this research has helped to reveal the contextual tensions, power dynamics, and contradictions that shape teachers' realities and lived experiences so that Eswatini can to effective implementation and outcomes of inclusive practices.

7.9 MY THESIS IN RETROSPECT

The aim of this study was to investigate the geographies of spaces for inclusive education through the narratives of six teachers in three primary schools in Eswatini. Chapter one introduced and gave the context of the study by highlighting the need to investigate teacher's experiences to inclusive education and understanding the spatial conditions under which teachers exercise their urgency. The researchers' positionality and interest in the phenomena under study was presented including the purpose and significance of the study.

In chapter two the study's conceptual and theoretical framework were discussed in detail. The conceptual framework outlined the concept, definition(s), and emergence of inclusive

education on a national and international scale. The discourse of social justice and inclusive education was traced back to the historical discourse of special education, which established a dual educational environment that promoted the exclusion of specific groups of children from mainstream education. The chapter further presented social constructionism as the theoretical framework for inquiry. Additionally, it described the connection between space and social practice (Baustien Suity, 2019) and the idea that teachers are active and purposeful participants in the change of classrooms and schools towards inclusive education (Makoelle, 2014). Particular attention was given to the fact that teachers work in socially complex environments as they seek to transform their schools and classrooms. The chapter presented the constructionist theory with which the teachers' experiences and complexity of factors which promote or hinder transformation can be identified and clearly understood. A critical geography perspective – critical spatial analysis- was used to examine, from the teacher's perspective, how educational spaces such as schools are socially and discursively constructed as places that promote or inhibit inclusive education.

In chapter 3 relevant literature was discussed, commencing with international, African, and Southern African literature, as well as studies on inclusive education in Eswatini. A review of research on the reactions of teachers to the introduction of inclusive education was made including critical examination of the role of inclusive education in advancing equality and equity, with a particular focus on recent criticisms in the field. Literature on the implementation gaps, focusing on ideals versus reality; and a critical understanding of what is required for inclusive education to be implemented successfully in Eswatini was discussed. Teachers' real-world experiences as they make the transition to becoming inclusive practitioners, and draw on theoretical arguments about how their experiences and methods of teaching and learning were influenced by their many and varied social identities as well as by the opportunities and

limitations presented by the context in which they work. The narratives provided a window into the lived experiences of the characters, the interpretations they gave to the events, as well as their views, beliefs, and reactions to the demands placed on them to act as change agents for a more inclusive social structure and education system.

In chapter four I described my journey of thinking about and choosing personal narratives and interpretive approach as the general approach for inquiry to easily comprehend inclusion and inclusive education from the viewpoint of the teachers, while also allowing me more freedom in terms of the overall research design. This chapter also described how I chose and designed data generation methods including school visits, semi-structured individual interviews and participatory techniques of photo voice, to capture participants' points of view and perspectives on their experiences with inclusive education. It gave a detailed discussion of validity, trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study.

Research findings were reported in chapter five, using themes and sub-themes whilst predominantly comprising data in form of verbatim excerpts. Empirical data generated by the individual interviews, photos and focus group discussions were used to support claims made in respect of findings. The findings were linked to the literature and theory. Photographs gave participants a visual voice that was mostly used to express their reflections and stories.

Chapter six presented the discussion and interpretation of data presented in chapter 5. In this chapter I brought my perspective while locating the data within the literature. To understand the transcripts, I looked for themes that emerged from the narratives. This study made an effort to recognize the various points of view and experiences that participants bring to the environments in which they operate, as well as the forces that shape these environments'

dynamics and participants' interactions with them. Chapter 7, served as the thesis' final chapter that summarised the most important research findings and made recommendations for future research. It also considered how this research adds to our knowledge and understanding of how teachers can transform to become inclusive practitioners, and how space promotes and or constraints teacher urgency and translating inclusive education policy into practice.

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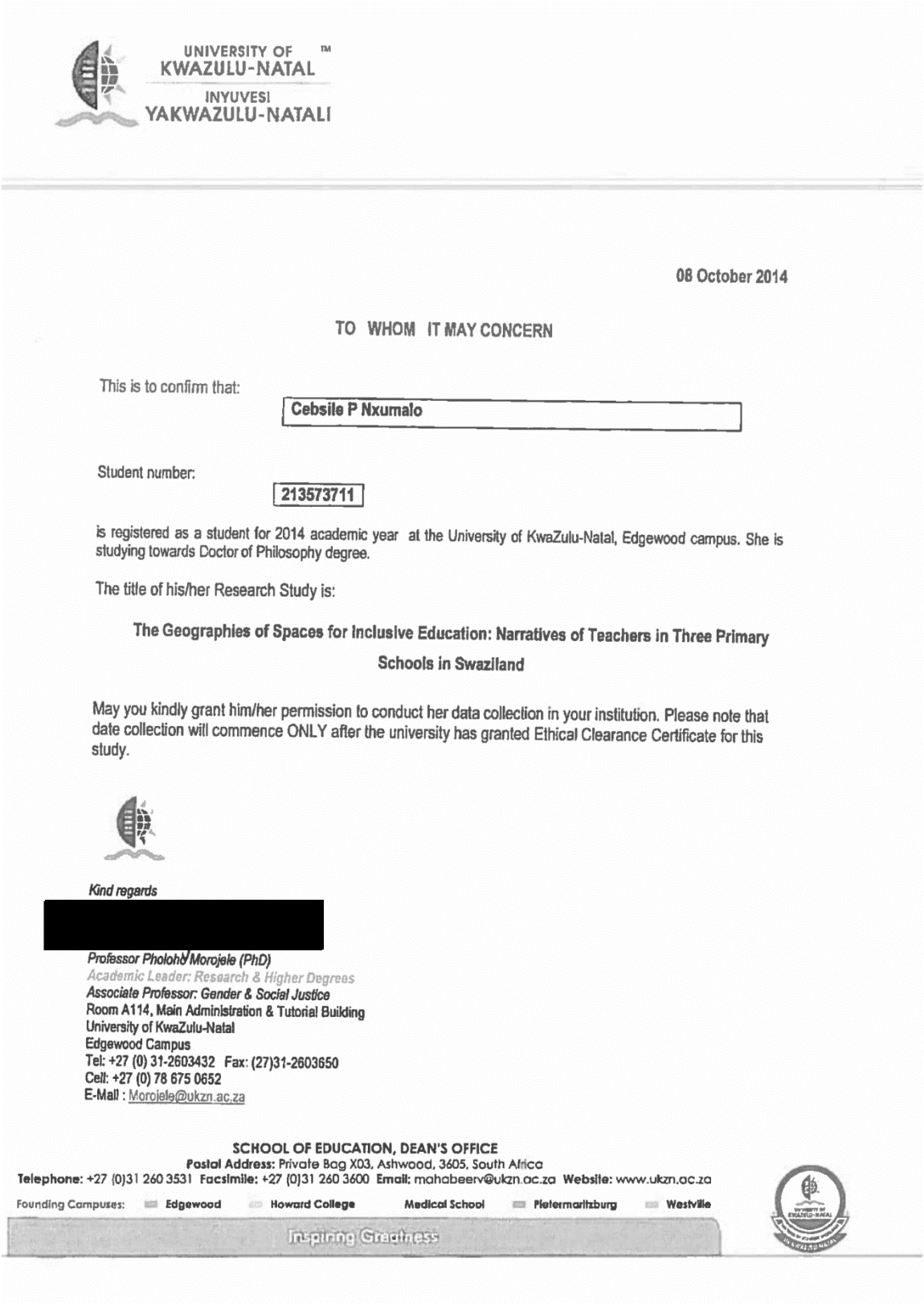
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Letter from the University of KwaZulu Natal confirming permission to conduct research



UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

08 October 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that:

Cebsile P Nxumalo

Student number:

213573711

is registered as a student for 2014 academic year at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus. She is studying towards Doctor of Philosophy degree.

The title of his/her Research Study is:

The Geographies of Spaces for Inclusive Education: Narratives of Teachers in Three Primary Schools in Swaziland

May you kindly grant him/her permission to conduct her data collection in your institution. Please note that date collection will commence ONLY after the university has granted Ethical Clearance Certificate for this study.

Kind regards

[redacted]

Professor Pholoho Morojele (PhD)
Academic Leader: Research & Higher Degrees
Associate Professor: Gender & Social Justice
Room A114, Main Administration & Tutorial Building
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus
Tel: +27 (0) 31-2603432 Fax: (27)31-2603650
Cell: +27 (0) 78 675 0652
E-Mail : Morojele@ukzn.ac.za

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, DEAN'S OFFICE
Postal Address: Private Bag X03, Ashwood, 3605, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 3531 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 3600 Email: mahabeerv@ukzn.ac.za Website: www.ukzn.ac.za
Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville
Inspiring Greatness

APPENDIX 2: Application to Director – Ministry of Education and Training to collect data from the participating schools

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

20th October 2014

The Director of Education
Dr. Sibongile Mtshali- Dlamini
Ministry of Education and Training
P.O. Box 39
Mbabane
Swaziland

Dear Madam

Re: Request for Permission to Conduct Research in Three Schools Located in the Hhohho Region.

I hereby request permission to conduct research for my Doctor of Philosophy Degree, which I am currently pursuing with the University of KwaZulu Natal. The title of the thesis is **The Geographies of Spaces for Inclusive Education: Narratives of Teachers in Three Primary Schools in Swaziland**.

The schools that I seek permission to conduct my research with are; Entuthukweni Primary School, Luhlangotsini Primary School and Mbasheni Primary School. I intend interviewing a total of six (6) teachers, two teachers from each school (one male and one female) and also to conduct a focus group with the same teachers.

1

All participants will be made aware that their participation is voluntary and they are free to withdraw from the research anytime they feel they can no longer take part. They will also be assured that all information that they will give towards the study will be kept confidential and their true identities will not be disclosed.

Please find attached a copy of a Letter Confirming my Studentship with UKZN, a copy of my Research Proposal and Ethical Clearance Application and a blank consent form for the teachers.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Should you have any question(s) or concerns, please contact me or my Supervisor – Professor P.J. Morejele at +27 31 260 3432; +268 78 675 0652; Email: Morejele@ukzn.ac.za

Yours Faithfully

[redacted]

Cebsile P Nxumalo (Mrs)

[redacted]

Email: cebsilenxumalo@gmail.com

APPENDIX 3: Permission granted by the Director – Ministry of Education and Training to collect data from the schools

The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland

Ministry of Education & Training

Tel: (+268) 2 4042491/5
Fax: (+268) 2 404 3880

P. O. Box 39
Mbabane, SWAZILAND

4th November, 2014

Attention:
Head Teachers:
Entuthukweni Primary School Ngwenya Primary School Mbasheni Primary School

THROUGH
Hhohho Regional Education Officer

Dear Colleague,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL STUDENT – MS. CEBSILE P. NXUMALO

1. Reference is made to the above mentioned subjects.
2. The Ministry of Education and Training has received a request from Ms. Ceb'sile P. Nxumalo, a student at the University of Kwazulu-Natal that in order for her to fulfill her academic requirements at the University of KwaZulu-Natal , she has to collect data (conduct research) and her study or research topic is: *The Geographies of Space for Inclusive Education Narratives of Teachers in Three Primary Schools in Swaziland*
   The population for her study comprises of twelve teachers (six males and six females) from the above mentioned schools. All details concerning the study are stated in the participants' consent form which will have to be signed by all participants before Ms. Nxumalo begins her data collection. Please note that parents will have to consent for all the participants below the age of 18 years participating in this study.

3. The Ministry of Education and Training requests your office to assist Ms. Nxumalo by allowing her to use above mentioned schools in the Hhohho region as her research sites as well as facilitate her by giving her all the support she needs in her data collection process. Data collection period is one month.

[redacted]
DR. SIBONGILE M. MTSHALI-DLAMINI
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION TRAINING 2014 -11- 04 BOX 39 MBABANE SWAZILAND

cc: Regional Education Officer Hhohho
Chief Inspector – Primary
3 Head Teachers of the above mentioned schools
Prof. Pholoho Morojele

Page 1

APPENDIX 4: Specimen – Applications to three (3) head teachers

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

20th October 2014

Dear Principal,

I am a Ph.D. research student under the supervision of Professor P. Morojele in the School of Education and Development, Edgewood Campus University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting a research study on teacher's experiences on inclusive education in Swaziland. The title of my study is **THE GEOGRAPHIES OF SPACES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: NARRATIVES OF TEACHERS IN THREE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SWAZILAND**

I am seeking your consent for your teachers' participation, which will involve extensive interview and story account sessions, and they will be required to take photographs of their activities at school over a period of one (1) months. The participants will also be required to make a collage (assemble images) that will represent their experiences at school. Your teachers' participation in this research is voluntary, and continued participation is also by choice. You have the right to choose not to have your teacher's participate, and to withdraw your teachers from participating at any time.

There is no penalty if a teacher chooses not to participate in this research or chooses to withdraw from participation at any time. The outcome of this research may be published. In the event of this being the case, teachers' name and identity will not be used.

All information you and your teacher's give concerning this research will be confidential. A code or number will identify the information your learners provide. Only authorized persons from the University of KwaZulu-Natal will have access to review the research records that contains your learners' information.

1

There is no benefit to your teacher's participating in this research.

Please note that:

- Any information given by your teachers cannot be used against them, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- The research aims at understanding how teachers experience inclusive education and further examine the spatial conditions under which inclusive education is produced in public schools in Swaziland.
- If you are willing for your teachers to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

Willing	Not Willing
Audio equipment ✓	
Photographic equipment ✓	
Video equipment ✓	

If there is any question you wish to ask concerning the research or the participation of your teachers in this research, please you can contact me or my supervisor Professor P. Morojele. You may also contact the Research Office through P. Mohun. Below are our contact details respectively:

Professor P. Morojele

Main Administration & Tutorial Building

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Contact details: Tel: +27 (0) 31-2603432

Fax: (27)31-2603650

[redacted]

E-Mail: Morojele@ukzn.ac.za

Prem Mohun

University of KwaZulu-Natal

HSSREC Research Office

Govan Mbeki Centre

Contact details: Tel: 031 260 4557

E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

[redacted]

Cebsile Phangisile Nxumalo

Student number: 213573711

Contact details:

[redacted]

Fax: +268 24043880

Email: cebsilenxumalo@gmail.com

APPENDIX 5: Permission granted by Head teacher for School A

[redacted] PRIMARY SCHO

P.O. Box 64
Piggs Peak
Swaziland
Tel: 76074565

18th November 2014

To Whom It May Concern

This serves to confirm that Mrs Cebsile P. Nxumalo has been granted permission by the school to conduct her research, The Geographies of Spaces for Inclusive Education: Narratives of Teachers in Three Primary Schools in Swaziland. Mrs Nxumalo will be allowed to work with two teachers in our school.

For further inquiries regarding this you can contact the principal at the above given details.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]
Principal

APPENDIX 6: Permission granted by Head teacher for School B

[redacted] PRIMARY SCHOOL

[redacted]
SWAZILAND
TEL: 00268 243 1474

24th October 2014

To Whom It May Concern

This serves to confirm that Mrs Cebsile P. Nxumalo has been granted permission by the school to conduct her research, The Geographies of Spaces for Inclusive Education: Narratives of Teachers in Three Primary Schools in Swaziland. Mrs Nxumalo will be allowed to work with two teachers in the school.

For further inquiries regarding this you can contact the principal at the above given details.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

Principal

APPENDIX 7: Permission granted by Head teacher for School C

10-SEP-2015 09:41 [redacted] P. SCHOOL [redacted] P. 01

[redacted] PRIMARY SCHOOL

P.O. BOX 349 MBABANE, SWAZILAND TEL.: 404 3087

24 October 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This serves to confirm that Mrs Cebsile P. Nxumalo has been granted permission by the school to conduct her research. **The Geographies of Spaces for Inclusive Education: Narratives of Teachers in Three Primary Schools in Swaziland.** Mrs Nxumalo will be allowed to work with two teachers in the school.

For further inquiries regarding this you can contact the principal at the above given details.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

Principal

APPENDIX 8: Informed consent from participant no 1

[Type text]

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

DECLARATION

I [redacted] (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

[redacted] 17-11-2014

[redacted]

APPENDIX 9: Informed consent from participant no 2

[Type text]

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

DECLARATION

I [redacted] (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE:

[redacted] 17-11-2014

[redacted]

APPENDIX 10: Informed consent from participant no 3

CONSENT FORM

If you agree to take part in this project, please fill in your full name and sign the form below

DECLARATION

I, [redacted] (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

[redacted] 06/11/2014

[redacted]

APPENDIX 11: Informed consent from participant no 4

[Type text]

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

DECLARATION

I, [redacted] ... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

[redacted] 06/11/2014

[redacted]

APPENDIX 12: Informed consent from participant no 5

CONSENT FORM

If you agree to take part in this project, please fill in your full name and sign the form below

DECLARATION

I, [redacted]..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

[redacted]..... 31-10-2014

[redacted]

APPENDIX 13: Informed consent from participant no 6

CONSENT FORM

If you agree to take part in this project, please fill in your full name and sign the form below

DECLARATION

I..... .... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

..... 31-10-2014