



# **Exploring Primary School Educators' Perceptions and Enactments of Inclusive Education for Disabled Learners in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**

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This thesis is been submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy.

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*Dedicated to the Almighty Allah,*  
*Dedicated to My Mother, Norah,*  
*Dedicated to My Father, Abdullah,*  
*Dedicated to My Wife, Rawan,*  
*To the Apple of my Eye: Abdulaziz, Haifa, Deem, and Reem,*  
*This PhD is for you,*

## Abstract

The field of special education in Saudi Arabia has witnessed much recent attention from policymakers and academic researchers attempting to reform the integration of disabled learners in public education. However, some Saudi scholars remain sceptical about this education reform due to the challenges facing the Saudi inclusive education mandate in practice. Saudi scholars' concerns frequently related to school educators' attitudinal, perceptual and pedagogic practices. The focus of this study was to explore how General Education Teachers (n=8), Special Educational Needs Teachers (n=8), and Headteachers (n=4) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia understand disability and inclusion. Another focus of this research study is to develop a nuanced understanding of how school educators enacted Saudi inclusion policies in everyday school practice.

The social model of disability and the policy-enactment theory are the theoretical underpinnings of this research, which adopted an interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative methodology and utilised ethnographic methods for data collection. Interviews, observations and fieldnotes data were analysed using a thematic approach. The data revealed that educators' perceptions of disability remained within the individual model of disability and that there was overwhelming reluctance to enact the contemporary Saudi inclusion (integration) policy mandate regarding the Saudi Rights of People with Disabilities (RPD 2022), Saudi Disability Welfare Law (DWL 2000), as well as Saudi educational policies concerning the inclusion of learners, categorised as SN in the Regulatory Guidance for Special Education (Ministry of Education 2015a) and the Regulatory Procedures for Special Education (Ministry of Education 2015b) documents. The overwhelming perception of disability as impairment among participants in this research study aligned with the traditional Saudi policy rhetoric, which continues to position disability based on the individual model, despite the Saudi ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD 2006). Locating disability within the individual model was related to the shortcomings of training and resources offered for mainstream headteachers and education teachers, as well as the constraints of the Saudi-prescribed curriculum and the overwhelming emphasis on categorisation as a means for

educational support – leaving little room for educators to promote inclusive pedagogy  
in school

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## Keywords Glossary

In this research, I use the terms disabled learners, disabled pupils, pupils with impairment or multiple impairments unless referred to the literature or participant reports. The purpose of choosing the word *disabled* is because I believe that disability differs from an impairment, in which learners with impairments are more likely to be socially and structurally disabled (Barnes 1996). However, I am aware of the emergent terminologies such as those with disabilities, those with determination, special needs learners, and recently, the commonly used term in Wales and other parts of the world: *learners with additional learning needs*. I concede that, based on my experience of working with disabled pupils in Saudi Arabia and the US, along with the rich experience I had during the PhD endeavour, the more we use and develop new terminologies, the more likely it is for learners with impairments to be stigmatised and therefore are likely to be disabled, which was evident from the SEN label and system (Runswick-Cole and Hodge 2009; Ainscow 2014; Florian 2014; Knight and Crick 2022; Smith et al. 2022). It is thought that establishing clarity at the start helps decode the following acronyms used throughout this thesis.

<b>ADA:</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act
<b>ALN:</b>	Additional Learning Needs
<b>CPD:</b>	Continuing Professional Development
<b>DL:</b>	Distance Learning
<b>DWL:</b>	Disability Welfare Law
<b>GE:</b>	General Education
<b>GET:</b>	General Education Teacher
<b>HT:</b>	Headteacher
<b>IDEA:</b>	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
<b>LEA:</b>	Local Education Authority
<b>MC:</b>	Mainstream Classroom
<b>MoE:</b>	Saudi Ministry of Education
<b>PD:</b>	Professional Development
<b>PL:</b>	Professional Learning

<b>PLC:</b>	Professional Learning Community
<b>PLD:</b>	Profound Learning Disability
<b>RGSE:</b>	Regulatory Guidance for Special Education
<b>REO:</b>	Riyadh Education Office
<b>RPSE:</b>	Regulatory Procedures for Special Education
<b>RR:</b>	Resources Room
<b>SE:</b>	Special Education
<b>SEN:</b>	Special Educational Needs
<b>SEND:</b>	Special Educational Needs and Disability
<b>SENDA:</b>	Special Educational Needs and Disability Act
<b>SENT:</b>	Special Educational Needs Teacher
<b>SNC:</b>	Saudi National Curriculum
<b>SN:</b>	Special needs

# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Inclusive Education: Background to the Study

Over the past two decades, scholars have scrutinised interpretations of inclusive education and sought theoretical principles and research-based practices to support inclusive pedagogy in schools (Hodkinson 2010). In part as a response to counter the assumption that it is individual learners' abilities which act as a hindrance to inclusion (Clough and Corbett 2000), rather than the "*ways in which educational difficulties are addressed*" (Ainscow and Haile-Giorgis 1999, p. 106). To conceptualise inclusion and to identify effective inclusion practices related to disabled pupils, it is crucial to understand how disability has been conceptualised over time and how this has shaped the current debate about disability and inclusion.

The medical model places disability within the individual (Oliver and Barnes 2010), suggesting that disabled learners can be educationally treated and cured with additional *intervention* in the SEN unit or by a relevant specialist (Thomas 1999; Oliver 2004; Norwich 2013; Shakespeare 2013). The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) sought to end biased segregation against disabled people (UPIAS 1976) by introducing the social model of disability, which recognises disability as a social construct. The emergence of this social model of disability was, however, critiqued. Although the social model separates the body and the socially imposed disablement (Corker 2001; Barnes and Mercer 2010), the social model fails to recognise the interaction between self and identity, impairment and social disablement (Shakespeare 1998; Thomas 1999; Corker 2001; Shakespeare 2013; Goodley et al. 2019). However the social model has influenced many theorists to develop a framework for effective participation for all learners (Booth 2016). One of the most recognised frameworks is the *Index for Inclusion* (Booth and Ainscow 2011). This provides a detailed account of the mechanisms schools can use to enact inclusion, to invite all learners to participate, and to help them to consider tensions and barriers to learning as a challenge for all, not a constraint inherent to individual learners.

There is great emphasis in the literature on the school educators' role in promoting inclusive learning to all learners through adopting an inclusive pedagogical approach

in schools and classrooms (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Black-Hawkins 2017; Black-Hawkins et al. 2022). Avramidis and Norwich (2002) emphasised the impact of teachers' negative attitudes towards disabled learners on the quality of inclusive practice. Inclusive pedagogy aims to generalise practices, challenging provision for individual needs through labelling as 'Special Educational Needs (SEN)' and replacing it with pedagogic practices which meet the needs of all learners (Florian 2014). However, inclusion can be hampered by teachers' assumptions, school policies, resourcing and a range of related factors.

Against this backdrop, the aims and research questions for this study were formulated. As a lecturer at Al-Baha University, I worked with local schools and LEAs in Al-Baha city. It was apparent to me that within Saudi Arabian schools, there appeared to be challenges in the support and education of disabled pupils classified as having special needs (SN). Special Needs (SN) is the term used in Saudi Arabia, but I will focus on using the term SEN as it is relevant to the UK context (Warnock Report 1978; Norwich 2019). This research enabled me to explore how teachers understand and enact inclusive education and how they educate pupils with SEN, whether in mainstream classrooms or the SEN unit.

The fundamental reason for carrying out this research study is that I observed the segregation of learners categorised as SEN from their peers at some of Al-Baha's schools during my work with schools. I was also keen to conduct this research because some special educational needs teachers shared with me concerns about the fact that many teachers send learners to the SEN unit in a quest for a diagnosis and referral. And lastly, I undertook this study with the aim of better understanding how the current Saudi social reform agenda is being undertaken and enacted in schools drawing on recent sociological theoretical insights into inclusion. By necessity, this study is therefore rooted in listening to the honest and open accounts of school educators regarding their day-to-day experiences of inclusion in their schools and classrooms.

## **1.2 Research Aims**

This research commenced with two aims: to explore primary school educators' perceptions related to disability and inclusion and to investigate how school educators interpret inclusion policies and enact inclusive education policies in the

mainstream classroom and the SEN unit. These aims, therefore, also involved developing an understanding of the alignments and tensions between MoE policy and teachers' enactments of these policies.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

**RQ1.** What are the alignments or tensions between educators' knowledge, understandings and practice of inclusion in schools and classrooms, the Saudi National Curriculum and other policies related to disability and inclusive education in primary schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia?

**RQ2.** How do primary school educators in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, perceive the current approach to supporting disabled learners?

**RQ3.** To what extent do primary school educators in Riyadh/Saudi Arabia enact inclusion policies for disabled learners in mainstream classrooms?

### **1.4 Research Gap and Significance of the Study**

At the beginning of my PhD journey in 2018, I reviewed the disability and inclusive education literature from 2000-2018. A review of the Saudi literature revealed very few qualitative studies undertaken in Saudi Arabia to understand the enactments of Saudi inclusion policies. In addition, the existing Saudi literature primarily focused on researching inclusion with a particular group of disabled learners rather than exploring educators' understandings and practices of inclusion more generally. For example, some Saudi researchers conducted studies on the inclusion of autistic learners in mainstream classrooms (Alkhunini 2021), and others conducted studies on barriers to inclusion for LD learners (Alhammad 2017). One study on Saudi schools aimed to understand teachers' and parents' perceptions of disability and inclusion and teachers' enactments of inclusion policies in all-female schools (Alanazi 2012). However, Alanazi (2012) did not adopt the enactment theory to interpret the complexities of policy enactments, and she did not seem to examine teachers' pedagogy in more detail using inclusive pedagogy literature.

In contrast, this study had no intention to focus on a particular group of disabled learners and concentrated on a male-only primary-level school for learners from third grade to sixth grade. The focus on disabled learners complied with the sponsor AL-Baha University's request to research disability, pedagogy, and curriculum. This



thesis contributes to the Saudi literature adopting the *enactment theory* (Ball et al. 2011) and an *inclusive pedagogy* approach to the theoretical framework (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). This research aims to contribute to the existing literature regarding school educators' commonly held views about the challenges of enacting inclusion policies in practice in the Saudi context.

This exploration of the nature and variability of primary school educators' views about disability and the enactment of inclusion policies in light of the Saudi National Curriculum is an original contribution to the Saudi literature. Theorising inclusion and the research involved in inclusive education practices is a complex task (Clough and Corbett 2000; Norwich and Kelly 2004; Allan and Slee 2008), so this investigation of teachers' attitudes towards disability and pedagogic enactments in Saudi Arabia is unique, and it is hoped may be drawn upon in future to contribute to changes in the classroom as “*a powerful way of moving practice forward within a school*” (Ainscow 2020, p. 11).

## **1.5 Thesis Structure**

***This first Chapter*** introduces the thesis and provides an overview of how inclusion is approached in the literature, a rationale for the significance of the research study, articulates the research questions at the outset of the thesis, and addresses limitations to the research.

***Chapter Two*** reviews the disability, inclusion, and pedagogy literature. The debates between the medical and social model theorists and critiques of the social model are discussed. Later sections explore how inclusion is theorised in the literature, focusing on the Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow 2011). A review of inclusion policies in Saudi Arabia, the UK, and the US is included, as it is essential to position the Saudi policy rhetoric within the (IDEA 2004b), (SEND Code of Practice 2015) and other US legislative policies such as (ADA 1990; ADAAA 2008) because Saudi Arabia also ratified the ADA for policies regarding special education (Alquraini 2011). A discussion of different approaches to inclusive pedagogy and a review of research studies on active and passive learning pedagogy is also included, as this research involves investigating approaches that promote learners' participation in the classroom. Teacher professional development and professional learning

communities are also explored in chapter two, as findings suggested constraints to teachers' professional training.

**Chapter Three** explains the methodological design for this research. It begins with a short review of the commonly adopted research paradigms in social sciences before providing a rationale for adopting an interpretivist epistemological stance alongside a qualitative approach. The chapter justifies the research methods adopted, which involved semi-structured interviews and participant observations of lessons. The sample included twenty teacher and headteacher participants. The methodology chapter explains the nature of their involvement and the procedures used for sampling and considers ethical considerations related to the study, such as recruitment to the study, anonymity, and confidentiality in matters such as retaining and handling participants' data and access to schools (BERA 2018).

**Chapter Four** provides essential contextual information regarding the schools visited for fieldwork. The purpose of contextualising schools based on gathered data is to bring to life the schools in Saudi Arabia and their characteristics, atmosphere and resources, including those offered in terms of accessibility for the reader of this thesis.

Findings are dispersed in three consecutive chapters. **Chapter Five** explores and discusses findings regarding school educators' perceptions of the Saudi National Curriculum and how delivery of this relates to pedagogy for disabled learners. This chapter covers three main themes: school educators' perceptions of the curriculum, curriculum accessibility, and curriculum planning. **Chapter Six** presents and discusses school educators' interpretations of disability and inclusion and their accounts of appropriate pedagogic responses for disabled learners. **Chapter Seven** explores mainstream education enactments of inclusion in traditional schooling and distance learning and explores and discusses special educational needs teachers' enactment of inclusive practice in the SEN unit.

**Chapter Eight** is the discussion and conclusion chapter which aims to answer the research questions and provide a holistic view of school educators' perceptions of disability and inclusion enactments. The discussion offers implications, recommendations for policy-makers and teachers practitioners, and suggestions for further research.

# Chapter 2 Literature Review

## Introduction

This chapter is divided into four sections: I first consider general concepts in disability and inclusion before honing in on disability and inclusion policies and enactment theory in section two. The third section explores the literature on pedagogy, and the fourth section draws some conclusions that helped to shape and refine my understanding of the research questions and, therefore, the approach taken to this study.

The disability and inclusion section opens the literature review with a discussion on the medical and social models of disability as contested terms and addresses debates related to the original social model. It then moves on to discuss inclusion and inclusive education literature. The Index for Inclusion is then considered, as it appears to be a credible framework for developing a theoretical understanding of inclusive education. A review of studies on teacher and other stakeholder perceptions and attitudes towards disability and inclusion is included within this first section. The second section examines disability and inclusion policies because policies often shape how teachers perceive and enact inclusion. The third section of this chapter reviews pedagogic theories, discusses learning modality, and explores conceptions of professional learning and development related to inclusive education.

### 2.1 Disability and Inclusion: Contested Terms

The academic literature on disability is extensive, and ever-evolving (Shildrick 2019), and debates around defining disability remain contested and problematic for theorists, researchers and teachers (Beaudry 2020). There are two primary schools of thought in the conceptualisation of disability. The *medical* or *psychoanalytical* model in disability studies locates disability within the impaired person (Oliver 1990; Swain and French 2014). This model witnessed criticism as the debates on an alternative model to re-evaluate social norms about disability were developing (Shildrick 2019). Critiques of the medical model were provoked by what is known as the *social model* of disability, as conceived by the Union for Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS 1976). This *social model* ascertains that disability is a social product that is distinct from impairment (Oliver 2004), which impedes a

person's life and "*social functioning*" (Finkelstein 2004, p. 15). For social model activists, the social model is a human rights approach to *re-examining* social discrimination against disabled people (Berghs et al. 2019). Later the discussions extended, and there was a re-examination of discrimination, which raised the academic debate on whether the *original* social model foregrounds an adequate and comprehensive analysis of disability beyond social disablements or was narrowed by the UPIAS definition (Shakespeare 2013).

The medical model (sometimes referred to as the individual model) examines disability from a positivist lens (Corker 2001), viewing disability as, within the person, "something in *need of a cure*" (Connor 2014, p. 116). Swain and French (2008) denote that the medical model created social norms about disability within public policies, media, and education. In the literature, the application of the medical model shapes education for disabled learners, as evidenced by the UK Special Educational Needs system proposed in the Warnock Report. The Warnock Committee Report (1978) enquired about the "*Educational provision...for all children*" (Barton 1986, p. 279). The Warnock Report aims to integrate SEN pupils into mainstream settings to make education accessible in local schools for disabled children (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Runswick-Cole 2011). A fundamental limitation of the SEN system was that medical labelling became a prerequisite for integration and educational support (Runswick-Cole and Hodge 2009; Conner 2016). Oliver (2009) signifies that the Warnock Report was comparatively insufficient in promoting inclusive practices because the labelling of disabled pupils is still problematic, as evident in the SEN: significant social and educational changes will not likely occur if the disability is still perceived as within the child. As Tomlinson put it, "*Those designated as 'special' will find it even harder than before to acquire skills and competencies that can be exchanged whether in integrated or segregated setting*" (Tomlinson 2000, p. 131). The below figure visualises the literature reviewed in terms of the medical model in the SEN system which starts with the assumption that there is a deficiency within the individual, and therefore assessments are necessary to pinpoint the exact needs for educational intervention and support which could attribute to unmet needs in the special educational needs classroom, particularly if there is a common perception towards learners to have a deficiency:

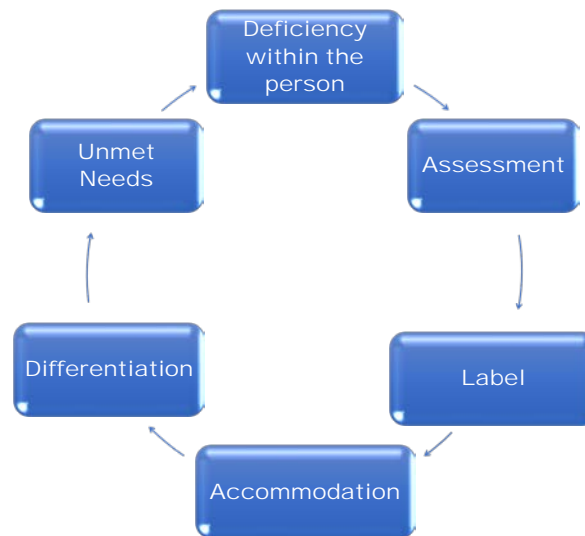


Figure 1 Deficiency as in the SEN System: Differentiation and unmet needs

Critiques of the special education system focused on the idea that disabled and learners with special educational needs only learn and benefit in a specialised learning environment (Tomlinson 2017). Despite critiques of special education, special education continued to dictate disabled pupils' learning and inclusivity for more than three decades (Florian 2008). Norwich (2008) decodes the dilemma in the SEN and argues that SEN offers a unique response to each learner considering the differences in every human being and the difficulty of integrating learners in mainstream classrooms, while other aspects are overlooked, such as the quality of training offered for mainstream classroom teachers to teach learners with SEN statements. Furthermore, the “dilemma of difference” is also socially viewed as *“lower status, less value, perpetuating inequalities and poor-quality provision and unfair treatment”* (Norwich 2008, p. 291). Therefore, Norwich hypothesises two folds of the dilemma of difference and the outcomes of the SEN dilemma: (1) when children with severe disabilities require special educational needs but are taught in mainstream classrooms, *“they are less likely to have access to scarce and specialist services and facilities”*, and (2) these children are also at risk of feeling excluded when taught in segregated units due to the educational needs of their disabilities (Norwich 2008, p. 293). While Norwich addresses the dilemma of inclusion as a means for the interrelationship between difference, placement of learning, and the

curriculum (Norwich 2010), the dilemma is perhaps not about different needs and learning placement.

Further, it is about the assumptions of “difference” to learners who do not fit into the socially constructed norms (Cline and Frederickson 2014). For example, what do we mean by “difference” if the aim is inclusion? Does “difference” serve as a positive indicator for social and pedagogic participation (Florian et al. 2017), or does it imply the method by which we identify learners’ functional and social needs to offer pedagogic differentiation and curriculum modifications (Norwich 2013)? Despite how we view and interpret difference, “difference” will, in my view, serve as a pillar for social and educational exclusion, as Sally Tomlinson also argued:

The major weapon in the structuring of inferiority and inability has been the belief propagated by elites that there really are strong difference in the educational potential of young people...is that children are born with the potential to be very able, average, less able or disabled and have to be treated differently and unequally.

(Tomlinson 2017, p. 25)

In contrast, disability studies which adopt the social model often highlight attitudinal, environmental, and social barriers which prevent impaired individuals from accessing the social and educational mainstream (Barnes 1996; Finkelstein 2004; Goodley 2014). The social model of disability is the emanation of disabled people in the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS 1976). The UPIAS defined disability as “*Something imposed on top of our impairments*” (UPIAS 1976, p. 14). This ontological shift is attributed to the work of disabled activists, which substantially impacted movements to counter discrimination against disabled people in social, political and educational contexts (Oliver and Barnes 2010). Although the UPIAS made a radical turn in disability studies and perhaps influenced disability researchers’ theoretical underpinnings, there is now an urge to develop a new tool or model in theorising disability (Berghs et al. 2019). More recent debates have been rooted in post-modernist and post-structuralist theoretical stances, which include consideration of personal experiences in disability, culture, and media representation of disability (Thomas 1999; Shakespeare 2008,2013; Barnes 2019).

### 2.1.1 The Social Model

The original social model challenges the concept of disability as a personal tragedy and separates the experience of impairment from the experience of disability (Thomas 1999; Shakespeare 2013; Thomas 2014a). Also, the original theorising of the social model did not consider racial and cultural facets in constructing norms (Barnes 1996). Thomson (1997) argues that the social model rejects the personal experience of disability and marginalises the social construction of “otherness” in terms of gender disablements. Oliver (2013) counter-argues there is an ideological challenge to reforming the social model of disability. As to taking the individual's personal experience into the model, Oliver warns about the danger of manipulating the social model's original ideology in a way that may disperse efforts made in shifting disability understanding. For instance, integrating cultural and other attributes into the social model theorising would frustrate the progress made so far and only serve to work against the political campaign of disabled people (Oliver 2013).

Regarding the personal experience in disability, Oliver (2013) signified that integrating personal experience could retrace disability theorising back to the medical model in which impairment, and the individual, are the centre of disability.

In its original work (UPIAS 1976), the social model does not seem to preclude the personal experience of disability but rather understands personal experience from within the social policy level (Dalley 1991). The social model provided an unpretentious and comprehensive conceptual framework for disability, inviting other scholars and theorists to continue contributing to this model (Finkelstein 2004; Goodley et al. 2019). Corker (2001), however, highlights epistemological concerns related to the social model. Concerns are primarily found in initiating a normative or individualistic identity for disabled people in society. As Corker (2001) argues, when understanding disability from a collective approach, unequal social responses to different impairments may occur. Whereas individualising impairment in the theorising of the social model, impairment becomes embodied in each impairment, meaning, concepts of the relationship between disablement and other impairments are fragmented. Collective understanding of disability is important, but “*Individuality is [also] so important; the risk in a bureaucracy is that you treat everyone uniformly and their individuality is overlooked and that's the worst risk in the poorly theorized social models*” (Norwich 2000, p. 111). The above connotations portray the

complexity of tackling social disablement through collective theorising on the one hand and the risk of ignoring the personal tragedy from theorising disability on the other (Thomas 1999). Debates also suggested a need to re-construct the social model from a broader perspective, given that disability is a social issue not only in the UK but also across the world (Shakespeare 2019), which entails inviting scholars from different parts of the world to review the social model more inclusively.

### **2.1.2 Inclusive Education**

Defining inclusion has been challenging for schools, education stakeholders, and research communities (Ainscow et al. 2006). It is worth distinguishing, on a conceptual level, between integration and inclusive education. The latter is “*about more than the simple geography of where a child is educated – in mainstream or special school – rather it is concerned with education for all and the benefits of an inclusive approach in the wider society*” (Runswick-Cole 2011, p. 113).

This definition appears to be concerned with clarifying the misconception of understanding inclusive education as a locational concept of where disabled students learn (Ainscow 1999). It, therefore, underpins social and educational inclusion as an integral element of inclusive education (Booth and Ainscow 2011). Slee (2013) contends that defining inclusion lies at the heart of challenging exclusionary practices, as it is essential to identify exclusionary practices to determine what counts as inclusive perception and practice. Although ‘addressing barriers to learning’ is considered a means for understanding and changing inclusive practices in education (Ainscow et al. 2006; Slee 2011), Allan (2003) disputes this, suggesting the concept of inclusive education extends beyond the issue of mere barriers. As Allan (2013) asserts, we can question the extent to which disabled pupils are included in education. We must continue to extend inclusive education policies and practices to include culture, values, policies, and barriers perspectives (Allan 2013). However, these concepts were descriptive but not articulated in the form of a *toolbox*, as can be found in the Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow 2011).

In the Saudi Arabian context, the social model of disability is relatively new and has not seen substantial theorising in Saudi academic rhetoric, except for a few Saudi researchers who seemed to advocate for the social model in Saudi disability policies (See Alhammad 2017 & Alsharif 2019). This is because the basic principles of Saudi



Arabian laws, including social laws, are often driven by Islamic Sharia laws (Alsaif 2008). Even though Islamic Sharia laws ensure equal rights for disabled people in all aspects of life, as outlined in the Disability Welfare Law (2000), these laws are “*not practised well in KSA*” (Al-Jaded 2009, p. 458). This in turn seems to problematise the Saudi position when defining disability and inclusion from a scientific perspective, which could have confused the terms impairment VS disability, and integration VS inclusion (Al-Mousa 2008). Although confusing inclusion with integration is observed in the Saudi policy rhetoric (further discussion on this can be found in sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2), there are also similar debates with controversies and extensive analysis in the Western literature, in the attempt to define and contextualise practices for effective inclusion (Slee 2011).

This research conceives inclusive education as attenuating any form of barriers to learning which are thought to prevent learners from social and educational involvement within the mainstream of education (Booth and Ainscow 2011); schools are a place for learners to “*be valued for who they are and be provided with all the support they need to thrive*” (Rieser and Peasley 2002, p. 53). We can approach inclusive education from the policy and attitudes perspective, as does the *Index for Inclusion*, a credible source to apply to inclusive education (Braunsteiner and Mariano-Lapidus 2021). Further, because the Index intersects with the social model in understanding barriers to inclusion that teachers and learners face (Booth and Ainscow 2011), it seemed appropriate to review the Index in the next section and discuss critiques of the Index.

### **2.1.3 Index for Inclusion**

The Index for Inclusion gained international momentum for teachers and researchers attempting to plan, develop, evaluate, and implement inclusive education (Sanchez et al. 2019). Fundamentally, the *Index* is a theoretical construct of three main dimensions: *Cultures*, *Policies*, and *Practices* (Booth and Ainscow 2011). Each domain will be consecutively discussed then, followed by some critiques of the Index.

“*Cultures reflect relationships and deeply held values and practices*” (Booth and Ainscow 2011, p. 13). Relationships and values towards inclusion within a school context are often unveiled through teachers’ perceptions and practices (Davis and

Hopwood 2002). To understand perceptions, Booth and Ainscow (2011) suggest two subordinate themes in identifying inclusive cultures: “*building community* [and] *establishing inclusive values*” (Booth and Ainscow 2011, p. 75). The ‘Building community’ domain comprises eleven indicators. These indicators focus on building proactive, respectful, attentive, and communicative school communities.

‘Establishing inclusive values’ is concerned with equality of opportunities for all children and is also about creating a school ethos which counters discrimination against all learners. It seems, though, that culture is a pillar in the Index for Inclusion in terms of planning and understanding inclusion because the Index posits culture as a critical element in promoting inclusive policies towards disability, which has been recognised by other scholars (Tomlinson 2017). Empirically, a study was conducted in Finland to measure the readiness of schools considered as inclusive in enacting inclusion. The study found that teachers’ beliefs regarding students were a prerequisite for inclusive school culture (Lakkala et al. 2016). However, cultural change towards inclusive policies and practices is not always straightforward (Ainscow 2015). Studies which scrutinise teachers’ inclusive perceptions and practice often recommend that exploring cultural change should start earlier in teachers’ education programmes (Forlin et al. 2009, pp. 205-206).

Educational policies are vital in conceptualising and enacting inclusive education (Booth 2000). “*Policies are concerned with how the school is run and plans to change it*” (Booth and Ainscow 2011, p. 13). The *Index* examines policies through two domains. The first domain is “*Developing school for all*”, and the second domain of policy theme in the *Index* pertains to “*Organising support for diversity*” (Booth and Ainscow 2011, p. 97). Arguably, policies are collective principles providing broad guidelines for planning, conceptualising, and enacting inclusion (Felder 2021). However, there have been recent questions concerning the expectations of inclusive educational policy from international policy-makers, exploring levels of participation in shaping international policies and how policies are interpreted and enacted into school practice (Maguire et al. 2015; Benson 2021). The influence of *globalisation* on policymaking, such as the development of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD 2006), has led to expectations of inter-government agencies such as the local Ministry of Education. The expectation is that nations should plan and further develop inclusion policies relevant to their national context (Junemann et

al. 2016). Constraints to policy globalisation have heightened the tension and complexity of inclusion policy-making and the enactment of inclusion policies on a national level (Dyson et al. 2004). The educational policy remains a written document until practised and enacted. Therefore, the *Practice domain* was triangulated as the third theme in the *Index for Inclusion* (Booth and Ainscow 2011).

The third domain in the Index for Inclusion is practice, which examines the nature and technicality of learning through: (1) understanding how the curriculum is constructed for all; (2) how learning is inclusively arranged for all in the school through “*Orchestrating Learning*” (Booth and Ainscow 2011, p. 120). However I will not substantiate further on the practice domain as I will discuss inclusive pedagogy under (2.3.4) and because there are some limitations to the practice domain outlined in the Index for Inclusion. For instance, the practice domain examines means for inclusive practice, but questions concerning what counts as empirical evidence of an inclusive practice do not appear to be incorporated in the *Index* (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). Also, addressing ‘what counts’ as inclusive practice is widely debated (Rouse 2008). Nevertheless, the *Index* addresses inclusive practice from an inclusive school culture stance. Still, little attention is given to *promoting* learners to think about their own learning in shaping learning (Norwich 2013) as theorised in inclusive pedagogy literature (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011; Black-Hawkins and Florian 2012). Therefore, it seemed appropriate for this research to review inclusive practice from a different theoretical perspective—inclusive pedagogy—which appeared to be well-articulated by (Rouse 2017), (Black-Hawkins 2017; Black-Hawkins et al. 2022), and (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011; Florian et al. 2017). (Further on inclusive pedagogy is found in 2.3.4). Apart from critiques of the concepts of *policies* and *practice* in the Index, applying the *Index* might be problematic: values in Western and non-Western countries may be dissimilar (Schwartz et al. 2001), and it could provide unreliable country-specific interpretations of inclusive culture. For example, schools in Saudi Arabia are gender segregated, and contending to implement the tool as a theoretical framework may pose methodological constraints to the findings, given that the Index for inclusion does not differentiate between genders. Whereas in Saudi Arabia, integration and inclusion are often conceived within disability framework. I understand that inclusion is broader

than a specific category, but also acknowledge the cultural specificity of my own country, in which inclusion is perhaps not appreciated as social and cultural value.

The Index for Inclusion, therefore, does not seem to be ubiquitous standard for inclusion, but rather is a helpful tool for researchers and educators to contemplate and search for a new means for inclusive education (Ainscow 2015).

#### **2.1.4 Attitudes Towards Disability and Inclusive Education**

Teachers', educators', parents', and other stakeholders' attitudes towards disability shape the nature of responses to inclusion and, in turn, reviewing the literature on attitudes helps to conceptualise how inclusive education is enacted within educational settings (Avramidis et al. 2000). As inclusion and exclusion cannot "coexist" (Ballard 2018), it is imperative to review some studies on parental and teacher attitudes when discussing inclusion given that:

Disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

(CRPD 2006, p. 1)

Several studies have explored the attitudes of school staff and parents towards disability. For example, Alanazi (2012) researched barriers to inclusive education in female schools in Saudi Arabia. The researcher highlighted negative attitudes among participants, both parents and teachers. The researcher described negative attitudes, with participants viewing disability as impairment and conceptualising inclusion as integration (Alanazi 2012). Similarly, Alkhunini (2021) conducted a qualitative study to understand teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and teachers' inclusive practice. The researcher identified that negative attitudes towards disability could be attributed to the quality of training in working with disabled learners. It seems that opportunities for professional learning that support the development of inclusive pedagogical practice are a central element in shaping how teachers perceive and respond to disabled learners (Florian and Rouse 2010). Both researchers, Alenezi (2012) and Alkhunini (2021), shared similar findings, in which the SEN system remained problematic for mainstream classroom teachers and parents. These findings signify that the SEN system could hinder inclusion, as any

form of exclusion often results in contested beliefs about inclusion (Qvortrup and Qvortrup 2018).

In contrast, a Saudi researcher conducted a study to understand Saudi primary-level teachers' attitudes and teaching efficacy in practising inclusive education when teaching students with autism disorder (Alkeraida 2020). The researcher revealed variability in teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, but teachers' level of training considerably shaped perceptions. The training was a key theme in his findings regarding promoting efficacy for inclusive practices (Alkeraida 2020). The researcher also found that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are linked with "*The reality of what is achievable in his practice...teachers may become less positive if they are overwhelmed and less able to cope with the challenges they face when teaching students on the autism spectrum*" (Alkeraida 2020, p. 153). In another Saudi Arabian study, Alhammad (2017) conducted a case study to explore barriers to inclusion within the perception of teachers. The researcher found that mainstream schools face a number of challenges, mainly that teachers' perceptions towards disability play a crucial role in teachers' acceptance of inclusion (Alhammad 2017). In addition, barriers around curriculum inflexibility, teachers' training on pedagogical practices to teach disabled pupils, and teachers' misinterpretation of inclusion were also reported in Alhammad's (2017) findings. Similarly, a systematic review of studies that focus on the barriers to implementing inclusion in Arab countries' schools, including Saudi Arabian studies, concluded that teachers' misinterpretation of what inclusion means, attitudes towards including disabled pupils in mainstream classrooms, whether from non-disabled peers or teachers, were also reported as barriers to inclusion (Al-Khateeb and Hadidi 2009; Alkhateeb et al. 2016). Another research study adopted a meta-analysis research approach, reviewed the literature in several countries to examine teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, and identified a common pattern suggesting uncertainty with the concept of inclusive education (De Boer et al. 2011). The researchers inferred that participants' feelings of *uncertainty* towards inclusion might be attributed to teachers' knowledge about impairments and confidence in their pedagogic competence and skills regarding teaching disabled students (De Boer et al. 2011). These studies allude to perceiving disability as impairment and inclusion as integration concurrent with the SEN system, which was critiqued earlier in this chapter. The SEN system detaches disabled

learners from inclusive education based on the categories of students determined based on IQ deviation scores (Florian 2008). Nonetheless, (Booth and Ainscow 2011; Armstrong and Ainscow 2018) share a view that rejection of the inclusion of disabled learners also relates to the national curriculum expectation of schools, as disabled learners become a burden on schools whilst schools are expected to compete on a national level.

Parents are active members in advocating inclusiveness for their children. Mittler (2000) argues that parents play a crucial element in adopting and supporting the social model stance on disability by advocating for their disabled child's rights and working closely with schools in decision-making. "*The successful education of children with special educational needs is dependent upon the full involvement of their parents*" (Warnock Report 1978, p. 150). Adams et al. (2016) conducted a mixed methods explanatory case study design in Malaysia to investigate the effect of parents' involvement and collaboration with teachers in decision-making. Adams et al. (2016) attested that positive attitudes in parents and cooperation between schools and parents are a profound element of inclusive schooling. In another mixed methods study conducted in Saudi Arabia, Algraigay (2019) interviewed parents to understand labelling in special needs education. Parents included in his study sample presented negative perceptions towards learning disability and Attention Deficit and Hyperactive Disorder children, which the researcher inferred lack of parents' awareness to impairment and learning disability (Algraigay 2019). Thus, inclusion must challenge exclusionary cultural norms of all stakeholders to build successful inclusive education, through raising awareness of social inclusion and all education stakeholder (Ainscow 1991; Ainscow 2014).

## **2.2 Disability and Inclusion Policies**

### **Introduction**

This section reviews disability and inclusive education policies in Saudi Arabia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The review will explore how disability and inclusive education are defined and enacted in these countries. The Policy Enactment Theory was adopted as a theoretical approach for this research as theorised by Stephen Ball (1987; 1990,1994). This theoretical approach was adopted

to help decode the dynamics of policy-making and meaning-making of inclusion policies into classroom pedagogy (See 3.1.6).

### **2.2.1 Saudi Arabia: Saudi Disability Welfare Law (DWL 2000)**

The Saudi Council of Ministers passed this Disability Act in 2000. It defines disability as:

An injury of one or more of the following disabilities: visual disability, hearing disability, mental disability, physical and motor disability, learning difficulties, speech and language disorder, behavioural and emotional disorder, autism, dual or multi disabilities, and other disabilities which require special care.

(DWL 2000, §1)

In alignment with the recent Saudi reforms, the Saudi Government states this:

The basic law of governance... stated in § 26 that *the Kingdom shall protect human rights in accordance with Islamic law*, which reinforces the concepts of justice and equality and prohibits discrimination on any basis, including disability.

(RPD 2022)

The Saudi sentiment towards disability and movement towards inclusive education for disabled learners can be traced back to 1990, as some learners with sensory impairments were integrated into public education schools after a long haul of campaigning from disabled advocates to integrate those learners from separate institutes to public education schools (Al-mousa 2008). Although the MoE's initiatives and other Saudi laws, such as the DLW tackled the full segregation of disabled learners and paved the way for more inclusive education, the integration of some learners based on categories remained problematic not only for disabled learners, but also for the MoE to offer coherent, inclusive, and effective plan regarding inclusion for all as Saudi in 2008 ratified the CRPD. For example, Aldabas (2015) reviews the history of disability and inclusion policies in Saudi Arabia and argues that despite progress made in the last decade to integrate disabled learners, issues around developing teachers' inclusive practice, the constraints of schools' accessible infrastructure, and the lack of careful considerations in conceptualising individual

needs outlined in the special educational needs system, hindered the MoE in the smooth transition from integration to a more inclusive education. Evidently, Boqlah (2002) conducted a mixed-methods study in Madinah, Saudi Arabia to understand the training needs for mainstream education teachers, attitudes, and pre-service training to teach learners with SEN. Boqlah (2002) found that the inclusion model in Saudi Arabia is far from inclusive, as he identified constraints to teachers' training, and partial to full segregation in some taught modules. More recently, Alkhunini (2021) conducted a study to understand Saudi teachers' views about inclusion and teachers' inclusive practices. Alkhunini (2021) found that despite teachers' positive views towards conventional inclusion "integration", they shared scepticism towards the mechanisms of inclusive practice. These findings signify that if inclusion is theorised from within the Saudi schools' context, the MoE would have recognised the profound difference between mere integration and inclusion before ratifying the CRPD. Instead, the MoE and relevant stakeholders relied on some of the US policies concerning disability and inclusion (Alquraini 2011), which did not seem to acknowledge the linguistic, contextual, and cultural specificity in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, unfortunately, policies regarding inclusion for disabled learners seem to remain within the *integration paradoxes* as was evidence in my research findings. For example, locational placement of learning (integration) was often paralleled with a categorical basis in school educators' views of inclusion, which seemed to hinder teachers' inclusive enactments (See 6.1.3 & 7.1). The above studies also provide a shred of substantial evidence for the fact that school educators included in my research sample lack the necessary training to promote more inclusive views and practices for all including disabled learners (See 5.2.1 & 5.3.4 & Chapter 7). However, the following policy statement illustrates that disabled children are different from their peers and therefore require other means of education, despite the Saudi ratification of the CRPD:

In the importance of equal education opportunities between ordinary children and children with special needs, Saudi Arabia has provided educational services suitable for the needs of children with special needs. Specialised institutes have provided them with cases that need special attention and care. Also, it has provided opportunities for inclusive education for children with disabilities along with ordinary children so that everyone can accept the difference in abilities between them.

(RPD 2022)



The above definitions and laws seem to secure the *deficiency* model, but recognising social disablement and other environmental barriers is not evident in these laws and statements, as (Alsaif 2008) has argued in his comparative study. Another found issue with perceiving *deficiency* in the person is that it is suggested that specialised support and treatment are needed, whether in institutes or mainstream schools. Thus, inclusion becomes a burden on inclusive schools to offer specialised support and adapt to the different needs of pupils (Smith and Bales 2010), wherein the philosophy of inclusive schools, as Braham Norwich argued in academic debate, is the need to improve “*teaching and learning in the general system*” (Williams et al. 2009, p. 209). The focus on SEN and viewing disability as a deficiency within the individual in the Saudi rhetoric may be attributed to the Saudi Government's commitment to adhere to the international community's common standards (RPD 2022), namely ADA, EHA, and IDEA. The Saudi approach to inclusion is perceived as a way of appreciating pupils' differences; thus, inclusion is a form of understanding differences in abilities and integration. Another critical issue is the concept of 'ordinary children' in Saudi policies; it is unclear what is ordinary and what is extraordinary. These two issues will be discussed under the analysis of the Regulatory Guidance for Special Education RGSE approach to SEN.

### **2.2.2 Saudi Arabian Special Education Policy**

This section focuses on Regulatory Guidance for Special Education (RGSE) in working with disabled learners through Special Education (SE) programmes, as RGSE covers expectations from schools, HTs and teachers. This section will also include the MoE approaches to inclusion, such as how inclusion is defined and policies around inclusion. I will analyse each of these domains with relevant literature. In so doing, it will help to examine the gap between the expectations of Saudi policy-makers, and the practices of teachers and headteachers.

Drawing from the Saudi position on disability laws discussed in 2.2.1, the MoE established the Special Education Department. The Special Education Department's (SED) responsibility is to regulate, establish new programmes, support, and evaluate special education programmes integrated in mainstream classroom (Al-Mousa 2010). According to Aldabas (2015), disabled pupils in 2001 were less vulnerable to be segregated compared with the pre-establishment of the Rules and Regulations of

Special Education Programs (RRSEP). The RRSEP ensures that all categories of SE must be accommodated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and attending the neighbouring ordinary school if appropriate (MoE 2001). Different to this policy, my research findings suggest that not all schools offer the LRE, which appeared to push some school educators to refer learners to other schools and SEN programmes if there is no relevant SEN programme or felt unable to accept some disabled learners in the school (See 6.2.1). Although the RRSEP shaped outset of special needs education policies, the RRSEP focused more on practices within special education resources room compared with other policies, such as the Regulatory and Guidance for Special Education and the Regulatory Procedures for Special Education. The RGSE, however, aims to:

- Develop an institutional structure to meet the needs of society and students from the special education community.
- To identify organisational duties on all human resources in institutes and schools which enforce the special education programmes and related services.
- To identify, organise and validate duties and responsibilities of all personnel working in institutes, centres and schools implementing special education programmes.
- To identify relationships which organise the duty between workers at institutes and schools applying special educational needs programmes and related services...
- To contribute to organising services provided for students with disabilities to facilitate suitable environments for them and to develop their abilities and meet their learning and educational needs.

(Ministry of Education 2015a, p. 5)

While the RGSE document identified vocational services and needs, staff training and schools' responsibility to raise awareness, the above objectives illustrate two intrinsic constraints. First, viewing special educational needs as a *community*, whether in schools or private institutes, may promote atomistic individuality between stakeholders, which subsequently may hinder stakeholders from collaborating with one another, as each party might be attached to a specific field of speciality. The sense of 'other-ness' and "difference", as explored by (Oliver 1990), is a critical issue in the discourse of the RGSE, which marginalises disabled pupils in mainstream education (Winzer 2014). This critique has also been elaborated in the international disability literature. For example, Kozleski et al. (2014, p. 243) observe that

*“Identifying students as different also curtails the extent to which they are able to participate in a full range of educational opportunities to learn”.*

The RGSE (Ministry of Education 2015a, p. 6) defines Special Education (SE) as:

A wide range of programmes, planning, and strategies are specially designed to meet the special educational needs of students with disabilities, including instructional approaches, tools, preparations, special auxiliary devices, and supportive services.

The parallel between disability and SEN from the above definition mirrors the (DWL 2000) definition of disability. While the RGSE categorical basis in defining SEN may be much narrower than the UK definition in the Warnock report: *“the concept of special educational needs is broad, extending beyond categories of disability, to include all children who are in need of additional support”* (Florian 2014, p. 44).

According to Norwich (2014c), this form of categorisation in the SEN system offers a core value for policy-makers, with an obligation to organise and place SEN pupils into mainstream or SEN provisions according to their needs. Norwich adds that the broader objective of categorisation in SEN is to distribute school funding with the 'additional' support received for the SEN provisions. However, it also *“reflects lower status and stigma and so perpetuates inequalities and unfair treatment”* (Norwich 2014c, p. 90).

Stigma and categorisation of SEN were explored in Saudi research. For example, Algraigray (2019) conducted a study in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to understand the advantages and constraints of ADHD and learning difficulty (LD) labels for disabled pupils on teachers' and parents' perceptions. Algraigray found that self-esteem and stigma were strongly connected with labelling. Low self-esteem contributes to lower academic attainment for disabled children (Algraigray 2019, pp. 140-141). In line with Florian (2014), Norwich (2014) and Algraigray (2019), it has been found that categorisation as SEN offers more negative stigma than a *statement* of support, in line with Goffman's Stigma theory: *“When an individual's stigma is very visible, his merely contacting others will cause his stigma to be known about”* (Goffman 1963, p. 65-66).

### 2.2.3 United States Disability Policy

“Disability is a global phenomenon, although there are local differences in magnitude and characteristics” (Shakespeare 2019, p. 322), and therefore reviewing influential policies from across the globe helps to unveil “Ideologies and socially constructed norms” (Cannella 2000, p. 38). Reviewing U.S policies and definitions of disability is necessary because *disability* definitions and laws passed by the Saudi Government and the MoE RGSE policy document ascribe to the approaches taken in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as Alquraini (2011) noted:

To further develop the policy of special education for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia, a Ministry of Education representative from the Directorate General of Special Education in Saudi Arabia and some professionals from the Department of Special Education at King Saud University—who hold master’s and doctoral degrees from the United States in special education—reviewed the United States’ special education policies, including the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EHA) in 1975 and Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990.

(Alquraini 2011, p. 150)

The ADA defines disability as:

A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered.

(ADA 1990)

The ADA is a federal law which was first passed in 1990 to protect disabled people from discrimination in the job sector, schools, transport, and access to social services (ADA 1990). The ADA was later amended to be the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act (ADAAA) to cover a broader range of impairments. Comparatively, the ADAAA emphasises attitudinal, environmental, and social barriers as factors for disablement which were not well articulated in the ADA (Lovett 2014). Under the (ADAAA 2008, Section 12101) the law objectives were to protect all

disabled Americans from discrimination, to outline a feasible plan to protect disabled people from discriminatory practices, and to empower the American Federal Government in monitoring and acting on behalf of disabled people. A few scholars argued that the ADA law adopts a socio-political model in protecting disabled people against discrimination (Barnes 2019; Watson 2019). However, adopting a socio-political view in policy-making as in the ADA in terms of including other health conditions without questioning whether people with health conditions are “*part of the disability community*” could be very problematic (Watson 2019, p. 133). Although Watson seemed to understand disability as a dynamic process between the personal experience and the political force of disablement, it is somewhat unclear what he meant by “disability community”. Continuing the debates about the personal experience in disability theorising is perhaps the embodiment of recognising disabled people as a community of “other”, whereas Barton calls upon sociologists for a “*Collective solidarity*” (Barton 1996, p. 10). However, although the ADA may align with the UPIAS (1976) sentiment in mitigating barriers, the UPIAS is much more unique and broad because it gives disabled people agency “*to have full control over their own lives*” (Shakespeare 2013, p. 214).

It seems that the ADA is assertive in facilitating accommodations for disabled people to be maintained, for example, by offering assistive technologies for all disabled learners (ADA 1990). However, these accommodations are only deployed when disabled people face specific barriers. In contrast, the social model of disability challenges the assumption of accommodations and further questions pre-existing sociological and institutional barriers (Oliver 1990).

The EHA law was signed in 1975 to ensure a free appropriate public education known as (FAPE) (Public Law 94-142, Section 504), but later was renamed as the IDEA Act and added autism under the IDEA law 1990 (IDEA 2004a). Then, IDEA was re-authorised in 2004 to ensure that infants “with disabilities” are protected under the IDEA law (IDEA 2004a). Despite the evolvement of these laws, the IDEA added more disability categories to its framework (IDEA 2004b). According to Smith and Bales (2010) Smith and Bales (2010), the ADA is broader than the IDEA because it does not subscribe to the classification of impairments but further focuses on the full extent of all impairments in ensuring equal human rights and opportunities.

## 2.2.4 United Kingdom Disability Policy

Whilst the US policies had an evident and significant influence on the development of Saudi policy, the changes in other countries, such as the UK, also influenced the approaches taken in the RGSE. The United Kingdom witnessed a rapid but rather hefty set of developments in disability legislation and policies during the 1980s and 1990s (Barnes 2007). This rapid development resulted from disabled and social activists advocating for equality in employment, education, and welfare sectors (Barnes 2007). Norwich (2019) relates the development in UK educational policies for disabled pupils to the earlier Warnock Report and subsequent identification and assessment system. Despite this early policy shift in the UK, this segment will concentrate on the Equality Act enacted in 2010 and the Children and Families Act (2014) due to the influence and relationship with Saudi Arabian policy.

In England and all countries under the UK government except Northern Ireland, the Equality Act (2010, p. 4, §6) defines disability as “(a) *person has a physical or mental impairment, and (b) the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [person’s] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities*”. The purpose of the Equality Act (2010) was to suppress unlawful discrimination in education, employment and social welfare based on ethnicity, gender, beliefs, disability and five other characteristics. Although the Equality Act replaces the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA1995), it also continues to define disability as impairment. Nevertheless, the DDA and Equality Act protected disabled people from discrimination (Bell and Heitmüller 2009). It is a statutory law in the Equality Act (2010) to make reasonable adjustments to support equality, which includes educational adjustments for disabled pupils. The Equality Act (2010) was enacted to substitute a raft of previous legislations preventing discrimination against disabled people (Redley et al. 2019) and acted as ratification of the UK government’s commitment to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) (Butlin 2011). There are, however, two main critiques of the Equality Act (2010) worthy of mention. Although the Equality Act (2010) ratified the (CRPD), the disability definition remains with the medical model (Butlin 2011). Also, the term *reasonable adjustments* is perhaps ambiguous and sometimes confusing and difficult to follow, as what is thought to be appropriate adjustments in one context might be the opposite elsewhere (Cameron et al. 2019). The Children and Families Act (2014, p. 19, §20) addresses SEN as when an

individual “*has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her*”. Four categories fall under SEN in this Act: Cognitive, Communication, Sensory, Social and Mental Health (Children and Families Act 2014). This categorisation in the Children and Families Act appears to reject the social model conceptualisation of disability (Alexander 2021).

Notwithstanding categorisation, the distinction between this Act and the SENDA Act (2001) is that it added detailed guidelines through the SEND Code of Practice (2015).

In Wales, Knight and Crick (2022) examined the Welsh policy reforms regarding inclusion for pupils with “additional learning needs”. The researchers suggest a lack of parallel between policy as a text and policy enactment in SEN and disability policy (Knight and Crick 2022) – illuminating the complexity of contextualising and enacting policy in practice (Ball et al. 2011). For instance, the UK, Saudi Arabia, and the US all ratified the CRPD framework in the international forum. Still, it is not clear that the social model is embedded on a national level within the policies of each country. This may be due to policy-makers’ interpretation of the CRPD and the fact that the CRPD did not have the power to ensure the enactment of these laws on an international level (Benson 2021).

### **2.3 Pedagogy**

Pedagogy refers to the recognition, competence, and reflection of teaching and learning of everyday educational practice (Alexander 2004). At the same time, curriculum relates to learning, pedagogies, resources, and what constitutes the school educational system (Walker and Soltis 2004). Because this research focuses on perceptions and enactments of Saudi inclusion policies and because researching the curriculum in its broader sense requires extensive time, this section will review some of the pedagogy literature in terms of traditional pedagogies, constructivist pedagogy, active and passive learning, and inclusive pedagogy which thought to give some insights of the Saudi National Curriculum. Different strands of schooling, such as traditional and digital schooling, will be reviewed because this research initially took place in conventional school settings before being transferred to fieldwork in distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Finally,

professional development and pedagogy will be explored to establish how professional learning impacts on values and practices of teachers through a discussion of teachers' continuing professional development and learning.

### **2.3.1 Traditional Pedagogy: Teacher-Centred Learning**

Traditional pedagogy, sometimes called Teacher Centred Learning (TCL), is a pedagogic approach often understood as practices in lecturing, textbook reading, and heavy reliance on memorisation (Gordon 2009). Therefore, TCL offers limited learning opportunities for all pupils, dismissing individual differences between learners (Gordon 2009). Presumably, "*learning is a process which comes about as a consequence of thinking...the subject-matter is cooperative and interdependent projects carried out by pupils with different abilities, previous knowledge and experience, [and] motivations*" (Garcia and Alaban-Metcalf 2005, p. 37). However, the root of TCL can be traced to behaviourist theorists, such as Burrhus Skinner (Boghossian 2006), which presumes learning in terms of punishment and reinforcement, which Skinner named this process of learning as "*operate conditioning*" (Berk 2011, p.19). Learning in behaviourism is seen in content absorption, the recall of information taught, and the performance of learnt skills (James 2006). When learners struggle to learn in a TCL environment, it often persuades teachers to presume a defect within these pupils (Corbett and Slee 2000). In turn, these perceptions of pupils' performance caused educators and policy-makers to reconsider new approaches for improving learning performance for disabled pupils through individualised Special Needs Education developments and the impetus for individualised learning and planning (Riddell 2014).

The purpose of individualised learning may resemble a behaviourist approach as learners learn through observation and imitation of teachers' conduct and presentation of knowledge carried out in one-on-one sessions (Berk 2011). Despite the transition to mainstreaming and integration of disabled learners, the inclusivity of the special needs education framework is widely debated (Florian 2014). Norwich argues that *questions* around the exclusion of disabled learners should not always be about the special educational needs framework but also the types of pedagogic approaches and resources customarily offered in the ordinary classroom (Williams et al. 2009). This suggests that when learning is constructively planned and integrated



into the ordinary classroom through a Pupil Centred Learning (PCL) approach for all pupils, pupils' abilities will no longer serve as the criterion for exclusion (Spratt and Florian 2015). Nevertheless, learning through observation and imitation should not be linked with *behaviourist theories* because *social constructivist learning theory* also employs simulation for learning (Berk 2009). While inclusive pedagogies are not circumscribed by constructivist pedagogy (Florian and Spratt 2013), the affordance of constructivist pedagogic approaches is that they allow pupils to be active agencies in constructing, interrogating, and re-constructing knowledge (Ainscow et al. 2013). In this vein, the next segment will review some constructivist learning theories.

### **2.3.2 Cognitive Constructivist and Social Constructivist Theories**

In contrast to a teacher-centred learning approach as often found in behaviourist theories (Berk 2011), "*constructivist pedagogy is a learner-centred approach that allows for quality interaction*" (Keengwe et al. 2014, p. 889). Constructivist pedagogy presumes learning when children independently explore and analyse knowledge (Aubrey and Riley 2019). Knowledge is, however, explored and analysed regarding self-exploration as in *Piaget's Cognitive theory* and in terms of social interaction and language as theorised by *Vygotsky's sociocultural theory*. Despite the stages of child development in Piaget's theory, Piaget views learning as self-explored and manipulated, which can take different applications in practice, such as solving "*puzzles, table games, dress-up clothing, building blocks, measuring tools...and more*" (Berk 2011, p. 256). For Piaget, knowledge should not be presented to learners; instead, teachers should offer an environment for learners to *construct* knowledge by exploring the classroom activity (Berk 2011). However, Piaget's theory received numerous criticisms, mainly that it marginalises the role of social interaction in children's development and learning (Lourenço and Machado 1996). Whereas Vygotsky suggested that social interaction and culture are the pillars of shaping how children acquire and develop subjective knowledge (Aubrey and Riley 2019). According to Berk (2011), Vygotsky aligned with Piaget in viewing children as active learners but inferred that learning can only occur through social interaction with more knowledgeable adults or peers. Due to Vygotsky's emphasis on language in children's learning and development, his theory is often used as a pedagogic approach for learning languages (Johnson and Golombek 2020). Whereas Piaget came from biological sciences, and focused on psychology; his theory is therefore

more anchored on individualism (Berk 2011). Implications for using Piaget and Vygotsky theories in practice can be as follow:

Table 1 illustrates the main differences between cognitive and social constructivist pedagogy (Berk 2011).

Piaget	Vygotsky
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pupils are encouraged to self-explore the classroom environment using a selection of pedagogic activities and resources such as puzzles, role-play, and problem-solving.</li>   <li>- Teachers must understand pupils' current level before supporting them to proceed to the next.</li>   <li>- Pupils' individual differences must be recognised in teachers' pedagogic planning and offered activities (Berk 2011, pp. 256-257).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interchanged pedagogy where teacher and pupils work as a group on a given task applying: "<i>questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting</i>" (Berk 2011, p. 269).</li>   <li>- Co-operative learning approach where "<i>a small groups of classmates work toward common goals</i>" (Berk 2011, p. 269)</li> </ul>

The table above illustrates the main differences between cognitive and social constructivist pedagogy. Alignments between the two theories can be seen in viewing learners as independent. Discrepancies can be highlighted in considering constructivism through individualism in Piaget's theory. In comparison, constructivism in Vygotsky's theory presumes learning to be socially, culturally, and linguistically created through social interaction between learners and teachers. Both theories, however, view teachers as a central source of pupils' learning. In line with Vygotsky's proposition on sociocultural learning, active learning stems from problems that occur during practice through social conversation with one another (Salisbury and Irby 2020). This reflection element is not seen as integral in cognitive constructivist theory

but is more found in social constructivist learning as in the *intersubjectivity* approach (Berk 2011). In active learning, teachers use all available theories to promote active learning, in which pupils actively observe, model their own learning, and participate (Berk 2011, Florian et al. 2017). The following section explores the evidence on the effectiveness and inclusivity of active learning in comparison with on sedentary learning.

### **2.3.3 Active and Sedentary Learning**

Active learning includes pedagogic approaches – inviting learners to interrogate learning with peers and critically reflect on their learning (Bonwell and Eison 1991). Examples of active learning approaches encompass but are not limited to: “*Visual-based instruction...Cooperative learning, debates, drama, role playing and simulation, and peer teaching*” (Bonwell and Eison 1991, p. 7). Contrary to active learning approaches, the traditional learning approach, which is often seen in lectures, requires less participation from learners and, thus, minimises the potential of learning compared with the active learning environment (Sood and Dutt 2017).

This can have an impact on disabled pupils in the classroom. Bishara (2018) conducted a quantitative study to examine the effectiveness and influence of implementing active and traditional learning pedagogies for disabled pupils’ achievements, motivation to learn, and self-presentation to learning. The researcher found a significant correlation between the approaches used in pedagogy, and the learning outcomes, whether self-presented by the pupils or measured by the teachers. Similarly, a Saudi researcher Alghamdi (2015), conducted an experiment in Saudi Arabia adopting a mixed method approach to understand the effectiveness and influence of the cooperative learning pedagogic approach in promoting secondary-level pupils’ English language writing skills and abilities in grammar. The researcher found in a post-test analysis that pupils in the co-operative learning group scored higher on the test than in the control group. However, Alghamdi (2015) found no significant correlation between pupils’ English writing skills and adopting a cooperative learning approach. He inferred that the effectiveness of implementing active learning pedagogies resides in the quality of teachers’ continuing professional development and training (Alghamdi 2015). In line with Alghamdi’s (2015) finding, another Saudi researcher conducted a mixed methods study to understand the

influence of face-to-face and online Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes on twenty primary science teachers' knowledge and practice (Binmohsen 2015). The researcher found that "*Teacher Talk was the most dominant characteristic in these pre-online CPD classrooms with a total 68.7%... Approximately 54.0% of this was used for Lecturing, where they were just giving facts and opinions about the subject content*" (Binmohsen 2015, p.176-177). However, the researcher noted an observable change in teachers' practice using constructivist pedagogy following CPD programmes (Binmohsen 2015).

Similarly, Alkhunini (2021) conducted a qualitative case study design research on Tatweer School, a private school owned by the Saudi government. The researcher examined mainstream education teachers' pedagogy and contended that most teachers in his sample rely on "lecture with questions" as a pedagogic approach, which the researcher inferred does not promote inclusivity for learners in the classroom (Alkhunini 2021, p. 197). Another study with an experimental design was conducted in India at a secondary level, in which the researchers found a significant increase in learners' math achievement on the post-test when taught using assistive technologies such as "*video assisted instruction*" (Sood and Dutt 2017, p. 127). Despite the subject taught, objectives for skills acquisition and the level or age of learners, active learning approaches are likely to promote effective learning for all learners when recognising learners as active participants in their learning (Florian et al. 2017).

The above studies also indicate that active learning and inclusive pedagogies require robust and continuous training in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere. Training and development for Saudi teachers is recognised as a central issue hindering teachers in enacting active learning pedagogies which respond to all pupil's needs (Boqlah 2002; Alanazi 2012; Al Ghamdi 2015; Alhammad 2017; Alghamdi 2020; Alkhunini 2021). These Saudi research studies also indicate a shortfall of educational policies in creating a professional learning environment where teachers can continuously learn and develop as a community of practice (Stoll et al. 2006). For instance, Alghamdi (2020) conducted a study to discern constraints on teachers' professional learning in Saudi Arabia. Alghamdi (2020, pp. 162-163) observed that only pre-determined CPD programmes are available at Saudi Ministry of Education (MoE) training centres, and these do not meet teachers' day-to-day pedagogic challenges

and needs. We can see how professional development and training become more significant and necessary to develop teacher skills in active and inclusive pedagogy and teaching disabled learners in the mainstream classroom, given the complexity of inclusion as a policy and practice (Florian and Rouse 2010).

### **2.3.4 Inclusive Pedagogy?**

Inclusive pedagogy is an alternative approach to modifications and pedagogic differentiation which invites all learners to learn, monitor, and participate in their learning actively (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). It is also about inviting teachers to perceive responding supportively to learners' individual differences as central to their pedagogy, moving away from the concept of *deficit* in pupils' abilities (Florian et al. 2017). It also gives learners a sense of belonging, as Black-Hawkins et al. described (2022). It is; therefore, a radical shift from individualising learning often paralleled with special educational needs practice (Florian 2014). Inclusive pedagogy is grounded in four themes: *inclusive policies*, *teachers' inclusive attitudes* towards learners, *teachers' confidence in their competence* in teaching all learners, and a *sense of collaboration* between teachers (Ainscow 1999; Florian and Rouse 2009; Forlin 2010; Kim et al. 2022). Below, I will discuss these four domains.

Favourable policies concerning inclusion should examine how disabled learners are viewed, through which "*identities and experiences of children with special educational needs are constructed*" (Allan et al. 1998, p. 30). Slee (2018) proposes that inclusive policies should, therefore, be built on the needs for everyday practice in schools. While this renders policy-makers' role in observing issues found in practice, school leadership plays a central role in mediating and communicating with policy-makers in reshaping and formulating more inclusive policies (Ainscow 2018). Therefore, school leadership should construct "*knowledge about the benefits of social connection, communities of learning and social capital*" (Thomas 2013, p. 474). If school leadership fails to consider an organisational commitment to inclusion as an ideology, a "bureaucratic" approach to leadership may result, as Ainscow (2018) described; inclusion becomes problematic. The convergence of inclusion and leadership elicits attitudes towards inclusion as a collaborative process of distributed leadership in inclusive pedagogy (Dyson 1999; Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011).

There is a vast body of literature devoted to findings on attitudes towards disability and inclusion and the resultant impact on shaping teachers' pedagogy (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Idol 2006; Alquraini 2011; De Boer et al. 2011; Al Jaffal 2019). According to Norwich (1994), teachers' attitudes towards disabled pupils' abilities are reflected in their classroom practice. When disabled pupils are viewed as *other* or *abnormal*, it undermines the fundamental human rights of disabled learners, preventing them from being equal members in classrooms and schools (Lipsky and Gartner 2012). Despite putative connotations in viewing teachers and other stakeholder attitudes as the pillar of inclusive pedagogy, the dilemma is in what counts as inclusive learning and how teachers are trained and offered the necessary development to enact pedagogies that promote participation among all learners (Thomas 2013; see the section below, on professional learning). Teachers often develop attitudes and acquire pedagogic skills through initial teacher education and teacher continuing professional development and training (Florian and Rouse 2009; Forlin et al. 2009; Alnahdi et al. 2019; Alnahdi 2020). Teachers' attitudes and pedagogic competence are quintessential reflections of contested policies and personal beliefs in higher education (Armstrong et al. 1998). A Saudi researcher conducted a study in higher education to understand academics in Special Education perceptions and views of inclusion. The researcher found "*conceptual, legal, attitudinal and contextual challenges*" among the twelve participants included in his study (Madhesh 2023, p. 63). Succinctly, Madhesh (2023) proclaims challenges in defining inclusive education and pinpoints the shortfall of qualified programmes in developing skilled teachers who can meet the complexity of adhering to inclusive practice. Arguably, when teacher education programmes promote inclusion in teachers' courses, teachers become more confident to offer an inclusive pedagogy (Corbett and Slee 2000). Madhesh's (2023) findings suggest that higher education is crucial in developing teachers' competence and confidence in inclusive pedagogy (Wallace et al. 2001). The level of quality of teacher education programmes requires educational collaboration. For instance, if there are joint efforts between academics and school educators to establish a channel to participate, reflect and continually train in inclusive pedagogies, teachers' self-confidence in their pedagogic skills could potentially improve.

Reviewing some Saudi and United Arab Emirates studies about inclusive practice is worthwhile, given that both countries are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and share cultural similarities. This will give a sense of the typical pedagogies used in these countries and help to conceptualise how these pedagogies in similar nations may promote or hinder inclusion. In Saudi Arabia, Alasiry's article (2019) draws on participatory action research. She shared her view of the inclusivity of schools in Saudi Arabia and the extent to which learners' views shape learning in the classroom. Notably, the researcher revealed that the motive to participate in this domain is because she felt that many of her students in the classroom are disengaged, distracted, and less enthusiastic about learning (Alasiry 2019). She deduced that inclusive pedagogy cannot happen if the school environment does not promote democracy and listening to pupils' voices. Such observation rendered Booth and Ainscow's (2011) approach to developing inclusive practice through promoting inclusive school culture viable in the Saudi context. To put these observations into perspective, another Emarati study explored the implementation of the "School for All" approach in three public primary schools. Although Alborno (2017, p. 36) contends that these (UAE) schools considered by the UAE's MoE to be implementing the School for All approach, teachers in the sample reported a shortfall of pedagogic skills to teach disabled learners, which in turn seemed reasonable for the researcher to observe a "pull-out basis in the resource room, leaving the classroom teacher with no support". Such frustration in promoting pedagogic inclusivity for all learners echoed those of Saudi researchers highlighting school educators' dilemma of adhering to the conventional inclusive mandate while feeling less equipped with pedagogic theoretical knowledge, practical pedagogic skills, and an inclusive environment to teach inclusively. For instance, Alkeraida (2020), a Saudi researcher, observed that weakness in some teachers' pedagogy does not inevitably entail negative attitudes towards disabled learners, but rather it infers teachers' self-efficacy as a fundamental element in teachers' inclusive practice. Whereas Alkhunini (2021) inferred teachers' reliance on traditional pedagogy often relates to the quality of training teachers receive. Both researchers seem to agree on the significance of self-efficacy to teach inclusively, which indeed requires substantial training and professional growth (Florian and Rouse 2010). To give a sense of the importance of self-efficacy and training for teachers' inclusive practice, Alzyoudi et al. (2021) conducted a quantitative study in the UAE to investigate teachers' perceptions of

inclusive practices in 451 mainstream schools. Of the 451 schools, 310 participants agreed to participate in Alzyoudi et al.'s (2021) study. Alzyoudi et al. (2021) findings showed that there was more confidence among SEN teachers to modify the curriculum, respond to different needs, and use more alternative approaches compared with their counterparts mainstream education teachers. The researchers also deduced that teachers who tend to be inclusive are more equipped with the necessary training to teach disabled learners (Alzyoudi et al. 2021). Thus, as is evident, my findings are supported by these reviewed studies, because low self-efficacy and lack of training offered for school educators to teach disabled learners aligned with viewing disabled learners as “others” when school educators found it difficult to promote an inclusive practice for all (See 6.1.4 & 7.1).

### **2.3.5 Covid 19 Pandemic: Online Learning**

Traditional schooling across the globe was significantly disrupted due to the *Covid-19* outbreak pandemic (Pokhrel and Chhetri 2021; Adedoyin and Soykan 2022). School closure, in return, urged Saudi stakeholders to consider e-learning as an alternative pedagogy during the epidemic (Madhesh 2021). This section is not intended to elucidate a detailed analysis of the impact of Covid-19. Instead, it will contextualise pedagogic approaches used in online learning, discuss some constraints to online learning, and explore the inclusivity of e-learning used as an alternative approach to conventional schooling corresponding to social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Online learning requires teachers and educators to create new techniques for learning that extend beyond traditional pedagogy (Hardy and Bower 2004). Because online learning is different in nature to face-to-face methods, there are two models for online learning: “*Asynchronous learning* [and] *synchronous learning*” (Greenhow et al. 2022, p. 134). The asynchronous method gives time dimension flexibility for the learner for a given task, in which lesson videos are posted beforehand, giving pupils the freedom to explore their learning in their own time (Glenn 2018). Although asynchronous teaching may promote active learning through self-exploration, issues around pupils’ motivation to learn and parental supervision were reported constraints to pupils’ self-motivation in the literature (Glenn 2018; Pokhrel and Chhetri 2021). It



is without doubt to argue that pupils' motivation to learn is connected to pupils' time management and accessibility of learning materials. Therefore, some learners may lose track of completing assignments as teachers' explanations of learning materials could be minimal (Nora and Snyder 2008), and access to technology may be limited for disadvantaged families (Lee 2022). Despite constraints to *asynchronous learning*, asynchronous pedagogic approaches offer social networking in which learners communicate beyond lesson time (Northey et al. 2015) and self-reflect on learning materials, but only when technological aids are utilised as means for learners to construct their learning on existing knowledge (Archambault et al. 2022).

*Synchronous* learning manifests in simultaneous interaction between learners and teachers online (Greenhow et al. 2022). While this method allows teachers and learners to explore learning concurrently, it may restrict creativity, pupils' time and convenience, and self-exploration (Boling et al. 2012). Boling et al. (2012) conducted a case study to explore adult learners' and online instructors' perceptions of online learning. Researchers found that although instructors often rely on synchronous learning, synchronous learning was the least favour method of learning among learners. As mentioned previously, teachers' pedagogic approaches shape the nature of learning and impact pupils' motivation and engagement in learning (Florian et al. 2017). In line with this vein, Archambault et al. (2022) argue that the modality of remote learning is not a fundamental issue, but rather the central concern is about how learning takes place during online learning. According to Archambault et al.'s model (2022, p. 182), effective online learning pedagogy must provide "*Active Learning, Cultivating Relationships, Learner Autonomy, Mastery Learning, and Personalization*". Active learning immerses learners in the learning activity; cultivating relationships is about establishing a learning environment in which learners shape their classroom, offering the necessary resources for pupils to communicate and interact; learner autonomy suggests equal learning opportunities for all learners. Mastery learning allows learners to check their progress as a motivation to self-reflect and understand the significance of their learning. Personalisation resembles the inclusivity of pedagogies offered, allowing learners to shape their learning (Archambault et al. 2022). While this model emphasises teachers' role in the pedagogic enactment of online learning, pupils' motivation and engagement are also contingent on parents' and other stakeholders' involvement

(Lee 2022). Lee (2022) conducted a case study using a mixed methods design in eight schools, exploring pupils', parents', teachers', and school headteachers' experiences of online learning. The study concluded that there were constraints around collaboration between schools and parents and limitations around resources available for students and parents (Lee 2022).

Online learning shares similar characteristics to face-to-face learning, but complexities arise when teachers are frustrated in promoting effective pedagogies for all learners. Challenges to online learning are levels of collaboration between schools and learners and parents, technological limitations, and the socioeconomic status of learners and parents (Adedoyin and Soykan 2022). Learning objectives and pedagogic goals often depend on the level of collaboration between schools and parents (Nicholls and Gardner 1999). In the pivot to online learning during the pandemic, the closure of schools as part of the effort to curtail the spread of the Covid-19 virus (Viner et al. 2020) restricted schools' ability to maintain coherent communication with pupils and parents (Smith 2021). In Huber and Helm's (2020) study conducted in Austrian, German, and Swiss schools, a recruited sample of school headteachers, teachers, parents, and pupils evaluated schooling during the 2020 lockdown. The Barometer survey, which Huber and Helm (2020) utilised, indicated stress among learners and headteachers in maintaining effective communication during remote learning. Teachers were, however, more confident in fostering effective learning and communication with pupils and parents, but 53% of the teacher respondents' indicated the key challenge of professional collaboration with one another in preparing learning materials (Huber and Helm 2020, pp. 254). Although Huber and Helm (2020, p. 251) caution researchers not to "*overinterpret these findings*" as there is a limitation to their sampling, the researcher asserted the role of collaboration between teachers and other stakeholders to be a fundamental factor in pupils' learning and engagement in online (Milner et al. 2020). Huber and Helm's (2020) study also indicates that issues around collaboration between stakeholders, including learners, depend on professional conduct and access to technology.

Disabled learners faced even more significant challenges with the change to online learning, as often, pupils' accessibility to virtual classrooms was restricted, impeding the core value of inclusive education. The successful use of inclusivity is, however,

highly connected with teachers' craft of knowledge of pedagogies used, whether in face-to-face or remote learning (Smith and Basham 2014). Enacting inclusion as the integration of disabled learners in remote learning is in many ways similar to the nature of inclusion in traditional schooling, despite the overdue debate on what counts as inclusive education and integration (Goei et al. 2021). Unfortunately, the complete exclusion of disabled learners during remote learning in some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, cannot be undermined (Madhesh 2021).

Madhesh (2021) conducted a study employing the observation method of online-learning lessons. Madhesh (2021) observed the broadcasted lessons on the EIN TV Channel, alongside an analysis of official Saudi MoE documents and semi-structured interviews of eighteen teachers, to understand the inclusivity of online learning for hearing-impaired learners across all three school levels: primary, secondary and high school education (Madhesh 2021). Madhesh (2021) observed full *exclusion* of disabled learners as the learning modality did not support using sign language, inclusive pedagogies, or interactive materials. Mantzikos and Lappa (2020) highlight that the exclusion of disabled learners due to Covid-19 restrictions substantiates the need for a *radical* shift in sociological and systemic norms towards inclusive education. The pandemic not only revealed how exclusion is socially embedded worldwide but also revealed the shortfall of technological resources and information on using pedagogic technology for remote learning (Kruszewska et al. 2022) and the hindrance of available technologies and resources for disabled learners from accessing remote learning (Barnes 1996). According to Kruszewska et al.'s (2022) study, which included 239 primary education teachers from Poland, exclusion, particularly in online learning, results from teacher training in how to use technology for learning effectively. The researchers also found that a lack of resources, such as computers and software, hinders pupils' access to learning (Kruszewska et al. 2022).

### **2.3.6 Professional Development and Professional Learning**

*It is essential to understand* how teachers engage with meaningful professional learning and development in order to develop professional judgment and expertise (Webster-Wright 2009). Previous studies undertaken with teachers in Saudi Arabia suggest many constraints around teachers' continuing professional development, particularly concerning inclusion (Alanazi 2012; Alhammad 2017; Alshahrani 2018;

Alkeraida 2020; Alkhunini 2021). This section draws upon literature which distinguishes between professional development and professional learning, reviews teacher change models, and discusses studies about teacher training and teachers' inclusive beliefs and practice.

In the literature, concepts of Professional Development (PD) and Professional Learning (PL) are interrelated, which has caused confusion among researchers, educators, and teachers (Boylan et al. 2018). Mitchell (2013) defined PD as changes in practice, attitudes, and beliefs which improve pupils' learning outcomes. In comparison, Professional Learning (PL) is a "*more school-centred forms of professional development which recognize, bring together, and build upon the skills, experience, and insights that teachers already have*" (Hargreaves and Dawe 1990, p. 229). It appears that the PD aims to develop teachers' abstract knowledge, which teachers then are expected to craft knowledge into practice (Borko 2004). Arguably, policy-makers play a central role in teachers' knowledge craft, and any form of development should be based on a field study reflecting on teachers' demands (Ingvarson et al. 2005; Campbell and McNamara 2009). Guskey (2003) counterargues that PD programmes are not rigorously developed from the field but rather are often developed through academic researchers' opinions and surveys. A qualitative study was conducted, using interview data to unveil why some science teachers are changing the teaching profession (Watters and Diezmann 2015). The researchers revealed a lack of training regarding what teachers actually need in practice and constraints to offering developmental programmes outside teachers' daily school responsibilities (Watters and Diezmann 2015). Although professional development programmes aim to improve teachers' professional skills, these programmes are rarely developed by researchers or independent stakeholders (Desimone et al. 2007; Nabhani et al. 2014). For instance, Hadfield et al. (2017) examined the Masters in Educational Practice programme's alignment with policy-makers in Wales on teachers' knowledge and professional expertise development. The authors asserted that the design of master's programmes does not always promote prolonged changes in teachers' practice (Hadfield et al. 2017). Similarly, a Saudi researcher explored inclusion in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia mainstream schools, using interview methods, the researcher reported resentment among teachers regarding the usefulness of professional development programmes offered for their

professional growth (Aldakhil 2017). According to Aldakhil's (2017) study, participants reported that the PD programmes offered for in-service teachers resembled courses taken during pre-service training, which issues they face in practice are not well tackled in these offered training sessions. In another study, which also took place in Saudi Arabia, Alshehry (2018) conducted a case study recruiting thirty teachers, teaching science modules to the eighth level, to understand their views of professional development programmes, their pedagogic and professional needs, and self-efficacy to develop skills independently. Alshehry (2018) contends that more than twenty teachers included in the sample reported constraints to the method of learning in professional development programmes. Particularly, Alshehry (2018) underlined teachers' pressing need for practice-based training given that little attention to the challenges teachers face in the field are rarely addressed in Saudi PD programmes. Thus, it was unsurprising to find a significant shortfall of practice-based training in the conventional PD programmes readily available for school educators included in my research sample (See 5.2.3 & 5.3.4). Therefore, Alassaf (2017) urges Saudi MoE and higher education institutes to overhaul conventional programmes offered for pre and in-service teachers and suggests that new programmes should promote inclusivity in teachers' attitudes and practices.

It seems that the *authority* in some PD and higher education programmes hinder teachers' effective development (Guskey 2002), whereby overlooking teachers' voice undermines "*a professional who could make a significant difference to teaching and learning in their school and also coach others to do the same*" (Hargreaves and Elhawary 2018, p. 57). However Czerniawski et al. (2018, pp.143) observe that educators in teachers' education programmes included in their study, which was conducted in England, Ireland, and Scotland, expressed a lack of opportunities to be invited or recognised to be part of the community of practice. It has been suggested that PD programmes for educators should mirror the empirical challenges that arise from the classroom environment and also reach out to stakeholders such as educators and researchers contributing to teachers' development (Darling-Hammond et al. 2009).

In the last two decades, there has been a growing tendency to support the concept of Professional Learning (PL), considering teachers to be at the centre of designing, discussing, and assessing their skills and needs, both formally by trained instructors

and informally through discussion and reflection on day-to-day teaching experiences (Stewart 2014). Programmes for teachers' professional learning have involved learning communities seen as a way of addressing some of the limitations found in traditional PD programmes (Darling-Hammond et al. 2009; Stewart 2014).

Constraints to professional development programmes often concern the quality of training, which was thought inadequate, as a few hours of seminars or workshops would not substantiate teachers' professional growth (Vangrieken et al. 2017).

Contrary, PL as in communities of practice, "*has the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing pupil learning*" (Bolam et al. 2005, p. 145). Professional Learning (PL) assimilates collaboration among peer teachers to work and learn as a community, which enables consistency in self-evaluation and reflection on their teaching practices (Kennedy 2005). This points to growth through knowledge and experience, where teachers are assumed to be independent learners improving their teaching skills to reform schools (Lieberman 1995; Darling-Hammond et al. 2017). Another pattern of PL is the construction of knowledge in daily practice instead of knowledge absorption in professional development programmes (Guskey 2014).

There are, however, a few limitations to professional learning communities. Because teachers need to learn from one another as a community of practice, novice teachers may find it difficult to interact and learn from senior teachers (Ben-Peretz and Schonmann 2021). This limitation may dissuade novice teachers from interacting with other teachers, whereas novice teachers need interaction to promote confidence in pedagogic competence and to improvise and explore pedagogies in practice (Horn 2010; Philip 2019). However as PL requires school leadership role-modelling pedagogic practices, some practices may be narrowed to what headteachers feel relevant to policies—raising the tension between what teachers empirically need in the classroom and practices imposed by headteachers (Leithwood et al. 2021). Equally, as some professional learning communities lack mentors and adequate guidance, teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards disability and inclusion, for example, may influence their colleagues (Scott and Armstrong 2016). While this may promote positive change between teachers as active agents in school reform (Watson 2014), changes in schools are far from easy – given the hostility teachers face to mediate conflicted policies with what they feel is useful in

the classroom (Ball et al. 2011). Another limitation of PL communities is that PL communities are not co-ordinated by authoritative agencies, which run through a network of teachers; this may result in passing on practices that are not critically and theoretically developed (Armstrong and Ainscow 2018; Rempe-Gillen 2018).

Although these are some constraints related to PL communities, a study conducted in China examining the effectiveness of PL communities for Chinese teachers using ethnographic methods found positive changes in teachers' attitudes and practices (Tam 2015). Tam (2015, p. 27) found that teachers expressed positive changes to their beliefs, practices, and teaching activities when engaged with other teachers in taught lessons, notably when the headteacher "*initiated a bottom-up change of school-based curriculum*". Similarly, De Neve and Devos (2017) conducted a study in Belgium in three schools to examine the effectiveness of PL in enhancing Differentiated Instruction (DI) to foster learning evolution among pupils with learning disability. The study found that teachers were considerably motivated to improve DI strategies, and researchers observed some improvements in teachers' autonomy to make changes in the classroom. These findings suggest that autonomy is learned through practice (Vescio et al. 2008), and teachers' collaboration offers value for unity and shared goals towards learning and reforming inclusion in schools (Englert and Tarrant 1995; Armstrong and Ainscow 2018).

The literature is enriched with several models in professional learning and professional development, but this section will focus on Guskey's professional learning model. According to Guskey (2002), professional learning programs should be embedded in teachers' daily practices, as pedagogical practices, beliefs, attitudes, and student learning outcomes are interrelated. The teacher change model emphasises pupils' voices and teachers' self-evaluation of the pedagogic approaches used in the classroom. Also, teacher attitudes and beliefs towards their practices are based on how teachers experience the results of the approach adopted in practice on learner experience and outcomes (Guskey 2002; Desimone 2009; Boylan et al. 2018). The following figure illustrates the order of the Teacher Change model in PD proposed by Guskey (2002):

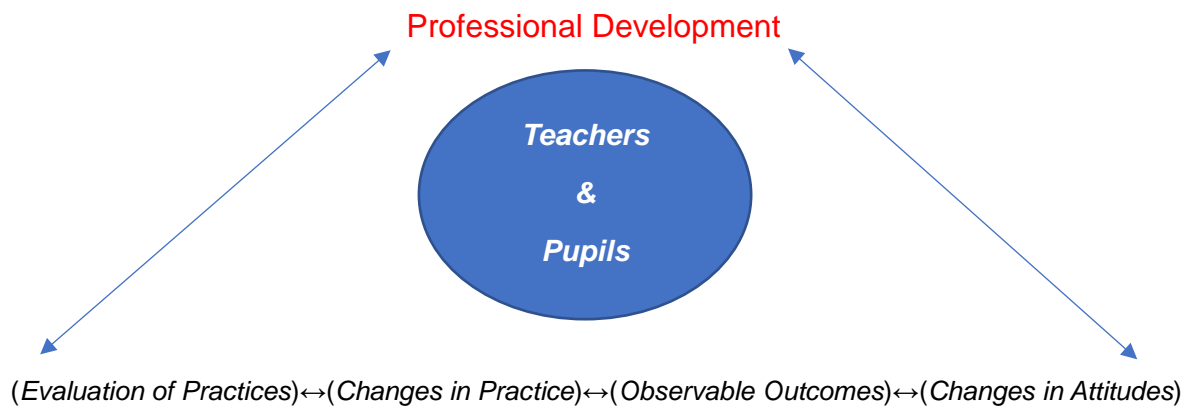


Figure 2: Professional Development Model Proposed by (Guskey 2002)

From the above figure, it can be observed that teachers and students are the centres of the teachers' training and development—changes in teachers' attitudes towards practice result from practices that teachers observed as applicable and beneficial for learners. Compared with other professional learning models, the distinction in this model is that learning is socially experienced. Therefore, efforts in professional learning are not limited to workshops. Further, the classroom is the ground for professional development in teachers' practices and attitudes (Guskey 2002). However, a pivotal gap to not be undermined is that Guskey's model excluded other domains, such as phenomenological, cognitive, personal, and system-subsystem domains, which were acknowledged by other scholars (See for example Clarke and Hollingsworth 2002; Opfer and Pedder 2011; Evans 2014). Comparatively, Desimone's model (2009) is also a single pathway; however, changes in attitudes and beliefs in Desimone's model are seen through training on instructional approaches and through abstract knowledge. Nevertheless, a singularity in teacher training does not entail comprehensive development, and indeed considering other domains in theorising teachers' development would help mitigate the perceptual and pedagogic challenges to inclusion (Boylan et al. 2018; Lefstein and Snell 2020).

Concerning professional learning in inclusive education, although inclusive education has increasingly become a significant reform in school policies, curriculum, and practices, Kozleski and Waitoller (2010) argue that pre-service and in-service teachers are still unprepared to enact inclusive education, which often results in devaluing disabled pupils' learning. This constraint pinpoints the shortfall of training on inclusive pedagogies (Florian and Becirevic 2011). My research findings



substantiate (Florian and Becirevic 2011) assertion that significant shortcomings of training for teachers made it challenging for teachers to conceive inclusion as a social value and practice pedagogies promoting participation for all (See perceptions under 6.1.3 & 6.1.4, See enactments under 7.1 & 7.4). Ainscow (1997, p. 5) contends that training offered at the policy level is often insufficient to practice inclusion; therefore, policies concerning teachers' training should "*consider what forms of professional development will be required for those who are to take on this radically reconstructed special needs role*". Furthermore, teachers' professional training, whether in PL or PD, is vital to assist special educational needs and mainstream education teachers in meeting the needs of all learners; this emphasises the value of collaboration between SEN teachers and mainstream teachers who lack the pedagogical knowledge and experience needed to teach disabled learners (Farrell and Ainscow 2002). Duncombe and Armour (2004) conducted a case study to understand collaboration in professional learning in two schools: one in England and the second school in Midland. The researchers underlined results from teachers' comments suggesting issues around the level of collaboration between teachers and around teachers' confidence towards their knowledge of the taught subject. These constraints were relevant to my research findings, as there was a lack of collaboration between teachers which was attributed to teachers' trust in one another's knowledge regarding working with disabled learners, given little training is offered for them (See 5.2.3 & 7.4). Continuous training and development are vital to maintaining inclusivity by mainstream classroom teachers (Rouse 2017). Sharma et al. (2018) compared Australian and Italian teachers' attitudes and teaching efficacy beliefs in enacting inclusion. Comparatively, Italian teachers were more positive towards integrating disabled learners than Australian teachers. Sharma et al. (2018) postulate that teachers' attitudes towards disability and inclusion are contingent on the level of training which teachers received prior to, and during their teaching experience.

The above studies infer that inclusive education policies are contextualised and enacted based on headteachers' mediation between policies and teachers' practice in the classroom (McIntyre 2020). As McIntyre (2020, p. 114) argues, "*changes in practice are most likely to occur*" if headteachers exercise a collaborative stance in teachers' professional learning and induce collaboration between teachers through

observation, reflection, and feedback. However, undermining teacher leadership in enacting educational policies also seems to be a concern. As (Harris et al. 2020a, p.1-2) put it, “*Teachers actively contribute to school and system change ... but how far are teachers playing an active role as curriculum leaders remains a moot point*”. The complexity of teachers’ autonomy, nonetheless, resides in the overreaching challenges in educational policy: (1) clarity of mechanisms through which teachers can exercise leadership in policy-making and enactment, (2) reflexivity of the curriculum, and (3) the *authenticity* of teachers’ and headteachers’ training programmes in developing curriculum leadership and collaboration between school educators (Hargreaves and Shirley 2009; Wenner and Campbell 2017).

Nevertheless, PL, particularly when addressing challenges in inclusive education, strengthens the level of collaboration between SEN teachers and mainstream education teachers, which allows them to work as a team with shared goals (Causton and Theoharis 2014). However, school educators often need to develop professionally, as in seminars and workshops by a specialised trainer in the form of PD, which helps teachers to “*update their skills in order to be able to demonstrate their competence*” (Kennedy 2005, p. 237). Although PD may influence the quality of inclusive education practices, some obstacles may arise from teachers’ attitudes towards disability. For example, in a South African study, Walton and Rusznyak (2017) found that the in-service teachers were motivated to learn specialised pedagogy, which corresponds to a belief that there are deficits in disabled learners. The researchers concluded that such a tendency would not change if the concept of inclusive pedagogy was deemed as extra training for specific students (Walton and Rusznyak 2017). This finding highlights Guskey’s (2002) proposition that attitudes cannot be changed until teachers observe the practicality of teaching approaches for improving students’ learning outcomes. It also supports Florian’s (2014) claim that inclusive pedagogy should not be considered extra or specialised solely for disabled learners. The findings of Walton and Rusznyak (2017) also corroborate that changes in teachers’ perceptions and practice are difficult to pursue in seminars and workshops outside the school because they lack the “*connection to the current classroom context in which participants work*” (Kennedy 2005, p. 237).

Nonetheless, teachers still need access to expert training for specific approaches; for example, training in Braille to teach visually impaired learners. Al-Busaidi and

Tuzlukova (2018) conducted a study in Oman to examine attitudes and challenges regarding teaching visually impaired learners enrolled in English courses in higher education. The study found that teachers supported integrating visually impaired students, but participants university instructors commented that there was a need for practical training related to Braille (Al-Busaidi and Tuzlukova 2018). The synergistic relationship between inclusive education practices and teachers' professional learning (Leonard and Roberts 2016) seems a compelling argument.

Last, it is the learners themselves that teachers need to consider their voice to enable a full picture in creating an inclusive teaching environment (Messiou 2017). Thus, pupils' involvement in teachers' continuous development and training is paramount, and it is also pupils' voice that manifests inclusivity in teachers' practice (Ware 2008; Florian and Beaton 2018). Therefore, carefully considering and discussing inclusion with pupils brings about teachers' continuing professional development and ability to respond to the persistent challenges to inclusion (Woodcock and Woolfson 2019).

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed the disability literature to explain the individual and social models. Issues related to the separation between individuality, the social imposition of restrictions, and universal needs in the social model have been explored, which were critical concerns for post-modernists and post-structuralists. The chapter also discussed the range of underpinnings and critiques of inclusive education as a policy and practice related to the Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow 2011). Policies around disability and inclusion in Saudi Arabia, the US, and the UK were discussed, offering a systematic comparison between these countries. This helped to hone in on literature on how policies were incorporated into pedagogic enactment. Reviewing the literature regarding different instructional approaches, such as traditional and constructivist learning, helped to theoretically distinguish the differences between active and passive learning and how best to promote inclusive pedagogy. Then the last segment, on pedagogy, reviewed how professional learning and teacher continuing professional development influences and develops teachers' and stakeholders' attitudes and practices for inclusion.

As reviewed in this chapter, while there were few qualitative studies conducted in Saudi Arabia exploring disability and inclusion, to the best of my knowledge, no research in Saudi Arabia adopted the policy enactment theory as a toolbox explaining how inclusion policies are interpreted into practice and adopted the inclusive pedagogy approach to understanding teachers' inclusive practice, in male schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. So I set out to design a research study to address how inclusion policies in Saudi Arabia are understood and interpreted into practice. This research aims warranted a qualitative research methodology to transfigure the complexity of teachers' nuanced views regarding disability and inclusion into a rich text (Maxwell 2022). The next chapter outlines the research aim and questions, philosophical approach, methodological design, research theoretical approach, methods used for data collection, and the thematic analysis approach used for this research.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines this research study's ontological, epistemological, and methodological considerations. The research employed an interpretivist qualitative methodology (Lincoln et al. 2018). Data collection methods used included interviews, observations, and observation field notes. The interview sample included: eight general education teachers (GETs), two from each school; eight special educational needs teachers (SENTs), two from each school; and four headteachers (HTs) across the four schools. Data collection methods were interviews, observations, and field notes. A thematic approach was used to analyse a nuanced view of disability and inclusion. The thematic approach was also used to decode the complexity of observation data regarding school educators' pedagogic enactments of Saudi inclusive education policies regarding disabled learners categorised as SN (Charmaz 2014a,2017; Charmaz and Thornberg 2021).

After establishing the research aims and questions, this methodology chapter is divided into three main sections. It starts with the research paradigm section, which elicits the ontology and epistemology, methodology, reflexivity and positionality, and approaches to inductive inquiry. It then discusses the research design adopted in this research. The following section explores data collection, including access to schools, sampling, data collection methods (as well as limitations to these methods), transcribing and translation, and confidentiality. Subsequently, the data analysis section will explain how data were analysed using inductive reasoning before presenting emergent themes from the data and discussing the limitations of the analysis. The chapter then concludes with a consideration of issues in authenticity, quality and trustworthiness of the research, and the researcher's statement, with an overall conclusion.

### **Research Aim and Questions**

The research aim was to explore teachers' and headteachers' perceptions and enactment of inclusive education in Riyadh, Saudi Arabian primary schools. The focus was on teachers' and headteachers' perceptions about disability and inclusion,

the policy constraints they work within, and teachers' inclusive enactments in their day-to-day educational practices. The research questions were as follows:

**RQ1.** What are the alignments or tensions between educators' knowledge, understandings and practice of inclusion in schools and classrooms, the Saudi National Curriculum and other policies related to disability and inclusive education in primary schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia?

**RQ2.** How do primary school educators in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, perceive the current approach to supporting disabled learners?

**RQ3.** To what extent do primary school educators in Riyadh/Saudi Arabia enact inclusion policies for disabled learners in mainstream classrooms?

### **3.1 Research Paradigm**

The research paradigm "*is a term used to describe an approach to research which provides a unifying framework of understandings of knowledge, truth, values and the nature of being*" (Somekh and Lewin 2005, p. 347). The research paradigm comprises the researcher's ontological, epistemological, ethical and methodological positions (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). This research aligned with a *relativist* ontology and subjectivist epistemology (Bryman 2016; Denzin and Lincoln 2018).

#### **3.1.1 Ontology**

"*Ontology is the theory of what exists...which is the study of...being and the nature of reality*" (Ladyman 2007, p. 303). The *positivist-realist* ontology asserts a singular reality which does not incorporate the difference between the object and the being (Crook and Garratt 2005; Gorski 2013), whereas a relativist ontology, such as constructivism and interpretivism, rejects this notion and argues that there are multiple realities, which individuals re-construct: the object is contingent on how people interact with it (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Creswell 2014; Bryman 2016).

Concerning the ontology adopted in this research, reality is understood as multiple, socially constructed and continuously re-produced (Cohen et al. 2007; Lincoln et al. 2018). In other words, I believe that there are various interpretations of disability and inclusion policies and variability in school educators' enactments of inclusion policies. Therefore, aiming to understand different views of disability and inclusion draws theoretical knowledge about how Saudi teachers' perceptions and enactment relate

to existing literature and may re-produce knowledge about disability and inclusion in the schools' context (Creswell and Creswell 2022). Therefore, as the focus was on the participants' beliefs in relation to disability and inclusion, the relativist perspective seemed appropriate for the purpose of this research.

However, the relativist ontology has been critiqued. Hammersley (2009) contends that some relativists fail to consider their personal beliefs and background before conducting the research. Hammersley (2009) urges relativists to acknowledge these domains before conducting research. Cohen et al. (2007) also argue that researchers may construct their own views of the participants, which can mislead the data. Understandably, these limitations pose risks to the research findings' authenticity. Still, the affordance of a relativist viewpoint exploring subjective understanding when creating an authentic and honest interpretation of a studied context was worthwhile. Simply put, I followed an interactive process in before and after the collection of data, being reflexive, honest and trustworthy with myself, the participants and the data, so to mitigate limitations to the authenticity of findings (Charmaz 2014a). More on how I addressed these limitations is found later in this chapter (Section 3.4)

### **3.1.2 Epistemology**

The epistemology of research provides a map of how knowledge is seen, interacted with, accessed and evaluated (Lincoln et al. 2018). As interpretivists seek to construct reality through interpretations of meanings of a studied context (in this case, schools) (Sullivan 2018; Creswell and Creswell 2022; Koro et al. 2022), I adopted a subjectivist epistemology to develop a deep and nuanced understanding of the variable meanings of inclusion teachers bring to the classroom in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (Charmaz and Thornberg 2021). Such knowledge “*depends upon...meanings, beliefs, values, practices*” (Schwandt 2000, p. 201), relating to how participants and I realise meanings we construct regarding disability, inclusion, and pedagogy.

In relation to how knowledge is interacted with and accessed, the interpretivist paradigm addresses “*transactional/subjectivist assumptions that sees knowledge as created in interaction among investigator and respondents*” (Guba and Lincoln 1994, p. 111). In other words, I was part of the studied context and must appreciate and

acknowledge my interactions, interpretations and impact as I conducted my research (Cohen et al. 2007; Creswell 2014). I adopted a subjectivist epistemology because I wanted to interact with teachers in the school context and to gain firsthand data on how school educators conceive and enact inclusion policies (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Lincoln 2010; Lincoln et al. 2018), given that I have a conceptual background of disability and pedagogy theories learnt from bachelor's and master's degrees, but I needed to extend this conceptual knowledge into field-based research knowledge. While subjectivity in qualitative research has received considerable criticism, it "*is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding*" (Stake 1995, p. 45). In terms of analysis, I acknowledge the source of data in the analysis, based on who constructed it, and triangulated it with different data collection methods used in this research to increase the reliability and validity of my findings (Shannon and Hambacher 2014; Bryman 2016) (see discussion in Section 3.3).

### **3.1.3 Methodology: Qualitative Approach**

*"Methodology is the lens a researcher looks through when deciding on the type of methods they will use"* (Mills 2014, p. 31), and using an interpretivist paradigm aligned with the adoption of a qualitative research methodology (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). Qualitative inquiry can provide rigorous details of a studied context (Urcia 2021) because "*researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them*" (Denzin and Lincoln 2018, p.43). The meanings that I wanted to search for were developed understandings of the perceptions of teachers and headteachers in relation to inclusion in primary settings and their enactment of national inclusion policies in Saudi Arabia. I also wished to analyse pedagogic approaches in supporting disabled learners in mainstream schools. The requirements for a detailed account of teachers' stories regarding disability and inclusion, and for observation of teachers' enactments of Saudi inclusion policies suggested that qualitative inquiry was an indispensable methodology for the purpose of this research (Alexander 2016).

While a qualitative methodology may produce a rich layer of texts as a reproduction of the reality being studied (Potter and Robles 2022), they pose epistemological



constraints to the credibility and trustworthiness of findings compared with quantitative studies (Maxwell 2022). Quantitative methodological designs are often “*straightforward*” compared with qualitative studies (Lincoln 2010, p. 3). Lincoln (2010) argued that the positivist paradigm, as in quantitative studies, allows researchers to build on existing theories and therefore is easy to evaluate and structurally coherent with pre-existing research in deploying a unified “*edifice*” (pp. 3-4). However, there are several critiques of objectivism in the positivist quantitative paradigm. Objectivism does not consider people’s unique differences (Locke and Becker 1998). As meanings are intersubjective, it is difficult to understand meaning through the predetermined indicators seen in surveys or the physical actions in experimental research (Diesing 1966).

In contrast, qualitative research seeks to interpret such meanings through the subjectivist nature of inquiry (Creswell 2014). For this reason, an interpretivist qualitative approach was favoured. A significant number of other Saudi research studies concerning inclusion and disability have similarly employed quantitative studies (See for example Al-Ajmi 2006; Al Jaffal 2019; Alnahdi 2020). Therefore, qualitative research was the preferred methodology. Nevertheless, the researcher’s subjectivity must be addressed. Being explicit in how I positioned myself within the research and how reflexive I was throughout qualitative inquiry is essential (Charmaz 2008,2014a; Alvesson et al. 2022).

### **3.1.4 Reflexivity and Positionality**

Charmaz (2014a) stresses the importance of elucidating reflexivity in research. Reflexivity is a continuous process which requires researchers to acknowledge and reflect on their personal beliefs, cultural background, profession and so forth (Hennink et al. 2020). According to Hennink et al. (2020), reflexivity aims to provide a clear positionality for researchers and establish their relationship to the study. Reflexivity and positionality include why the researcher choose to study a particular context (Hopkins 2015), as this influences how data was collected, interpreted, and reported (Rose 1997). Therefore, I will discuss my personal beliefs, cultural background, profession, and how I was reflexive with myself, the participants and the data during the research process.

I am a Saudi researcher from “*Najd*”, the heart of the Saudi desert, who is interested in disability and inclusion studies. This interest developed in high school, as one of my classmates was physically impaired, and we had to take turns carrying him to the arena (the area for sports) and back to the classroom on the second floor. I did not question why the school did not offer basic adjustments that would have improved accessibility, such as lifts or ramps, and I was not sure why he was only accommodated on the ground floor. I started to search about disability and undergraduate programmes after completing high school. Around 2006, King Saud University was the only institute in Riyadh that offered this programme. I conducted my undergraduate study in “Special Education/ Mental Retardation”. I worked as a teacher for one year before being offered a higher education degree as part of the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme. I gained my master’s degree in pedagogies for mild/moderate disabilities in the United States. I had the privilege to work with pupils categorised as having “learning disabilities” as a tutor during the course. A pivotal transition to my knowledge and practice in education was when I joined the Curriculum and Instruction Department at Al-Baha University as a lecturer, working closely with Local Education Authorities (LEAs) at Al-Baha.

During my work with teachers at Al-Baha University, Special Education Teachers, whom I worked closely with as part of field training for modules I taught, shared with me that some general education teachers tended to send pupils with learning disabilities to the special education unit when they found it challenging to work with these pupils, asking Special Educational Needs (SEN) specialist for a diagnosis and support. This referral raised questions about why pupils with Special Needs Statements were sent to the “resources room”, as they were segregated from other learners for much of their time at school. “*Resource rooms... seek to support student’s learning in the regular classroom*” (Al-Khateeb and Hadidi 2009, p. 56). I started searching for compelling justifications for why some students were repeatedly sent to the resources room and excluded from the mainstream classroom. I contacted fellow educators working at Al-Baha LEA about this concern, and they explained that some learners are transferred to the SEN unit when learners academically struggle in the mainstream classroom. I then reviewed the special educational needs literature relevant to Saudi Arabia and identified many studies conducted on teachers’ perceptions of inclusion. This led to further interest in the

implications of teachers' perceptions and attitudes on pupils' inclusiveness. Nonetheless, few qualitative studies were found exploring perceptions and inclusion policy enactments. This research gap required qualitative research to understand "*the complex interrelationships among all that exist*" (Stake 1995, p. 37). Consequently, I decided to undertake qualitative research to understand the variability in teachers' perceptions and practice towards disability and inclusion, attempting to provide a nuanced interpretation of why some pupils were sent to the resource room (Flick 2022).

As discussed above, reflexivity is a continuous process which begins before conducting the research, during data collection, analysis, and reporting of the findings. The risks of not acknowledging these stages can affect the integrity of the findings (McGhee et al. 2007). McGhee et al. (2007) urge researchers to be reflexive during data collection and, crucially, to address and separate what they learned before data collection and during fieldwork. For example, my initial perspective before conducting my research was that disability is the same as impairment (Barnes and Mercer 2010). I was not aware of the fact that there are different models in theorising disability, such as the medical/individual model, social model, capability model, and biopsychosocial model (Norwich 2013). Therefore, I first thought that teachers in the classroom only need to adapt pedagogic approaches to suit disabled learners' needs (Idol 2006). However, after further engaging with the academic literature on the inclusion of pupils categorised as SEN, my thinking developed to consider the need for pedagogies to be inclusive for all learners.

Reflexivity in data collection pays an integral part in the co-construction of data (Charmaz 2014b; Davis 2020). Addressing reflexivity in data collection means identifying the implicit assumptions behind how and why I chose participants, interacted with participants in day-to-day field work, and managed unforeseen situations such as Covid-19. There are two phases for data collection: before school closure and during the Covid-19 pandemic as schools were closed.

In relation to the first phase, schools were chosen based on the availability of special educational needs programmes posted on the MoE website (Riyadh Education Office 2019). Choosing participants was on two main grounds. Participants had to be

general education teachers who taught disabled learners in mainstream classrooms and special educational needs teachers who worked within the same schools. Most schools were welcoming, and access to gatekeepers before the pandemic was relatively straightforward. Regarding my interaction with participants, I introduced myself as a PhD student at Cardiff University, United Kingdom. Participants demonstrated familiarity with my nationality and viewed me as a colleague in the profession. While this made it easier to interact with teachers and understand teaching rituals, the influence of professional background made some teachers reluctant to exercise their opinions openly. For example, some teachers used vague terms such as “as you know, as you are aware of, I don’t need to explain this because you know what I mean”. This could be viewed as a constraint on the quality of social encounters and the collected data. In addition, I entered schools without *social pre-arrangements*, which could also be considered a constraint because, in Saudi culture, it is common for people to rely more on social connections than formalities. However, I tried to listen to them with empathy and affirmed their role as co-researchers instead of participants. This, in turn, enabled transparency and honesty in interactions.

In relation to the second phase of data collection, which took place during Covid-19 restrictions, two schools were also chosen based on the availability of schools offering inclusion programmes for pupils with SEN (Riyadh Education Office 2019). Maintaining access to schools during times of uncertainty was quite daunting. I had to gain further approval from the Riyadh Education Office (REO) for observing online lessons (*Appendix 1 for REO Approvals, schools' names are hidden*). However, conducting interviews remained straightforward, and schools did not request further approvals (as the initial approval for the pre-Covid epidemic phase sufficed for conducting interviews). I continued conducting interviews until my request for online observation was approved. I was then given access to the Madrasti portal but only had the chance to observe depending on each teacher’s invitation for the lesson. Despite these limitations, the affordance of this phase is that I could conduct interviews outside school working hours based on headteachers' recommendations, which made interviews less formal and more informative. However, interviews with headteachers during this pandemic still took place in the school.

Concerning reflexivity in the analysis, Hammersley (2002) asserts that consensus on researchers' interpretations of findings is difficult because each reader has their own epistemological lens for analysing and reporting the data. I followed a few steps, aiming for a reflexive analysis. I listened to the audio recordings when commuting from/and to school. Then, data was transcribed in Arabic by a professional stenographer. Data was read several times in Arabic and then translated to English (Further details on Transcribing can be found in 3.2.7). Initial codes were then initiated. I wrote down notes on how I felt towards these codes as self-reflection. Then, I shared coding with research supervisors to gain a more expert perspective on the relevance of codes with the data. The aim was to maintain some level of consensus (Hopman 2021). Another method I followed was checking several data sources regarding a specific code or category. For example, when I suspected some contradictions between codes and my interpretation of the data, I checked participants' statements in other data sources within the interview or in observations. If both sources complemented one another, codes were kept with a note on the annotation section in the Nvivo 11/12 application (*Appendix 2*). If there was a contradiction, a further check was made with other codes for the same participant and other participant data codes. The objective was to investigate if the analysis was as accurate as possible of meanings participants wanted to convey (Hennink et al. 2020).

### **3.1.5 Inductive Inquiry**

Strands for knowledge inquiry and reasoning are inductive, deductive, and abductive (Kennedy 2018). Deductive reasoning infers the notion of theory testing, which presumes universal laws; therefore, these laws can be replicated and confirmed in experimental research (Johnson and Gray 2010). Abductive inference renders *"discovering new concepts, ideas and explanations by finding surprising phenomenon, data, or events that cannot be explained by pre-existing knowledge"* (Kennedy 2018, p. 52). Similarly, inductive reasoning *"begins with study of a range of individual cases and extrapolates patterns from them to form a conceptual category"* (Charmaz 2014a, p. 343). This research ascribed to inductive reasoning because the purpose was to provide new meanings to teachers' sentiments towards inclusion and interpret how inclusion policies shape everyday mainstream classroom pedagogic practice (Kozleski et al. 2014).

### 3.1.6 Theoretical Model: Theory of Policy Enactments

Investigating how inclusion policy is enacted is relatively challenging, as the focus on policy-making shifts from public officials formulating school policies, to the exploration of a complex process whereby teachers and other stakeholders shape and enact policies (Taylor et al. 2013). Stephen Ball developed the enactment theory as a model for exploration of the complexities in policy-making and policy enactment, and his theory was adopted to help decode the power dynamics of policy and the complexity of policy understanding regarding disability and inclusion (Ball 1987; Ball 1990,1994; Ball et al. 2011). As this research adopted the social model as a starting point and aimed to explore the enactment of disability and SEN policy in practice in Saudi Arabian schools, Policy Enactment Theory was adopted as a theoretical approach. Before I discuss how I used the enactment theory as a toolbox for this research, I must briefly review the development of the enactment theory. The enactment theory was first explored in Ball's (1987) work *Theory of School Organisation*, then was further developed through his research in schools (Ball 2006). The enactment theory was further developed through a longitudinal case study conducted in four secondary schools in England (Ball et al. 2011). Enactment theory helps explain policy enactment dynamics (Singh et al. 2014).

The policy dynamics I wanted to understand was (a) the "*material contexts*" of schools, such as school buildings, funding for schools, resources offered across the classrooms in the SEN unit and the mainstream classroom (presented in chapter four); (b) different social actors of education policy (mainstream education teachers, special educational needs teachers, and HTs) understand, interpret and challenge policy context, with competing pressures and discourses regarding disability and inclusion policies in Saudi Arabia (chapters five and six); and (c) how these social actors interpret and interrogate their understanding of disability and inclusion policies into a school pedagogic practice across four schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia included in the sample. This theoretical approach helped to generate a nuanced view of the complex educational landscape (Ball 2006; Ball et al. 2011). Although the *enactment theory* was extensively endorsed in social and school educational policy research, some critiques of this theory will be briefly illustrated later in this section. Before discussing critiques of the enactment theory, I must address what educational policy and enactment of policy mean.

Educational policy is not easily defined or understood since a dichotomy exists between policy as a *text* and *discourse* (Ball 2006; Ball et al. 2011; Ball 2012). Policy enactment is, however, in the dynamics between the physical context (school), the interpretation of policy text by the school educators as the (subject & social actors) and the discourses between school educators, all of which bring textual policy into school policy and enactments (Ball et al. 2011). However, for Ball (2006), the dilemma in *school policy* is in the inter-relationship between the subject (textual policy) and the social actors. The formulation of policy texts is not always contingent on authors' ideologies but is further inferred from "*Ad hocery, negotiation and serendipity within the state*" (Ball 2006, p. 45). Equally, the *discourses* of policies are also rendered by teachers' and school headteachers' interpretations; they analytically interrogate, bring about, and translate what they feel is helpful for school practice (Ball et al. 2011). While subjectivity plays a significant role in shaping school policies and teachers' enactment of policies, it is also the plurality of policies and the challenge of the continuous state of change (Ball 2006; Maguire et al. 2015). In Ball et al.'s (2011) longitudinal study conducted in four English schools, the researchers found a lack of clarity in relation to a number of policies. For instance, there were policies on acceptable behaviour, but behaviours might be ignored in some lessons but deemed unacceptable in others (Ball et al. 2011). Conflated or contradicting policies not only raise the tension between state policy-makers and schools but also raise the tension between teachers regarding what counts as good practice, even within the same school (Ball 1994).

Blackmore (1989) critiqued Ball's (1987) "*Theory of School Organisation*" as she denoted Ball marginalised his "responsibilities" to the details in his construction of enactment theory. However, Ball clarified his experience in the field and supported how his experience shaped his theory development through rigorous research. Ball himself did not consider his theory rigid but rather as an analytical toolbox, helping researchers and educators examine the complexity of policies and their enactment in schools (Ball et al. 2011; Ball 2012). Furthermore, Ball argued that enactment theory should be viewed as a starting point, which calls upon researchers not to undermine the complexities in social policies (Ball 1987; Ball 1994; Ball 2006; Ball et al. 2011). Nonetheless, Blackmore (1989) acknowledges Ball's (1987) contribution as a theory that diverged from the orthodox proposition of teachers being viewed as troublesome

to viewing teachers as actors of a challenging policy landscape with conflated and debated policies. Heimans (2014) also critiqued the rigorousness of Ball's philosophical and methodological stance in viewing policy enactment as mere inter-relationality and power-dynamics. Instead, Heimans (2014) extends beyond the inter-relational sphere's complexity and power dynamics to unveil meanings in tangible, perceptible and physical dimensions of policy embodiment. Nevertheless, Ball et al. (2011) acknowledge the complexity of policy *implications* beyond abstract sphere, as they commented:

Different types of policy become interpreted and translated and reconstructed and remade in different but similar settings, where local *resources, material and human*, and diffuse sets of discourses and values are deployed in a complex and hybrid process of enactment.

(Ball et al. 2011, p. 6)

Apart from these critiques, enactment theory is a valuable *tool* in understanding teachers' enactments of inclusive education policies in schools (Hardy and Woodcock 2015; Lopes 2016). Because inclusion is underpinned by social and educational policies (Slee and Allan 2001; Tomlinson 2005; Ainscow et al. 2006; Norwich 2014b), reviewing at least one empirical study on inclusion policy enactments is imperative. Brennan et al. (2021) conducted qualitative research to understand primary education teachers' enactment of inclusive pedagogy in Ireland. The researchers revealed contested findings. Despite Irish exclusionary policies towards disabled learners, teachers who engaged in discursive discourses about the implications of the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action framework were observed to be more inclusive in classroom practice (Brennan et al. 2021). This finding underpins some commentators' (Ainscow et al. 2006; Ball et al. 2011) assertions that we should view enactment as a complex interpretation of a policy text rather than an issue of mere compliance.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

This section will address my access to schools, sampling, interviews, observation data, fieldnotes, limitations to data collection methods, and transcribing. Ethical considerations are addressed in each section.



### 3.2.1 Access to Schools

Researchers must address how they accessed their research site(s), issues faced in gaining access, and approaches to keep their access (Cipollone and Stich 2012). Six months before data collection, I applied to the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University for ethical approval. The form thoroughly discussed the research objectives, research questions, methods, participants and sampling, addressed ethical issues, and how I could tackle these ethical issues. (A copy of the ethical approval from Cardiff University can be found in *Appendix 3* and the data collection letter in *Appendix 4*). The request was approved by the School Research Ethics Committee (SREC), and then I forwarded the request to the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) in Riyadh Education Office. This was supplemented with the approval of research sponsorship by Al-Baha University. The DPD approved the request along with a confirmation letter for gatekeepers to allow the purpose of visit to schools in Riyadh city. Access to schools was completed in two stages. The first stage was before Covid-19 was announced as a pandemic in Saudi Arabia, and the second phase was during the Covid-19 pandemic. Concerning the first stage, I accessed two schools; one was in Northern Riyadh, and the second was in Western Riyadh (More on the rationale is found in Sample Section 3.2.2). The second stage included two schools in Eastern Riyadh and Southern Riyadh.

Access to schools before Covid-19 was relatively straightforward, except for one school in Western Riyadh, which refused to take part in the study unless a directed letter to the school's name was provided. Such formalities were well reported in the literature (Cipollone and Stich 2012; Janesick 2016). I tried to negotiate with the gatekeeper to accept the letter as it serves all schools in Riyadh and explained to him the potential and interest of the research. Still, this HT insisted on maintaining the need for a specific letter directing the school to accept the researcher's fieldwork. I did not opt-in for another approval as this would have taken longer. Instead, I searched for another school with a similar SEN programme to avoid unwarranted suspension from access, which might have interrupted data collection.

In contrast to granting access before Covid-19, access to schools during the pandemic was comparatively difficult (Striepe and Cunningham 2022). Striepe and Cunningham (2022) examined difficulties faced by ethnographers during Covid-19

and suggested that gatekeepers became more reluctant to grant access to school sites to researchers. The problems I faced were negotiating with headteachers during the pandemic phase to attend the school and the need to undertake a Covid-19 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test before visiting each school to ensure containment of the spreading of the Covid-19 virus. Gatekeepers also shared concerns about the observation methods because learning during the Covid-19 pandemic was through E-learning for all levels (Fieldnotes 27<sup>th</sup> Aug 2020). Indeed, access to E-learning was a limitation that I found in obtaining access, but after negotiations with the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) along with the Information Technology (IT) department at the Saudi MoE, I was given temporary access to online teaching.

There were other limitations to school access. Fundamentally, I was an outsider to the school (Atkinson 2011). However I tried to gain more sense of the school environment and acted as one of the teachers in terms of following the school code. I also made sure not to become too accustomed to the school's surroundings – sustaining my *appetite* for observation (Hammersley and Atkinson 2019). When I visited schools in the morning, “*I felt time went back when I was a teacher... sharing stories and laughter with fellow teachers*” (Fieldnote 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2020). These rituals are common in schools, where ethnographers have reported a tendency to self-present their professional identity to maintain social acceptance (Holland and Leander 2004). Another method I followed was a self-assessment of how I was observing schools and the extent to which my role played in this construction of knowledge (Janesick 2016). Being reflexive with teachers' timetables in determining the best time they deemed appropriate for conducting interviews and observations was another approach I followed, which helped lessen the pressure on participants. Although reflexivity regarding teachers' timetables helped to establish a friendly relationship with participants', it affected the pace of data collection and the promptness of analysing extensive transcripts (Kvale 1996; Roulston 2010).

Nevertheless, towards the end of data collection from school 2, which was pre Covid-19 pandemic phase, the school vice headteacher shared with me: “*Fahad, get it done! We don't know what's happening! We heard rumours they might shut down schools, but we don't know when*” (Personal Communication with School 2 Vice headteacher 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020). He then prompted teachers to complete the remaining

observations. I was thus able to complete the remaining data collection three days before schools were shutdown. Five months later, I resumed field work during Covid-19. Interviews during COVID-19 were conducted face to face, following the Saudi Ministry of Health guidelines in wearing face masks, social distancing guidelines, and taking PCR tests if there were symptoms of COVID-19. Interviews were booked at places outside the school, at the convenience of participants, and observations of classes with children were conducted online.

### **3.2.2 Sampling**

This research adopted purposeful sampling and inductive reasoning because *“qualitative inquiry depends on samples that are selected purposefully, a practice that can be applied not only to people (for interviews), but also when choosing documents, images, and so on”* (Mayan 2016, p. 61). While purposeful sampling may not render inductive reasoning as is found with theoretical sampling, different sampling strategies can be inductive (Guest et al. 2013). In this section, I will outline the sample I have chosen, the eligibility and rationale when selecting participants, and the recruitment, ethical considerations and limitations in sampling.

The targeted sample chosen for this research was general education teachers (GET), special educational needs teachers (SENT), and headteachers (HT) working under the Riyadh Office of Education. The following table will depict participants' pseudonyms and affiliated schools:

Table 2: Sample with participants listed according to the school setting

Schools	Khuzama School (1)	Khuraim School (2)	Al-Tawgi School (3)	Al-Tinhat School (4)
Pseudonyms	Headteacher <b>(Barrack)</b> GET <b>(Awadh)</b> GET <b>(Abelmalik)</b> SENT <b>(Riyadh)</b> SENT <b>(Omar)</b>	Headteacher <b>(Qassim)</b> GET <b>(Rawaf)</b> GET <b>(Abdelwahab)</b> SENT <b>(Meshari)</b> SENT <b>(Nawaf)</b>	Headteacher <b>(Saleh)</b> GET <b>(Mesha'I)</b> GET <b>(Wadah)</b> SENT <b>(Hamad)</b> SENT <b>(Salem)</b>	Headteacher <b>(Hani)</b> GET4 <b>(Azzam)</b> GET4 <b>(Ahmad)</b> SENT <b>(Battal)</b> SENT <b>(Khalid)</b> Headteacher <b>(Qasim)</b>
Data collection phase	<i>Pre-Pandemic</i>	<i>Pre-Pandemic</i>	<i>During Pandemic</i>	<i>During Pandemic</i>

As presented earlier, eligibility for participation was teachers and headteachers working in public schools for boys from third grade up to sixth grade in Riyadh. The participants were all male school educators. Schools were chosen because they were deemed inclusive by the Saudi MoE on the MoE website. The purpose of including four schools in Riyadh was to provide a detailed account of teachers' narratives and explore the variability of teachers' enactments of Saudi inclusion policy, which required different stakeholders working at the same school. Schools were in Western, Northern, Eastern, and Southern Riyadh city. Although this may render a representative sampling technique (Marshall 1996), the purpose was to include participants from different areas of Riyadh to improve the credibility of the findings (Guba 1981) and to include diverse views about disability and inclusion (James 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson 2019). Furthermore, I chose these four schools not only because they were deemed inclusive on the MoE website, but also because the chosen schools had more special educational needs programmes. For

example, on the MoE website, there were several schools for each district in Riyadh but most of these schools had only a learning difficulty programme or hearing impairment programme. The schools included in the sample had a visual impairment programme, an ADHD programme, a fairly new programme named Yaseer, and a learning difficulty programme. I selected these four schools because the focus was not on a specific impairment, but to explore the broader spectrum of inclusion, particularly with the availability of different types of special educational needs services provided in these schools. The below table illustrates the number of SEN programmes available in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia, and the number of registered learners in SEN for the years of 2020, 2021, and 2022:

Table 3: Saudi SEN Department Yearly Report

Year	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Number of Available SEN Programmes and SEN Institutes	150	160	162	135	163	114
Number of Registered Pupils	9952	8614	9924	8752	NA	8719

Source: Saudi Open Data (2023)

Considering the recruitment of headteachers and teachers, the purpose was to analyse how headteachers interpret disability and inclusion and their role in extending these interpretations on teachers' perceptions and enactments (Ball 1990). The rationale for including two teachers from general education and two teachers from special needs education from each context was to understand how those with different job roles viewed and enacted disability and inclusion within the same school context (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). The focus on male teachers was because schools in Saudi Arabia are gender segregated (Alanazi 2012; Alhammad 2017; Alshahrani 2018; Alkhunini 2021). Consequently, conducting research involving ethnographic methods within female schools was impossible. Female researchers also raised this limitation as they did not have access to boys' schools (Alanazi 2012 & Alshahani 2018).

When I arrived at each school, I explained to the HT the research purpose, the data collection methods used for the study, and the scope of participants needed for this research. I also gave an estimation of the duration of the research. HTs then approached teachers to confirm they wished to participate. Then each school HT

nominated two general education teachers and two special educational needs teachers. To ensure that there was no influence from HTs on teachers' participation, I presented a consent form along with gaining verbal consent during interviews. I explained in both that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study without the need to justify their reasons to me. I explained the potential of the research and acknowledged them as co-researchers (Davis 2020). Participants were then recruited for the study.

The recruitment of participants in the Arab world could be culturally different than in Western nations. I, as a Saudi researcher who studied and worked in Saudi and abroad, could argue that some of the assumptions underpinning Western notions of informed consent, the right to withdraw from the study, and ethical responsibility to participate are perhaps perceived differently in the Saudi culture, specifically in schools' landscape. In Saudi Arabia, there is a great emphasis on hospitality and social encounters as more than mere formalities. This cultural characteristic may influence the headteacher's decision to demand participation from teachers who cannot overrule the headteacher's request. As headteachers accepted my invitation to take part in the research, and were responsible for nominating teachers, it could be that teachers who had been nominated by the headteacher may not share the same perception of choice in partaking in the research, or might have felt hesitant to decline the headteacher's nomination for participation. While this is a constraint in the recruitment of participants, I thoroughly explained to teachers that they were not obligated to participate, but I equally explained the potential of the research and appreciated the value of their participation for the development of inclusion in Saudi Arabia.

Although pupils were not the focus sample in the research, pupils were asked for written and verbal consent using more simple Arabic language (Hammersley and Atkinson 2019) (*Appendix 5: Written Consent Form for headteachers, teachers, pupils and parents*) because direct observations took place in classrooms and schools' facilities. I distributed separate consent forms for pupils in Khuraim and Khuzama schools via the deputy HTs, except for the schools in phase two data collection, where verbal consent from pupils during E-learning lessons was sufficient. Prior to all observations whether phase one or two, I explained to pupils, using simple Arabic language, the purpose of the research and how their privacy was

viewed as my priority, although some initially found this hard to grasp: “*teacher teacher, will you be the new Arabic language teacher instead of Mr. Awadh*” (Students at fourth grade asked, Fieldnotes 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020)?

As to consent forms, all participants were informed in writing using consent forms explaining the research aims and methods used for data collection, researcher approaches to tackle any harms, how data was stored and accessed, researcher details such as name, contact, and researcher’s supervisors contact details if participants wish to complain or inquire about the research taking place (Manning 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson 2019, pp. 402-413).

### **3.2.3 Interviews**

Interviews can help researchers understand different perceptions and views of a context (Fielding and Thomas 2016; Silverman 2019). The context of this study was four schools in Riyadh deemed as inclusive by the Saudi MoE – given that the schools have SEN programmes (Riyadh Education Office 2019). The purpose was to “*reproduce the informant’s point of view*” (Whitaker and Atkinson 2019, p. 621) about disability, inclusion, and pedagogy. Three types of interviews were used in this research: semi-structured main interview (*Appendix 6*), structured pre-observation-interviews and unstructured post-observation-interviews (*Appendix 7*). Piloting was done on the main interview schedule to test the formality and coherence of interview questions and to examine whether the interview questions helped answer the research questions (further on piloting is under 3.2.3.1).

Concerning the main interview method, nineteen semi-structured interviews were conducted. Main interviews were carried out one at a time for each participant. Interview questions were divided into three themes: perceptions of disability, inclusion, and the curriculum and pedagogy for disabled learners. The semi-structured interview was conducted because understanding teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards the above themes would unveil and re-construct their meanings in the social context (schools) (Heyl 2001). The main interviews lasted from thirty-five minutes to a maximum of ninety minutes per interview. It is worth noting that the time range of interviews increased from the first interview to the subsequent one. This increase was because initial interviews were analysed, and initial codes urged me to probe participants for further explanations on themes or

ideas which were not explored sufficiently (Charmaz 2014a). During interviews, I was actively listening to participants' remarks and comments. I also paused for a few seconds after their answers because I did not want to interrupt if they wanted to share or reflect more on their responses (Brinkmann and Kvale 2018). All main interviews were voice-recorded using electronic devices (Hennink et al. 2020; Creswell and Creswell 2022).

Although the main interviews were designed as individual encounters (Hammersley and Atkinson 2019), two participants preferred to conduct the main interview together. I completed a joint, or per se, *dyadic* interview, which was not anticipated in the data collection plan. The joint interview helped to cross-examine how two visually impaired teachers with a similar working environment had different views towards the core value of inclusion for visually impaired learners (Roulston 2022) (See 6.1.3 for more on how SENTs Riyadh and Omar had different opinions towards disability and inclusion). However, the joint interview method could be problematic, mainly if participants influence other participants' views (Roulston 2022) or if the interview is about understanding common themes between the two participants (Polak and Green 2016). I did not seek a common understanding between these two participants. Instead, I generated codes for each participant, and themes did not focus on the joint interview because I searched for holistic and broad themes from the overall data. In relation to participants' influence on one another, as in the joint interview, I directed each question to each participant. When SENT Omar, for example, replied to one of my interview questions, "*I agree with [SENT] Riyadh*" (SENT Omar Joint Interview), I probed Omar further or used alternative questions to ensure that SENT Omar had more chance to express his view. About the analysis of the joint interview, I coded each respondent's answers and cross-compared between these two participants using Nvivo 11/and12, then analysed their answers together, searching for similarities and discrepancies along with the overall analysis (Roulston 2022).

Another interview method I used was the pre-observation interview. The objective was to learn how teachers prepare for inclusive pedagogic practice in mainstream classrooms and a special educational needs unit (Black et al. 2019). Structured questions concentrated on how teachers planned lesson objectives, instructional approaches fostering disabled learners' participation and inclusivity, and teachers'



methods of assessments to all pupils' engagement in the lesson. For these, I relied on field notes instead of voice recordings. However, this method helped to conceptualise alignments and tensions between teachers' self-reports of lesson planning and teachers' enactments, which also helped to identify patterns regarding the deficiency of teachers' practical training on pedagogy. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, four general education teachers and four special educational needs teachers were interviewed before each lesson was observed. Since four non-participatory observations were conducted for each teacher before Covid-19, there were four pre-observation interviews, respectively. During the Covid-19 pandemic, no pre-observation interviews were conducted. This was restricted because there was a constraint on virtually meeting teachers while they had other online lessons.

Another interview method I used for data collection was the post-observation interview, which was unstructured. I used this method to explore participants' views of their enactment in relation to how they felt towards the approaches they used for learning and established grounds for teachers to self-reflect on their pedagogy (Taylor et al. 2016). Since the unstructured observations I conducted denote a significant level of observer subjectivity in interpreting meanings (Finkelstein et al. 2021), post-observation interviews helped increase the credibility of my interpretations of participants' enactments. For example, participants were invited to understand how I, as an external observer, understood their enactments, facilitated a channel where they had the chance to reflect on the lesson, and, most notably, brought the discussion with teachers on how best to enact inclusive practice and underline the barriers hindering inclusive practice (Florian and Beaton 2018). Post-observation interviews were conducted for general and special educational needs teachers four times after each observation. No voice recording for this tool was utilised, but instead, I used field notes and shared them with participants. This interview method was not employed during the E-learning lessons phase.

### **3.2.3.1 Piloting Interviews**

According to Kvale (2007), researchers should plan interviews ahead of time by piloting the interview. Interview piloting prompts researchers to identify the relevance of questions asked to research questions. It aims to locate drawbacks in questions about the language used and meanings and allow researchers to re-articulate questions with the help of similar participants (Kvale 2007). The piloting interviews

method was conducted six months before the first formal interview with teachers I had previously worked with. I performed piloting interviews on the phone because I was in the UK while the interviewees were in Saudi Arabia. Following interviewees' suggestions and reflections on piloting interviews, questions were revised, added, or deleted if irrelevant to the research aims. I also sought the counsel of a professor at Al-Baha University who is also an expert in qualitative research. I gained more sense of the interviews, which also guided my position as an interviewer; when to probe, when to ask, when to reflect on an answer, and most importantly, I listened to the details participants thought important in their stories (Turner 2010).

### **3.2.4 Observation Data**

The observation method was another tool I used to collect the data. The observation method enabled me to record and portray the school context as I saw it, aiming for insight into how schools and classrooms operate enacting Saudi inclusion policies (Ball 1990; Hammersley 2018; Creswell and Creswell 2022) For example, detailed notes of teachers' pedagogic enactments, objects in the classroom, the capture of verbal and non-verbal communication during observations, and visualising the scene for readers were all elements of the observation methods (Bratich 2018). Such advantages cannot be found in interviews. This section illuminates the approaches used in observation data, the rationale for using observation data, and an explanation of how I used the observation tool.

The participant observation method entailed direct interactions in the context for an extended period to study the unfolding events as a member of the context's community (Atkinson 2011). I used non-participatory observation in this research, which does not entail researchers being fully participatory with the participants' community (Billups 2021). This is because participant observations, as in ethnographic studies, consume more time and need further approvals from gatekeepers to visit the school for an extended time (Erickson 2018). Although adopting a participant observation approach would provide a clearer image of teachers' inclusion enactments, being a member of the teachers' community as "an insider informant" often leads ethnographers to normalise surroundings, interactions, and events which may lead ethnographers to be less *perceptive* of the nuances of everyday interactions (Guest et al. 2013). In contrast to participant-observation,

direct observation is a useful tool when used to unveil explanation and interpretations for specific research questions and aims (Billups 2021). Direct observations were used to understand how school educators interpret pedagogic actions for teachers' practices in the classroom. While direct observation has been critiqued for issues around objectivity, all observation methods, including direct observations, are epistemologically subjectivist (Lincoln et al. 2018). This is because observers rely on the language used in observations, teachers' and pupils' stories, and observer subjectivity in defining what was observed (Erickson 2018; Hammersley 2021).

There were two main objectives for using observational methods in this research. The purpose was to understand educational issues from daily teaching practices (Creswell and Creswell 2022) and to explore further the recommendations of a Saudi researcher who identified a research gap in Saudi Arabia:

Observation of teachers and pre-service teachers to assess how knowledge gained through coursework is being translated into practice through fieldwork supervision in classroom situations will also demonstrate their competency in the settings where they will eventually use it.

(Alquraini and Rao 2018, p. 120)

The below table illustrates the observations conducted for each school:

Table 4: Observations

School	Teacher	Subject Taught	Time Slot	Interval	Attendees	Level	Duration	Setting
Khuzama	Awadh	Literacy, introduction	4 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	27 learners (1 with SEN)	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	45 mins	Mainstream classroom
Khuzama	Awadh	Literacy, Traveling prayers	3 <sup>rd</sup> Lesson	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	27 learners (2 with SEN)	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	45 mins	Mainstream classroom
Khuzama	Awadh	Literacy, Document Crafting	3 <sup>rd</sup> Lesson	3 <sup>rd</sup> Observation	44 learners (4 with SEN)	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	40 mins	Mainstream classroom
Khuzama	Awadh	Literacy, Story Telling	1 <sup>st</sup> Lesson	4 <sup>th</sup> Observation	27 learners (2 with SEN)	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	45 mins	Mainstream classroom
Khuzama	Abdelmalik	Literacy, Review	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lesson	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	23 learners (2 with SEN)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	40 mins	Language Lab

Khuzama	Abdelmalik	Literacy, Arabic Grammar	5 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	27 learners (2 with SEN)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	40 mins	Language Lab
Khuzama	Abdelmalik	Literacy, Activities on Arabic Grammar	3 <sup>rd</sup> Lesson	3 <sup>rd</sup> Observation	27 learners (1 with SEN)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	40 mins	Language Lab
Khuzama	Abdelmalik	Literacy, Arabic Grammar	5 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	4 <sup>th</sup> Observation	32 learners (2 with SEN)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	45 mins	Language Lab
Khuzama	SENT Omar	Literacy, Braille Letters	3 <sup>rd</sup> Lesson	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	1 visually impaired learner	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	25 mins	SEN Unit
Khuzama	SENT Omar	Literacy, Writing on Perkins	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lesson	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	1 visually impaired learner	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35 mins	SEN Unit
Khuzama	SENT Omar	Literacy, Letters in Braille	4 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	3 <sup>rd</sup> Observation	1 visually impaired learner	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	30 mins	SEN Unit
Khuzama	SENT Omar	Literacy, Grammar	5 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	4 <sup>th</sup> Observation	1 visually impaired learner	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	30 mins	SEN Unit
Khuzama	SENT Riyadh	Literacy, Introduction	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lesson	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	1 visually impaired learner	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35 mins	SEN Unit
Khuzama	SENT Riyadh	Literacy, Reading (Braille)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Lesson	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	2 visually impaired learners	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	30 mins	SEN Unit
Khuzama	SENT Riyadh	Literacy, Grammar1	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lesson	3 <sup>rd</sup> Observation	1 visually impaired learner	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	15 mins	SEN Unit
Khuzama	SENT Riyadh	Literacy, Grammar2	3 <sup>rd</sup> Lesson	4 <sup>th</sup> Observation	1 visually impaired learner	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35 mins	SEN Unit
Khuraim	Abdelwahab	Math, Subtracting Fractions	4 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	35 learners (3 learners with SEN)	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	45 mins	Mainstream classroom
Khuraim	Abdelwahab	Math, Pedigree Problems	6 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	35 learners (1 learner with SEN present and two absentees)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	40 mins	Mainstream classroom
Khuraim	Abdelwahab	Math, Fractions and Percentages	5 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	3 <sup>rd</sup> Observation	38 learners (3 learners with SEN)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	45 mins	Mainstream classroom
Khuraim	Abdelwahab	Math, Measurement using Metric System	6 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	4 <sup>th</sup> Observation	31 learners (1 learner with SEN)	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	45 mins	Mainstream classroom
Khuraim	Rawaf	Physical Education, Football Match	3 <sup>rd</sup> Lesson	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	44 learners (3 learners with SEN)	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	40 mins	Indoor arena
Khuraim	Rawaf	Physical Education,	6 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	41 learners (2 learners with SEN)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	40 mins	Indoor arena

		Football Match						
Khuraim	Rawaf	Physical Education, Football Match	5 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	3 <sup>rd</sup> Observation	41 learners (2 learners with SEN)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	40 mins	Outdoor arena
Khuraim	Rawaf	Physical Education, Football Match	3 <sup>rd</sup> Lesson	4 <sup>th</sup> Observation	38 learners (1 learner with SEN)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	40 mins	Indoor arena
Khuraim	SENT Meshari	Literacy, Tanween (Grammar)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lesson	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	1 learner with SEN (LD)	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	40 mins	Resources Room
Khuraim	SENT Meshari	Math, Addition	5 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	1 learner with SEN (LD)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	30 mins	Resources Room
Khuraim	SENT Meshari	Math, Numbering	3 <sup>rd</sup> Lesson	3 <sup>rd</sup> Observation	1 learner with SEN (LD)	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35 mins	Resources Room
Khuraim	SENT Meshari	Literacy, (Vowels)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Lesson	4 <sup>th</sup> Observation	1 learner with SEN (LD)	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35 mins	Resources Room
Khuraim	SENT Nawaf	Literacy, Reading	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lesson	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	2 learners with SEN (Yaseer Programme)	5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> Grades	20 mins	Resources Room
Khuraim	SENT Nawaf	Math, Numbering Single Digit	5 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	1 learner with SEN (Yaseer Programme)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	15 mins	Resources Room
Khuraim	SENT Nawaf	Math, Single and Double Digits	4 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	3 <sup>rd</sup> Observation	1 learner with SEN (Yaseer Programme)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	30 mins	Resources Room
Khuraim	SENT Nawaf	Math, Organising Single Digit Numbers	3 <sup>rd</sup> Lesson	4 <sup>th</sup> Observation	1 learner with SEN (Yaseer Programme)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35 mins	Resources Room
Al-Tawgi	Mesha'l	Math, Functions	3.35 PM	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	35 learners, 7 absentees, and an unknown number of learners with (SEN)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35 mins	Online (Teams)
Al-Tawgi	Mesha'l	Math, Functions	4.10 PM	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	38 learners, 2 absentees, and an unknown number of learners with (SEN)	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35 mins	Online (Teams)
Al-Tawgi	Waddah	Science, Biology (Cells)	5.20 PM	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	24 learners present, 12 absentees, and an unknown number of learners with (SEN)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35 mins	Online (Teams)
Al-Tawgi	Waddah	Science, Biology (Creatures)	6.00 PM	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	28 learners present, 6 absentees, and an unknown number of learners with (SEN)	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35 mins	Online (Teams)

Al-Tinhat	Ahmad	Literacy, Reading	5.40 PM	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	19 learners present, 16 absentees, an unknown number of learners with (SEN)	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35 mins	In-person and Broadcasting Online (Teams)
Al-Tinhat	Ahmad	Literacy,	4.10 PM	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	21 learners present, 8 absentees, and an unknown number of learners with (SEN)	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35	Online (Teams)
Al-Tinhat	Azzam	Math, Functions	3.35 PM	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	29 learners present, 5 absentees, and an unknown number of learners with (SEN)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35	Online (Teams)
Al-Tinhat	Azzam	Math	5.00 PM	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	22 learners present, 16 absentees, and an unknown number of learners with (SEN)	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	35	Online (Teams)

Khuzama School

Khuraim School

Al-Tinhat School

Al-Tawgi School

As you can see in the above table, I conducted four observations of lessons in pre Covid-19 pandemic for each teacher. Observations of general education teachers lasted from forty to forty-five minutes, whereas observations of lessons in special needs education units lasted between fifteen minutes to thirty minutes. Observations of E-learning lessons during the pandemic were conducted two times for each general education teacher, seeking a virtual experience of the social world of schools (Przybylski 2021). I could not observe special educational needs teachers because disabled pupils were not given access to E-learning at the time of data collection (more on this disparity is discussed in the findings and discussion chapters). Observations of the GETs during E-learning lessons, however, lasted thirty minutes. Observations, whether online or in conventional schooling, allowed me to search for new meanings about inclusive practice. Comparatively, observations of online learning lessons were quite challenging. The glimpse of social learning and the

teachers' and learners' interactions with one another (Howe et al. 2019), watching the lesson from a distance, offered little trajectory for a detailed portrayal of the social world being observed (Przybylski 2021). This limitation also dwindled the analytical tools I used during conventional schooling, which made it perhaps impossible to ask teachers to reflect on lessons – given the constraint on teachers' timetables.

Despite where the observation took place, fieldnotes followed a format sheet which included the participant's name, subject taught, lesson date and time, available resources, number of students, and a box within the sheet for a written account of the observation along with a space for my reflection on the left-hand bar of the paper (*Appendix 8*) (Janesick 2016). I took notes of each object, gesture, language, action, and reaction relevant to the research aims and questions (Janesick 2016). I edited these notes after completing the observation when my memory was fresh (Angrosino 2007). When post-observation-interview data conflicted with my interpretation, I made notes to double-check within the same observation notes. When my interpretations of the observation contradicted the teacher's post-observation interview data, I reflected on the same observation sheet to find an answer to the opposing interpretations. I then searched meanings to this contradiction in the upcoming observation for the same teacher, or sought explanation from another teacher.

### **3.2.5 Fieldnotes**

Field notes serve as the researcher's eye in the research context, gazing at all observed details and recording a hand-written document of study (McInch 2020). This method works as a backup data source when access to electronics such as video recording is prohibited (Hammersley and Atkinson 2019). Since I did not file for ethical approval to carry out video recording of observations inside the classroom to avoid ethical issues, and because video recording requires a series of approvals from the Saudi MoE, I relied on a hefty account of writing as an alternative source of data.

Non-classroom-based observations such as in morning assembly, breakfast break for students, teachers' gatherings in the common room, and headteachers' interactions with pupils and school visitors were all considered part of the

observation and field notes. I aimed to gather every detail I could to portray school contexts in Riyadh-Saudi Arabia (Angrosino 2007). According to Guest et al. (2013), fieldnote data should be written daily to avoid losing track of editing or forgetting the most minor observed details. In line with these recommendations, I carried out my notebook during interviews, direct observations, and when walking outside in the arena. Carrying my notebook allowed me to write down and reflect on what was observed or heard. When I gathered with teachers during breaks, I postponed writing notes as this was inappropriate to conduct. However, I wrote notes when I arrived home, reflecting the overall sense of the school I observed, which helped me to map out the context I presented in chapter four.

### **3.2.6 Limitations to Data Collection Methods**

Researchers should address limitations to data collection methods found in their research (Mertens 2020). There were some limitations to interviews, observations, and field notes data. Although Charmaz (2017) urged researchers to use informal language when interviewing, interviews with headteachers followed formal language, as interviews with elites such as headteachers would not be successful if colloquial language was used, as the researcher might be viewed as unprofessional.

Subsequently, headteachers would “*revise his or her attribution of competence*” (Bogner and Menz 2009, p. 61). To avoid displaying a sense of unprofessionalism to headteachers, I relied on formal language, although there were some instances of humour to *pave the way* for a more friendly interview. Another limitation related to interviews was the compatibility of Arabic and English language. For example, general education teacher Meshal rhetorically asked a question about the term ‘accessibility’ of the national curriculum: “*Who formulated this question?* (GET Meshal Main Interview 25<sup>th</sup> Aug 2020). Issues with language transferability for complex and specialised terms such as curriculum accessibility was problematic. Alkeraida (2020), another Saudi researcher, found a similar limitation related to the term ‘inclusion’, which he inferred as a constraint to the compatibility of translation between English and Arabic. Accordingly, when I felt there was confusion about a specific question, I reframed it from the most relevant meaning from the source text (English) to the target text and context (Arabic) language and culture (Baker 2018). For instance, I changed the term curriculum accessibility to: “*How learners with disability participate in all school activities, including learning in the classroom*” (GET



Mesha'l Main Interview 25<sup>th</sup> Aug 2020). Similarly, there was a limitation to the interview methods when transcribing from Arabic to English (See section 3.2.7 for more on Transcribing).

In relation to observations conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic, there were limitations concerning my presence in the classroom, the pupils' familiarity with me, and the teachers' timetables. Because I was not part of the school community, my attendance could have impacted the neutrality of the observed setting (Martinez et al. 2016). While some pupils were familiar with the evaluation protocols, for example, in LEA supervisors' visits, some pupils were less familiar with the format of my repeated visits to the school, despite the consent forms and explanation to pupils being given before conducting observations. This could be related to the lack of research studies using ethnographic methods in Saudi Arabia. For instance, three schools out of four asked me to hand in the survey needed for the study. This suggested that ethnographic methods, such as observation, are less standard in Saudi educational research than quantitative methods (Alhammad 2017). With timetables, some teachers offered me a tight window to conduct observations, conflicting with other observations booked for other teachers. This resulted in delays in conducting observations, leading to prolonged school visits, compared with schools' expectations to complete the study in just one week.

Access to E-learning lessons during Covid-19 was often disturbed due to lost internet connections (Pokhrel and Chhetri 2021). This limitation affected the observation pace for each lesson. Even when observation of E-learning lessons was possible, the proximity to teachers and pupils was obviously missing (Marotzki et al. 2014; Przybylski 2021). This limitation warranted an incomplete picture of the social world of teacher and pupil interactions. Furthermore, disabled pupils' access to the E-learning portal was not granted throughout the lockdown during the pandemic (Madhesh 2021). Consequently, I was unable to explore the depth of dialogic pedagogy (Mercer and Howe 2012) in online lessons. There was also a limitation in the quality of transcribing from a distance while performing on a computer and the ability to check field notes with teachers.

### 3.2.7 Transcribing and Translation

Methods of data transcription play a central role in ensuring the rigorousness of the data gathered and the authenticity of the analysis (Jenks 2018). As illustrated earlier in the interview sections, the main interviews were not problematic to transcribe because they were audio recorded (Creswell and Creswell 2022). However, I hired a professional stenographer to help accelerate the transcribing process for only two interviews. To ensure accuracy, I edited and double-checked the interview scripts when completed. I then relied on myself to transcribe all remaining interviews because transcribing was a means of initial coding and analysis (Creswell and Creswell 2022). Pre- and post-observation interviews were not voice recorded; therefore, I relied on hand transcribing or computer typing. Reliance on transcribing during these types of interviews restricted the information gathered because creating a text of audio data is unlikely to be identical and can be viewed as subjective; if two people transcribed the same audio or visual data, the result would likely be different (Jenks 2018). In response to these challenges, I wrote down these types of interviews into a text as quickly as I could and edited it immediately after the interview. Then, I checked with the participants if the script accurately represented the interview. Although some participants viewed it as a redundant process, it helped to secure the rigorousness of the data gathered and allowed participants to self-reflect on the interview.

Transcribing observational data was also a challenging task. This is because it was difficult to absorb all visual and auditory details simultaneously (Atkinson 1992). Consequently, I edited observation scripts as soon as I left the classroom or arrived home so my memory was fresh. I did not, however, share observation scripts with participants because I did not want field notes to affect teachers' enactments in later observations. Instead, I asked teachers to reflect on my observations in post-observation-interview. While not sharing the observation notes with participants could be a limitation to this data collection method, teachers' reflections on post-observation interviews signposted whether participants were happy with my interpretations of enactments.

Since the data transcripts were in Arabic, I had to translate all data sources into English. Researchers should follow careful approaches when translating or

interpreting data from one language to another (Resch and Enzenhofer 2018). There are two fundamental approaches to translation: literal translation and equivalence translation (Baker 2018). Mona Baker (2018) is a well-known theorist in translation studies, and because she comes from an Arab background, it seemed appropriate to follow her approach to translation. Translation of data transcripts followed a pragmatic equivalence focusing on meaning and stylistic coherence. “*Coherence of a text is a result of the interaction between knowledge presented in the text and the reader’s own knowledge and experience of the world*” (Baker 2018, p. 237). In other words, cultural and linguistic differences between Arabic and English demanded my ability to be conscious of both cultures and languages to convey meaning as valid knowledge based on my interpretations (Resch and Enzenhofer 2018). I was born and raised in Saudi Arabia, and Arabic is my native language, but living in the UK enabled me to learn more about the English language and UK culture. Awareness of both languages and cultures fostered coherence in translation. However, the translation equivalence was double-checked with my wife as she holds a postgraduate degree in translation studies. Apart from the technicality involved in translation, learning from data during translation extended my learning of further meanings and assessment of whether data were irrelevant to the research (Bogner and Menz 2009). For example, cross-checking different cultural and linguistic patterns on disability and inclusion in Saudi Arabia and the UK supported Barnes’ (2019) claims that language and culture re-construct disablement. For example, linguistic disablement can be seen in the following comment, which categorised learners with “SEN statement” as intruders to the mainstream school “*GE students would be damaged too! Firstly, a third of the building, including rooms and halls, is gone. It has all gone! Due to this ‘occupying’*” (GET Meshal Main Interview Aug 2020). In relation to cultural disablements, disability was viewed as a known category as SENT Nawaf described it “*I mean, the disabled are very well-known! Their category is known*” (Main Interview, 19 Feb 2020). More on the language used in constructing disablement is found in Sections 5.2.3 & 6.1.

Before I move to the next section, I must appreciate the work of the third-party editor who conducted a proofreading service of my thesis. Proofreading did not exceed what was outlined by Cardiff University guidelines regarding using a third-party editor. In other words, I focused on typographical errors and issues with using proper

English grammar. The editor did not make alterations to the original meanings of the documents submitted, as I asked the editor to make track changes so I could make sure the original meaning I wanted to convey was preserved. I accepted changes when necessary and refused changes when an alteration to meaning could have occurred.

### **3.2.8 Confidentiality**

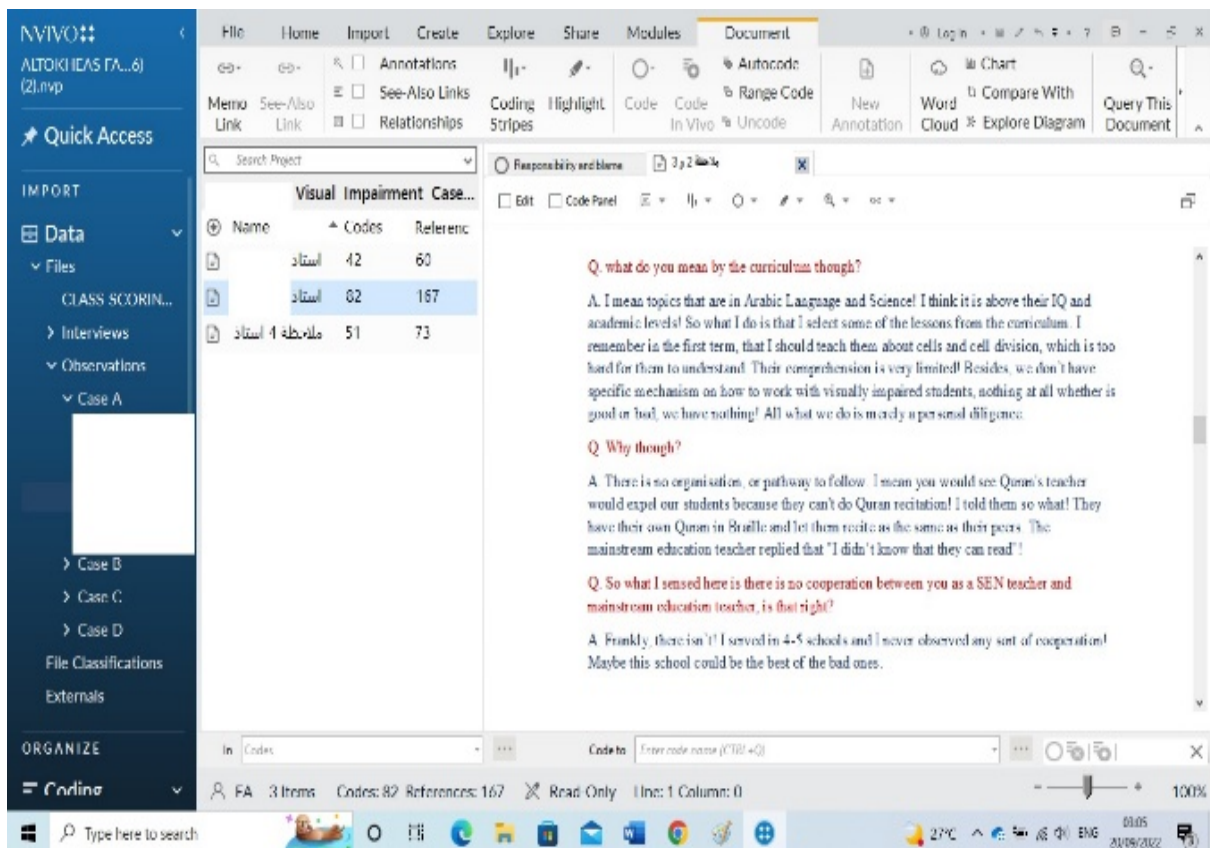
Kaiser (2009) points out that participants' confidentiality in qualitative research can be endangered because of the amount of data disclosed as a unique means for exploring the social world in qualitative research. This seems a reasonable argument considering that the data collected included participants' voices which could lead to their personal information being revealed. Therefore, the researcher only recorded interviewees' pseudonyms, and personal information was censored from voice recordings. Some details were changed to obscure identification. In addition, I kept raw and unedited data encrypted in a secure drive in Cardiff University's One-drive.

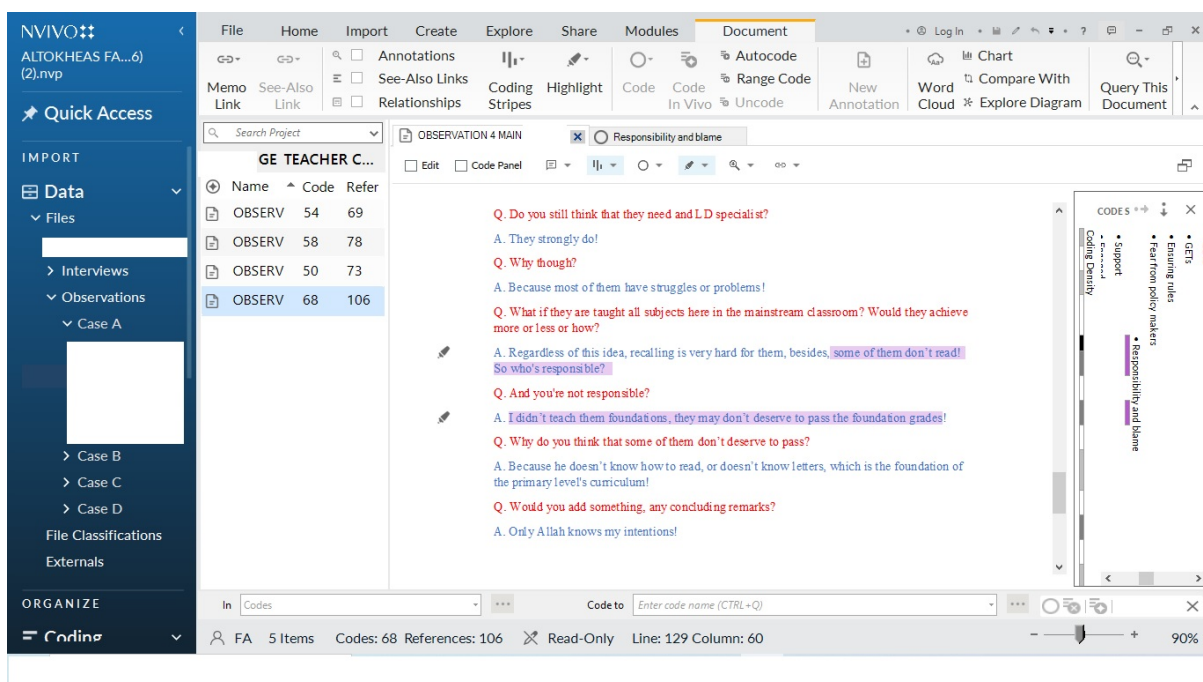
### **3.3 Data Analysis**

A thematic analysis approach was adopted in this research. I followed (Charmaz 2014a) suggestion for inductive coding but did not elaborate to create a theory. This section will depict how coding was conducted, the implications of inductive reasoning and inquiry, emergent themes from the data, and the limitations of the analysis.

As Charmaz (2006, p. 178) elaborates, "*We can use the tools of grounded theory methods without subscribing to a prescribed theory of knowledge or view of reality*". The epistemological flexibility in adopting inductive reasoning seemed an appropriate approach for the analysis. Data was coded [initial coding] as soon as I gathered first-hand data (Thornberg and Charmaz 2014, pp. 69; Corbin and Strauss 2015). For instance, when the initial interview and observation data were transcribed into Arabic, I read textual scripts several times in Arabic line by line, and then I wrote notes on each paragraph or word (Charmaz 2014a; Corbin and Strauss 2015). It is noteworthy to emphasise that the initial analysis was done manually. At a later stage, I relied on software tools such as Nvivo 11 and 12 as data became more challenging to visualise (Friese 2022, pp. 307-311).

I translated Arabic data scripts into English so Nvivo could recognise the input language because Nvivo 11 software does not seem to support Arabic coding (Alhammad 2017) fully. I then read interview scripts and observation notes several times in English. Subsequently, I allocated words, sentences and paragraphs to the most relevant code representing the phenomena' meaning (Charmaz 2006; Thornberg and Keane 2022). I was cautious not to allocate text into irrelevant codes, so I generated new codes for emergent data (Glaser 1992). When a specific code frequently occurred within the manual coding, I probed the next interviewees to explain it further or traced it to make “*sense of inductive observations*” (Charmaz 2014b, p. 1079). I then completed a constant comparison between participants' data, a comparison between codes, and a comparison between observation notes and interview scripts (Glaser and Strauss 2017). The following pictures of Nvivo illuminate the inductive reasoning for new interpretations, and further examples of the coding and themes are found in (Appendix 9):





As is evident in the above screenshots of Nvivo, I discussed with a special educational needs teacher about integrating a disabled pupil into the mainstream classroom for all taught subjects, which led to another inquiry, then applied to a general education classroom teacher interview. The constant comparison between data sets engendered new meanings of *responsibility and blame* in inclusion (Slee 2011; McLaughlin 2019). Another implication found in inductive reasoning was the replication logic. In other words, interview questions were added to replicate: (a) if the generated hypothesis from schools 1&2 suggests dependability in schools 3&4 (Denzin 2014), and (b) to learn if lockdown and curfew during Covid-19 created other meanings for disability and inclusion.

There are three main emergent themes found in this research. The themes were *Professionalism*, *Inclusion*, and *Pedagogy*. The below table illustrates the list of emergent themes found in the data:

Table 5: Themes

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-Theme</b>
<b>Professionalism</b>	<b><i>Pedagogy</i></b> - Curriculum & Instructional approaches Understanding. - Curriculum accessibility. - Active Learning Pedagogy
	<b><i>Policy Makers</i></b> - Legislation - Decision involvement. - Accountability and Evaluation
	<b><i>Professional Learning</i></b> - Perceptions & Attitudes. -Level of Training. - Leadership
<b>Inclusion</b>	- Integration & Inclusive Enactment - Medical Model
<b>Characteristics</b>	-School infrastructure -Resources -Collaboration -Conduct

Before I address the limitations of thematic analysis, it is imperative to state that the findings in chapters five, six, and seven did not follow the order of the above themes, although themes have shaped the overall structure. Instead, I followed Ball's

enactment theory which I presented in chapter four as the (physical) context of school. Chapters five and six concentrated on school educators' (discourses) around curriculum, disability, inclusion, and pedagogy, whereas chapter seven presented and discussed findings regarding the actual enactments (actions) of inclusion and other education policies (Ball et al. 2011).

There were some risks and limitations to thematic analysis. Transferring data and coding from manuscripts to electronic versions posed risks of duplication (Friese 2022). To tackle this issue, I exported raw and uncoded data in English to a Microsoft Word Document format and then transferred it to Nvivo 11. I asked my wife to read codes line by line in these manuscripts corresponding to text in Nvivo 11. Another limitation was the compatibility of using the Arabic language in Nvivo. Therefore, I only relied on English translations of text for the analysis.

Furthermore, there was a limitation regarding the authenticity and credibility of the coding (Glaser 1992). While there are many approaches to confirm the researcher's authenticity in relation to emergent themes (Charmaz and Thornberg 2021), I relied on debriefing with my research supervisor and two academic faculties at Al-Baha University, experts in qualitative research. Debriefing the analysis was done to check whether the coding was authentic to the data (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Glaser and Strauss 2017). Credibility relates to the researcher's knowledge about field work and confidence in the plausibility of analysis (Glaser and Strauss 2017). To reiterate, I have worked in the education sector, so observing variable practice is very common.

### **3.4 Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba developed guidelines of four domains for researchers conducting qualitative research to self-reflect on the *findings' Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability* (Lincoln and Guba 1985). According to Guba (1981), researchers conducting qualitative inquiry should address these domains to ensure trustworthiness but also emphasise that researchers do not necessarily have to address dependability in a separate section but can be included under the techniques used to improve credibility. In this vein, I will discuss credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the credibility domain assesses whether the findings are likely to be credible given the variability of data collected, the



assessment of data with the constructors of data (informants), and peer-debriefing (supervisors and experts). Although there are two more approaches Lincoln and Guba (1985) have suggested, I followed three approaches to improve the credibility of the findings. Firstly, I included three types of data collection: prolonged semi-structured interviews, observation methods, and observation interviews. Secondly, the observation interviews conducted before and after the observation helped assess whether my interpretations of observed enactments aligned with other data constructors (teachers). Conducting four observations for each teacher also helped to prolong the data gathered, promoting the credibility of the findings (Lincoln and Guba 1985, pp. 301). Debriefing supervisors about the raw data and the generated codes was the third method I used, which helped to assess my interpretations of data against experts' views of the findings (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

As to transferability, interpretations of interview and observation data have generated similar findings in the first school and second schools, which made me hypothesise, and add more interview questions to check whether there were changes or similarities in school educators' perceptions in schools three and four (Lincoln and Guba 1985, pp. 124-126). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), assessing transferability is challenging as there is no external validity. Instead, they advise researchers to provide a detailed portrayal of the contexts to show how the findings are relevant or transferable to another context. In line with this recommendation, I drafted an analysis chapter in early 2021 which included most of the findings, to check whether the findings could be transferable from one context to another and found in similar research studies aims (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Despite what was discussed under transferability, "*subjectivity*" in understanding the findings of qualitative research does not warrant generalisability as in quantitative research analysis but instead gives a sense of how I interpreted my interactions with school educators, which may or may not be transferable to elsewhere (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p. 292).

The third domain is confirmability. This domain questions whether findings were genuinely relevant to participants' self-reports of what was found in the research (Guba 1981). In other words, the researcher must be neutral in perceiving participants, have no intention for biased analysis, and have no interest or motivation to mislead the data. Regarding confirmability, I have no interest in wrongfully altering

participants' statements because I solely conducted this research to learn how Saudi teachers perceive and enact inclusion on an abstract level and to contribute to the Saudi inclusive education literature in conducting a qualitative inquiry. Nonetheless, I tackled these constraints using peer debriefing and triangulation of data collection methods (Guba 1981). As to peer debriefing, I constantly contacted research supervisors throughout the research process. I asked supervisors if they felt any bias or inconsistency in the findings. Concerning the triangulation of methods, “*Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods in the examination of a social phenomenon*” (Jonsen and Jehn 2009, p. 126). Therefore, I cross-checked if there were any discrepancies and consensuses between observations and the three types of interviews used in this research. When differences were found, I re-analysed both texts and searched for another reference in the data concerning similar findings. For example, if a teacher commented on a question during the main interview, but later in pre-observation or post-observation-interview commented otherwise—I used observations, for instance, as a cross-reference for these data sets to confirm whether the analysis was neutral.

### **3.5 Researcher Statement/Use of Terminologies**

Throughout this thesis, I will use the following terms, disability, disabled learners, learners with impairment, special educational needs teachers, special needs, and pupils categorised as SEN. Although I favour using disability and disabled learners terms, I used special educational needs teachers and/or special education teachers when I reported my findings. I used the special educational needs term because it is relevant to the UK education context despite the ongoing debate about the SEN (Norwich 2013) and because it is similar to the term used in Saudi Arabia, “special education” (Alhammad 2017). Nevertheless, it is noteworthy to reiterate that special educational needs or special needs and so forth terms *are not my first choice* of terminologies as I struggle to marry these with the inclusion agenda. However, these are standard terms used in Saudi schools and education literature. Perhaps, the social model and the critical disability studies have shaped my choice of terminologies to use disability and disabled learners to recognise the social and cultural disablements that learners experience in schools (Oliver 1990).

Reading critical disability studies and the work of social model theorists seemed to polarise consensus around using the term 'disability' as a representational. Ableism around terms such as disability could also be subject to further terminological enhancement and must be critically challenged in academia (Bolt 2019). This is because, throughout my studies and career, I learned how confusing and problematic it is when interchangeably using different terms. However the dilemma of disablement entails an awareness of more social and cultural underpinnings of disability, although the power of descriptive terminologies, as in SEN, cannot be undermined (Foucault 1991; Barnes 1996). The issue I wanted to outline here is that the terminologies in the SEN system and/or within the SEN system have significantly shaped inclusion, at least in Saudi schools, concerning who should or should not be included. Such a categorical and aesthetic view often results in labelling, which ascribes particular social standards to people and designates those who do not fit in and are therefore stigmatised and excluded (Goffman 1986). Although such norms are challenging to eradicate from the academic field, the least I could contribute is to define the representational terms used in my social and academic life and show awareness of the inherited cultural norms within us (Bolt 2014).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Having outlined my research methodology and explored my research methods' strengths, challenges, and limitations, the following four chapters will present the research findings, using Ball's enactment theory as a structure. The next chapter presents the context of schools, using detailed descriptions to introduce the reader to the schools in Saudi Arabia so that teachers' and pupils' attitudes, opinions, and lived experiences can be appreciated in the context of the environment. Chapter five examines the power dynamics of policy through a detailed portrayal of school educators' discourses on curriculum as a policy and how it is viewed and interpreted. It gives a sense of how the enactment of policies can be undermined due to the shortfall of resources and other constraints to promoting participation in the curriculum (Anderson-Levitt 2008; Hart and Drummond 2014). This significant constraint made it challenging for teachers to digest the complexity of adhering to inclusion whilst also being expected to encourage pupils to compete based on abilities. Chapter six presents and discusses teachers' interpretations of disability and inclusion and allocates school educators' interpretations within the contested

paradigms of the social and medical models of disability. Synthesising school educators' understandings of disability and inclusion with views on inclusion as a policy, presented in chapter five, enabled me to examine the interactions of the two forces of policy and discourses into enactments presented and discussed in chapter seven.

## Chapter 4 Context

### Introduction

This section gives an account of the 'material context of schools' as outlined in the policy enactment theory (Ball et al 2011). This will enable us to place the opinions and observations explored in chapters five, six, and seven within the physical and material spaces of learning. The context chapter relies on observations, interviews, and field notes data to depict the context of four schools regarding infrastructure and accessibility, resources and amenities, responsibilities, and SEN provisions.

Moreover, this chapter will also give a summary of rituals for E-learning. To reiterate, I will refer to schools using pseudonyms. School (1) is named 'Khuzama', School (2) is named 'Khuraim', School (3) is defined as 'Al-Tawgi', and School (4) pseudonym is 'Altinhat'.

### 4.2 School 1 (Khuzama) School Infrastructure and Accessibility

The school is made of three floors and only has an outdoor arena for sports activities and for pupils to enjoy their breakfast break. The sports arena was made of concrete for pupils to play football, as there were goal bars and basketball baselines. Inside the school building was a prayer hall shaped like a rectangle where pupils and teachers pray (Fieldnotes Jan 2020). A pivotal distinction to Khuzama school is that it had a security guard who was assigned to ask visitors about their credentials and the purpose of their visit to the school, whereas the rest of the schools included in the sample did not have security guards

Since Khuzama did not benefit from accessible entry or hallways such as lifts or ramps, visual impairment and LD programmes were located on the ground floor.

*"Although I felt at the time that the school administration placed the LD programme and VI programme on the ground floor so VI pupils can find it easier to access, I realised that this was done to make it accessible for VI teachers, not pupils"*

(Fieldnotes 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020). Pupils with visual impairment were taught in mainstream classrooms on the first floor, whereby means for accessibility, such as lifts, were unavailable. The Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) unit and the Gifted and Talented Programme (GTP), however, were located on the third floor.

#### 4.2.1 Special Educational Needs Unit

The Khuzama School accommodates the SEN programme. The programme consists of a learning difficulty (LD) programme, a visual impairment (VI) programme, a gifted and talented (GAT) programme, and an attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) provision. The LD and VI programme resources-rooms were located on the ground floor, whereas the ADHD provision and GAT were found on the third floor (Fieldnote, 28<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020).

The VI and LD provisions were in a separate hallway within the SEN unit located on the ground floor (Fieldnote 28<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020). Registration into the VI programme requires a medical report from an authorised hospital to enable pupils' enrolment in the visual impairment programme (Riyadh and Omar, Joint Interview Jan 2020). This programme aims to support visually impaired pupils in particular modules. For example, the VI pupil can only undertake math, language, and science within the VI programme (HT Barrack, Main Interview Jan 2020). These modules were allocated to VI specialists due to the availability of Braille textbooks and Perkins Brailier in this division; such aids were not observed in the general education classroom (Fieldnote 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020). While the VI programme benefited from Braille tools, it lacked other sensible materials, such as maps and other resources that are commonly used for visually impaired learners. As SENT Riyadh commented in the joint interview, "*in terms of the curriculum, we have the exact same curriculum as in the mainstream curriculum except for things that need adaptations like Maps or drawing, which we don't have*" (Riyadh, Main Interview, Jan 2020). The below picture was taken in the visual impairment classroom:



As you can see in the above picture, there were limited resources in the VI room. This can be attributed to the lack of resources offered to the VI programme or may be related to the fact that the VI programme relied heavily on Perkins Braille, though a well-stocked library in the LD room was observed. Before my interview with Riyadh and Omar, the SEN co-ordinator showed me around the LD unit so that I could take pictures:



The LD unit at Khuzama School appeared well-organised and had a library for pupils to read books and magazines. The library also had brochures for parents to learn



about disability and LD. Across all SEN resources rooms, tables were organised as horseshoes, allowing for a direct instruction pedagogy. Lessons at SENU varied from one-on-one sessions to three pupils per session; however, a one-on-one teaching style was often used in the SEN unit (Fieldnote 19<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020). Pupil registration to LD follows a series of procedures. According to HT Barrack, procedures were the referral from GETs followed by a diagnostic test to determine whether the pupil needs to enrol depending on the SEN specialist's judgments and assessment (Main Interview, Jan 2020).

#### **4.2.2 General Education Classrooms in Khuzama School**

Although I was sceptical about including two teachers who teach the Arabic language module in my sample, classroom arrangements and practices were unlike. For example, GET Abdelmalik had his own Arabic Language lab (Fieldnotes, 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 2020). Whereas Awadh, a general education teacher, did not have access to a language lab but moved from one classroom to another (Fieldnotes 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan 2020). Such arrangements appeared to influence these two teachers' use of instructional approaches in their pedagogic enactments. For instance, Abdelmalik's lab was organised as small circles for pupils to learn in groups (Abdelmalik Observation 1, 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 2020). In Abdelmalik's lab, visual aids such as a projector, TV screen and smart board were also observed resources at the Arabic language lab (Abdelmalik Observation 1, 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 2020). Whereas teacher Awadh lacked these resources, impeding the variability of instructional approaches and learning materials offered in his lessons. Awadh unveiled funding as an impediment to resources and accessibility:

We started to chat, and he informed me that he lacks support, specifically financial support, he commented...look Fahad, the dilemma of inclusion, LD and education in general, especially in Saudi Arabia, is that it is much much much more complex than you can ever imagine because you are talking about funding, which is the most critical component for schooling. And we lack financial funding (Awadh, Post-Observation-Interview 4, 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2020).

Apart from classroom resources, the number of pupils present during observations in the general education classroom was approximately 28-44 pupils per classroom, depending on the level and size of the classroom. The below pictures show similar characteristics to which Awadh carried out his lessons:



(Source: *EyeofRiyadh* 2015)

As you can see in the above pictures, observed classrooms at Khuzama school were organised in rows, with tables and chairs facing the whiteboard where the teacher usually stands. None of the observed classrooms had a library, visual aids such as posters and Braille or projectors, a smartboard or hearing aids (Fieldnote 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020).

#### **4.2.3 Khuzama School Day Rituals**

The data was collected during winter, in which the first lesson starts at 7.00 AM. Before the lessons begin, pupils assemble for the morning exercise and Ethe'ah <sup>1</sup>, named "Taboor". The Tabbor assembly was organised in vertical rows. A row line was allocated for each classroom (Fieldnote, 18<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020). At the end of the morning assembly, pupils were asked to sing the national anthem together (Fieldnote, 18<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020). Lessons usually stretched from 7.00 AM until 12.35 Pm. Breakfast break was after the third lesson of the day. When the third lesson ended with a bell ringing, pupils rushed to the cafeteria. The below picture is the school's cafeteria:

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<sup>1</sup> Eza'ah is pupils' broadcasting which includes, Qura'an reading, Hadith, wisdom quotations, and a quick activity which pupils select to use.eg. asking a buzzle, or singing a song.

The cafeteria window, particularly at the beginning of the break, was usually covered with pupils' hands holding *crushed* Riyal notes to buy prepacked sandwiches or beverages (Fieldnote 21<sup>st</sup> Jan 2020). Two to three teachers supervised pupils during these breaks (Fieldnote 21<sup>st</sup> Jan 2020). On one occasion, I observed pupils playing



with empty cans instead of football, passing the cans around. However, I observed no bullying between learners (Fieldnote 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020). Some pupils wore Thobe (National Dress) while others wore training suits.



(Graphic Image. Source: Alriyadh Newspaper 2021).

#### **4.2.4 Responsibilities at Khuzama School**

I observed Barrack, the HT, had minimal direct interaction with pupils. In contrast, the deputy HTs were in constant supervision of pupils and teachers' day-to-day tasks:

Teachers ask the [deputy HT] about their timetable, duties related to breakfast break supervision, and dismissal day supervision. The HT was directing teachers to speak with the deputy HT.

(Fieldnote 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020)

General education teachers (GETs) were expected to teach all pupils in the mainstream classroom contingent on their subject of speciality. For instance, teachers with Arabic Literature Degrees are often assigned to teach the Arabic language. Most schools I observed expected GETs to carry out twenty-four weekly lessons and supervise breaks and dismissal. Teachers signed their attendance when they arrived at or left the school on a booklet at the HT's office (Fieldnotes, 26 Jan 2020). However, unpunctuality was a typical school characteristic for GETs, SENTs and pupils equally. When I first arrived at Khuzama's school, it was the first week of the second term. The deputy HT advised me that "*there are no lessons...because pupils do not usually attend at the beginning of the term, as they usually attend from the second week upwards*" (Khuzama Deputy HT, face-to-face meeting, 19<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020). He continued, "I advise you to come in next week... *many of our students don't also attend the last week of studying term, and this is a big issue*" (Khuzama Deputy HT, face-to-face meeting, 19<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020). Concerning shared offices, general education teachers have their own designated common-room where they gather with fellow GE teachers and spend their professional and spare time there. In contrast, special educational needs teachers also have a designated common-room to spend their free time there.

### **4.3 School 2/ Khuraim School**

#### **4.3.1 A Glance at Khuraim School**

The Khuraim school appeared similar to the Khuzama school in terms of infrastructure and accessibility. To illustrate accessibility, the school had stairways, but no sign of access alternatives such as lifts or ramps were observed (Fieldnote 18<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020). Khuraim school was a three-story plan, which had a hollow hall at

the centre for the prayer and also used as a stage for theatre plays or school activities (Fieldnote 19<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020):



(Source: ALWatan Newspaper 2013)

#### **4.3.2 Khuraim School's Resources**

The Khuraim school did not have math or science labs, as the school only comprised classrooms with two arenas, SEN provisions, and resource rooms for LD and Yaseer. Regarding the location of general education classrooms, levels were relatively mixed up. Some upper-level classrooms were next to early levels (Fieldnote, 24<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020). Observed classrooms for math did not have instructional aids such as projectors, speakers or classroom libraries (Abdelwahab Observations 1-2-3-4, 20<sup>th</sup> Feb-5<sup>th</sup> March 2020). The indoor sports arena seemed to be the most preferred arena by pupils (Fieldnote 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020). The second arena was located outside and was made of asphalt, as can be seen in the below photo:



As you can see in the above picture, the arena was made of asphalt and gravel. Two physical education lessons (PEL) were carried out in this arena, whereas the rest of the observed PELs were conducted indoors. However, pupils spend breakfast breaks in this outside arena. It is worth noting that since Khuram school had a Profound Learning Disability Programme, breaks were segregated between GE and PLD (Fieldnotes 20 Feb 2020).

#### **4.3.3 The SEN Unit**

There were three SEN units at Khuraim School. The first established unit in Khuraim School was the PLD unit (HT Qassim, Main Interview 2020), followed by the LD provision and the Yaseer resources room, respectively (Fieldnote, 18<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020). The PLD unit was on the school's second floor with only authorised access, comprising several classrooms accommodated for PLD pupils. During my field visits to this school, I did not observe any direct interaction between PLD pupils with their peers in general education, except during the assembly, where they stayed in rows albeit away from their peers (Fieldnote, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020). In relation to the LD provision:

It only comprised one resource room (RR) with a projector, whiteboard, computer, printer, portable whiteboard, and other instructional aids such as books, stories, and sensible instructional aids. The RR also had a horseshoe-shaped table. The painting was neutral white, so it wasn't distracting for the eyes. The LD teacher always stays in this RR and rarely was observed to have an interaction with other teachers, including SENTs.

(Fieldnote, 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020)

The Yaseer RR was similar to the LD resources, and the below pictures were taken at Yaseer RR:



#### 4.3.4 Responsibilities at Khuraim

General education teachers Rawaf and Abdelwahab had twenty weekly lessons assigned to their timetables (Fieldnote, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020). However, Rawaf was responsible for the assembly and school activities (Fieldnotes 19 Feb 2020, Post-Observation-Interview 1, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020). SENTs Nawaf and Meshari had between sixteen to eighteen lessons a week. SEN teachers were also devolved to carry out diagnostic assessments at the beginning of the studying year and collect general education teachers' feedback about pupils who were suspected to be at risk of poor

attainment (SENT Meshari Main Interview Feb 2020; and SENT Nawaf Main Interview Feb 2020). SENTs were also obligated to help their fellow GETs in school supervision and fill in when a GET is absent (SENTs Nawaf and Meshari, Main Interview 2020).

#### **4.3.5 Making Sense of General Education Classroom**

Despite the similarity of classroom structure at Khuraim school compared with Khuzama school, classrooms at Khuraim school were packed and congested (Fieldnote 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020). Disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs attending Yaseer or LD interacted less directly with GETs Rawaf and Abdelwahab during lessons (Fieldnote 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020). Regarding general education classroom resources, no instructional aids or library were observed across all the attended classrooms (Fieldnote 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020; Fieldnote 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020).

#### **4.4 School 3 (Al-Tawgi School) Atmosphere: During Covid-19 Pandemic**

In relation to the school structure and overall atmosphere, Al-Tawgi school did not substantially differ from the first two schools. Succinctly, classrooms, hallways, offices, and issues around accessibility shared an unmistakable resemblance to Khuzama and Khuraim schools, except for a table at the entrance of the school to *hand-sanitise* and thermometer to check for *fever* – following Saudi Covid-19 measures (Fieldnote 18<sup>th</sup> Aug 2020).

##### **4.4.1 Resources at Al-Tawgi School**

Since schooling across Saudi Arabia during the pandemic was through digital learning, I could not fully discover Al-Tawgi's school resources (Fieldnote 18<sup>th</sup> Aug 2020). However, I walked around the school with the administrator and observed similar resources to Khuzama and Khuraim schools. Nonetheless, resources were more identical to Khuraim. The similarities between Khuraim and Al-Tawgi schools relate to the SEN programmes. PLD, Yaseer, and LD programmes were available in both schools (Fieldnote 25<sup>th</sup> Aug 2020).



#### **4.4.2 SEN Programme at Al-Tawgi School**

This school has three SEN programmes. SEN programmes were profound learning disability programme, learning difficulties programme, and the Yaseer programme was for "boundary class" pupils (Fieldnote 19<sup>th</sup> Aug 2020). The programmes' structure did not differ from Khuraim school, in which both schools followed the same procedures and protocols in working with pupils categorised as Special Needs (SN). However, the cross-sectional analysis suggests that GETs Abdelwahab from Khuraim school and Meshal from Al-Tawgi school had some knowledge about the Yaseer programme, although opposing attitudes towards this SEN programme were discerned (See more on perceptions in Chapter Six). GET Rawaf from Khuraim school and GET Waddah from Al-Tawgi school did not seem to know clearly about the purpose of the Yaseer programme. However, all GETs at Khuraim, and Al-Tawgi knew the rest of their schools' SEN programmes.

#### **4.5 Al-Tinhat School (School 4) Structure**

Al-Tinhat school's physical structure did not differ from any other schools included in the sample except for the allocation of the VI programme (Fieldnote 7<sup>th</sup> Sep 2020). The VI programme was not allocated as a separate unit but as classrooms assigned for VI pupils on the top floor (Fieldnote 10<sup>th</sup> Sep 2020). In comparison, the VI programme at the Khuzama school was allocated on the ground floor as a whole unit. Despite the location and ethos of the VI unit and classrooms, accessibility such as tactile corduroy bars, tactile flooring, and Braille signs were missing in both Khuzama and Al-Tinhat schools (Fieldnotes 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 2020; Fieldnotes 7<sup>th</sup> Sep 2020). This lack of accessibility for visual impairment rendered the structural disablements of the schools' culture (Bolt 2019).

##### **4.5.1 SEN Programmes at Al-Tinhat School**

Al-Tinhat school had two SEN programmes. SEN programmes were learning difficulty and VI programme. However, I could not observe VI pupils or pupils *categorised* as LD, as VI pupils did not have access to the Digital Learning Portal "Madrasti". At the same time, pupils with LD had access to the portal (Fieldnotes Sep 2020; GET Ahmad, Observation 1 & Observation 2 15<sup>th</sup> Sep 2020).

#### **4.5.2 Responsibilities at Al-Tinhat School**

Since teachers were not continually attending school due to COVID-19 *social-distancing* guidelines (HT Hani, Main Interview 2020), observing teachers and HT's role in daily school life was challenging. However, a few teachers, HT, and the school counsellor were present. The HT was responsible for helping parents access the portal (HT Hani, Main Interview 2020). The school councillor seemed to be a key player in the HT management role. As observed in this encounter:

While waiting for the MoE to grant me online access to observe virtual lessons, I asked the HT if it was ok to grant me school access to the portal... he advised me to coordinate with the school counsellor to give me access.

(Fieldnote 7<sup>th</sup> Sep 2020)

HT Hani and the school councillor were pressured to report technical issues parents faced. Meanwhile, the MoE seemed to find it challenging to manage high requests of technical issues schools have raised to the MoE (HT Hani Main Interview 2020).

Therefore, it appeared that schools do not have the power to make relevant decisions or have available technicians to rectify these technical issues. In short, the hierarchy in MoE restricted schools from granting admission to pupils, visitors, and researchers. This issue tightened schools' reflexivity and impeded schools' professional duty to respond to the daily obstacles. However, teachers were advised to visit the school once a day per week to answer pupils' questions and help to teach pupils who do not have access to the portal, except for learners with SEN, as they were not given access or advised to visit the school (HT Hani Main Interview Sep 2020).

#### **4.6 Making Sense of Virtual Lessons for Al-Tawgi and Al-Tinhat Schools**

There were two general education teachers from Al-Tawgi School included in the sample. Math teacher "Meshal" and Science teacher "Waddah". Whereas the GETs from Al-Tinhat school were Ahmad, who taught the Arabic language, and Azzam was a math teacher. Subjects taught were similar to traditional schooling compared to the observed first two schools. However, there were some differences related to the nature of pedagogy. For instance, other modules, such as art and physical

education, were suspended. Also, the time of lessons and lesson durations at Al-Tawgi and Al-Tinhat differed from observed traditional schooling at Khuzama and Khuraim schools. Comparatively, Sunday through Thursday school days were congruous with conventional schooling before the pandemic. However, the school day during distance learning started at 3:00 PM until 6:30 PM, though differences were related to the timing of school recess and lesson timetable between Al-Tawgi and Al-Tinhat schools (Fieldnote 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Sep 2020). Pupils' attendance during virtual lessons was substantially less than registered pupils (Fieldnote 16<sup>th</sup> Sep 2020).

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

Having outlined the schools' environments, professional duties, and characteristics of general and special educational needs classrooms and observed commonalities and discrepancies across the four schools included in the data, the next chapter presents and discusses findings related to school educators' perceptions of the Saudi National Curriculum. This will be analysed by understanding how teachers and HTs interpret the curriculum broadly and give a sense of concern regarding the quality of collaboration between teachers. School educators' views of the curriculum appear to constrain teachers' planning of inclusion for disabled learners and promoting curriculum accessibility for all pupils' participation. However, there was significant contentment among school educators regarding funding and the needed resources – highlighting the central hindrance to teachers' continuing professional development and professional learning. The chapter also examines other concerns teachers raised regarding teacher autonomy and school educators' overall positioning in the curriculum. Next is chapter five.

# **Chapter 5 Findings: Teachers' and Headteachers' Perceptions of the Saudi National Curriculum with a particular focus on Disability and Inclusion**

## **Chapter Overview**

This chapter presents teachers' and headteachers' perceptions of the Saudi National Curriculum (SNC), mainly related to disability and inclusion in primary schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The purpose of presenting educators' perceptions towards the national curriculum is to provide nuanced views of how educators' discourses about the curriculum bring about, or restrict disabled learners', participation in the Saudi National curriculum.

The data provided strong evidence that most teachers and headteachers in this study viewed the curriculum as the specific programme of study for a particular year group as outlined in modules' textbooks. This view highlighted them to perceive a shortfall of resources, inclusion planning, and teachers' involvement in decision-making. They reported that although there is a commitment to inclusion in policy documents, they feel that there is very little training and information about SEN programmes.

This chapter illuminates findings of teachers' perceptions of the Saudi National Curriculum under three main sections as follows: (Section 5.1) addresses participants' perceptions and attitudes towards the Saudi National Curriculum. It explores how teachers view the Saudi National Curriculum as the module's textbook. The sub-heading will transition to address findings related to teachers' and HTs' concerns about school resources and funding. (Section 5.2) explores perceptions of curriculum accessibility in terms of how teachers report lesson planning for disabled pupils and teachers' approaches regarding classroom management. (Section 5.3) explores curriculum policy incorporating issues around inclusion planning, decision involvement, accountability, and training. The chapter then concludes with a summary highlighting the main findings.

## 5.1 Teacher's and Headteacher's Attitudes Towards the Saudi National Curriculum (SNC)

Most teachers and HTs conceived the *curriculum as the textbook*. A narrowed perception of the curriculum appears to be in junction with limited resources offered for schools and could also be related to constraints to government-allocated funding and resourcing.

### 5.1.1 Curriculum as the Textbook: Perceptions and Attitudes

Three HTs, two GETs, and one SENT reported a positive stance towards the Saudi National Curriculum (SNC). This finding suggests that SENTs were perhaps the least participants to seem optimistic towards the SNC because seven SENTs out of eight reported constraints to the curriculum. However, most participants understood the curriculum as the narrow articulation of learning standards and objectives in schools' textbooks (Egan 1978). For example, HT Barrack understood the curriculum as the presentation of the textbooks as a means for paper-style, but also as a means for prescribed learning objectives – ready for teachers to enact

The ease in the curriculum, the very selection of some topics. This selection of topics gives account to the student's level. Umm [silence/clock ticking], umm... the ease of information and the presentation of it using wonderful pictures, colourful things, these are the things that have facilitated the delivery of the information.

HT Barrack (Main Interview Jan 2020)

In its broader sense, the curriculum is "*The study of any and all educational phenomena*" (Egan 1978, p. 71). In comparison, a narrow and instrumental interpretation of the curriculum as the textbook portrayed the Saudi National Curriculum as "*Hollow rhetoric which fails to engage the imagination or occupy the pedagogical possibilities inherent in [teachers] practice*" (Smith 2016, p. 92, emphasis added). Narrowing the curriculum down to the learning objectives outlined in the modules' textbook was a consistent perception among eight SENTs, seven GETs, and all HTs included in the sample. This tendency to conflate talking about the curriculum with the textbook meant it was relatively unclear whether participants had positive or negative attitudes towards the overall curriculum in its broader sense. An example of this was when GET Awadh explained his pessimistic view of the SNC, mainly due to its shortcomings in the areas of spelling and grammar.

As Awadh reported:

I teach Lughaty [Arabic language Textbook], and in my opinion, it is terrible. Putting various textbooks into one book is extremely bad for many reasons. Students do not understand if the lesson is about language or whether something else... It does not have separate chapters on spelling or grammar from the Lughaty textbook.

GET Awadh (Main Interview, 2020)

SENT Meshari shared the commonly held perception of the curriculum as the textbook, although Meshari held a more negative perception of the curriculum than HT Barrack. Meshari believed that the Saudi National Curriculum had become more difficult for disabled learners:

I think *curricula* have become slightly harder! Especially the new ones, it is not easy! In particular, math and science as things in these two subjects are challenging for the student, especially for his age... For example, patterns in math and stuff like that, it is difficult for him... We usually do not rely on the curriculum! We could use it to answer HW or an activity. (Meshari, Main Interview 2020).

Based on the first-hand analysis, I probed some of my interview questions to understand better why exactly most participants conceived the curriculum as the textbook (Charmaz 2008; Charmaz and Thornberg 2021). The analysis of educators' responses suggests that the modules' textbook is a legal document and an obligation from the MoE for teachers to follow *letter by letter*. Thus, as indicated in teachers' and HTs' responses, the module's textbook becomes the curriculum.

As Waddah signified:

We are obligated to teach objectives in the textbook, and I cannot deviate from this as this will get me in trouble... as teachers, we are compelled to finish the module's textbook; if not, I will be liable.

(Phone call with Waddah, 3rd September  
2020)

SENT Nawaf aligned with Waddah and commented:

The [GE] teacher is very restricted to the curriculum and has to maintain umm... to finish the curriculum within 15 weeks.

(Main Interview, Feb 2020)

The above quotes illustrate that teachers being unable to elaborate more on learning using other resources in the curriculum besides the textbook may render that LEAs expect teachers to follow the textbook as it is. Another interpretation of this finding is that educators perceived the curriculum as the textbook because it is perhaps their only available source for learning.

As GET Abdelmalik stated:

Because the curriculum focuses on the textbook, and because we do not have an exercise book, neither we have a teacher's book! Therefore, I focus on the textbook.

(Post-Observation-Interview 2, Jan 2020).

Also, relying on the textbook could be related to MoE's focus on using textbooks as standardised documents containing learning objectives for LEA supervisors to evaluate teachers' enactments against outlined objectives.

As GET Azzam reported:

With a bold font, **I do not know!** The MoE is the one who implemented the curriculum... the LEA supervisor would have to, frankly, come to me and only evaluate how I do.

(Main Interview Sep 2020)

Whilst this connotes constraints in collaboration between LEAs and teachers, it also signifies deficient levels of teachers' agency and autonomy to enact different means for learning than what was prescribed in the textbook and therefore, teachers were less likely to make inclusive changes in the curriculum (Priestley et al. 2012).

Further, it also portrays concerns about opportunities for professional learning in the curriculum, as GET Azzam reported that LEA supervisors only visit for evaluation which rendered focused on retention of learning, competition between schools, and LEAs' role were perhaps "evaluators" regarding ensuring that teachers are enacting prescribed policies from the textbook (Muijs et al. 2011).

Contrary, GET Meshal did seem to understand the curriculum in its broader sense as he identified shortcomings in the curriculum as enacted in his setting in terms of the material context of a setting (Ball et al. 2011).

As GET Meshal commented:

The module as a textbook is remarkable; we brought it from America and bought it from McGraw-Hill...However, the curriculum needs labs, and it needs aids; the curriculum has labs and fewer lesson intervals, the curriculum relates to the number of students in classrooms, and the curriculum relies on an attractive learning environment! *These are not available here.*

(Main Interview Aug 2020)

In many instances, it seemed easier for teachers to unthinkingly follow the textbook as prescribed, given that little or no additional resources were available. It was equally certainly less demanding on MoE funding to centre the curriculum on the textbook rather than offering extensive resources such as professional learning, pedagogic support, and material resources. However, the commonly held view suggests that it was more accessible for LEAs to follow and evaluate how teachers precisely enact texts prescribed in the textbook. For instance, when Azzam asked to elaborate on the SNC, GET Azzam commented:

*They require me to finish the entire student's textbook.*

GET Azzam (Main Interview Sep 2020)

Similarly, GET Mesha'l found it challenging to respond to pupils' preferences towards learning as he is required to finish the textbook in a specific timeframe:

It is not easy, as I have to finish the textbook... if we talk about perfection where there are educational games or through the computer, I cannot maintain this because the textbook is very extensive.

GET Mesha'l (Main Interview Aug 2020)

However at times, participants reported that LEA supervisors advise teachers to enable active learning strategies such as self-learning, group learning, use of technology and other sources of learning. The following extracts are examples highlighted by school educators themselves of some of the approaches which LEA supervisors advise teachers to use for learning:

*They advise us to use learning through play.*

SENT Nawaf (Main interview Feb 2020)

SENT Salem also shared this:



*Letter Board, learning through playing... also learning through joy.*

(Main Interview Aug 2020)

Still, teachers' responses articulated refusal to enact these pedagogic recommendations. SENT Omar reported that he does not implement all recommended approaches:

Yeah, we do not implement everything! I apply things that suit my students and usually do not apply what the MoE asks us to do, especially for blind students.

SENT Omar (Main Interview Jan 2020)

The above quotes firmly suggest that teachers' enactment of MoE policies is contingent on the level of co-ordination between LEAs and schools regarding interpreting the curriculum as a policy (Ball 1987). Therefore, GET Rawaf seemed satisfied with using traditional pedagogies as there is an inadequate collaboration between policy-makers as in LEAs and teachers as subject actors of textual policies to develop pedagogic skills, "*if they do not care [referring to LEA], no one would care too*" (Rawaf, Post-Observation-Interview1, Feb 2020). GET Abdelwahab aligned with Rawaf and questioned the MoE and LEA efforts in responding to schools' needs:

They should offer it to us without asking because each school should have resources and specific instructional aids. Why [resources] were not delivered to us, I never know.

(Post-Observation-Interview 4, March 2020)

To summarise findings, educators perceive the curriculum as the learning objectives and materials prescribed in the modules' textbook. They report feeling that they often operate in contexts where the material resources to support learning are limited and where there is little or no professional learning or support. There is also a commonly held view that MoE policy directives do not necessarily relate to learners with impairments and/or additional learning needs. This was indicated in teachers' comments on LEA supervisors' evaluation of teachers' enactments of textbooks rather than offering support and material resources for enacting inclusion. In turn, teachers were clearly divided in implementing the prescribed objectives, whether reflecting inclusivity or not, or refusing to enact these objectives if they sensed that

there was a space for teachers' agency to interpret curriculum policy into practice (Priestley and Philippou 2018).

### **5.1.2 Sentiments Towards School Funding**

Public schools in Saudi Arabia are government-funded, and Saudi Arabia heavily invests in their education sector (Prokop 2003). Although school resources are essential for successful schooling (Pijl 2014; Moriña and Morgado 2018; Power and Taylor 2018), the analysis of data collected showed that funding and resources were limited in such a way that educators perceived them to be barriers to an inclusive school environment. This limitation was particularly the case across the domains of schools' accessibility of school infrastructure, the disproportion of funding, and the availability of pedagogic resources across classroom contexts in special educational needs and the mainstream (Booth and Ainscow 2011).

Concerning schools' infrastructure, school educators consistently reported that public schools lack an inclusive infrastructure:

*I think they [inclusion], for god's sake, really need unique buildings.*

(GET Rawaf, Main Interview 2020)

Rawaf's statement may render that public schools should be well-prepared to accommodate all pupils, including disabled learners, as he compared public and private education in Saudi Arabia:

Perhaps, in private schools, education is better. Why? Because they have more than one teacher working on pupils, resources, foundations, and something enlightening them! But public education, no! It is all about expecting pupils to write and not to write. That is it.

(GET Rawaf, Main Interview)

Similarly, Battal rhetorically questioned the preparation of school infrastructure:

Did you offer them strips to walk on? As what do you call it, umm, as a tactile paving? No! Did you offer them special toilets? No!

SENT Battal (Main Interview, 2020)

Several Saudi Arabian studies showed similar findings, as public buildings, including schools, are inaccessible to disabled people (Alhammad 2017; Yousef 2018).

Arguably, school funding shapes the accessibility of school infrastructure, such as arranging accessible paving, ramps, and other means of accessibility. However, the data indicated that perception about the commonly used approaches to fostering accessibility for disabled pupils is another hindrance to offering accessibility in schools. For instance, HT of Al-Tawgi School Hani was unsure about the commonly used approaches to promoting accessibility for visually impaired pupils, as when I rhetorically asked him about not observing tactile paving or Braille posts on the school's amenities, he did not seem to be aware of these approaches.

As Hani commented:

*Well, we do not have it in the school, but this is an excellent idea that we may implement.*

HT Hani (Main Interview Sep 2020)

To practically conceptualise the effect of this on pupils' accessibility in schools, Khalid shared that visually impaired pupils at Al-Tawgi school were not participating and socialising with their peers during breakfast break as they cannot move around the school, but instead, they remain in the classroom most of their day.

As SENT Khalid revealed:

Whereas the *up-normal* student, the disabled student, during breakfast break, he would only be sitting and eating, that is it...he does not [go out] because it is risky for him, as one student could mistakenly hit him, or can be pushed *or may fall off, or forgets his place!* Therefore, he is sitting still all the time!

SENT Khalid Al-Tawgi School (Main Interview Sep 2020).

Notwithstanding the *normalisation* in Khalid's choice of terminologies, as he categorised disabled pupils as up-normal, the underlined issues in Khalid's statement substantially reflect the effect of accessibility and mobility on disabled pupils' inclusion in mainstream schools. These constraints on disabled pupils' mobility in schools echoed that environmental barriers remained unchanged and continued to disable impaired pupils (Barnes 2019). In contrast to Al-Tinhat school,

Khusama's school alterations to pupils' accommodation on school floors were observed to promote accessibility for a physically impaired pupil.

As observed:

Before my third observation of Awadh's classroom, he informed me that I would love to see the upcoming lesson because it is diverse, with different *categories* of disabled pupils. The fourth-grade classroom is on the ground floor because there are physically impaired pupils and two pupils diagnosed with ADHD.

(Fieldnotes Khuzama School, 28th January 2020)

Locating physically impaired learners on the ground floor is a step forward in acknowledging the environmental barriers corresponding to the absence of lifts in schools and the personal experience of each impairment (Thomas 1999; Shakespeare 2019). However at times, approaches to accessibility for visually impaired pupils in Khuzama school were not found. For instance, visually impaired learners often walked with a tutor when they wished to attend lessons in the Special Educational Needs Unit:

I looked around the VI unit to see any sign of tactile paving or use of Braille on the classroom entrance, SEN unit entrance, or the school hallways, but I could not find any. The unavailability of Braille signs and other means for Universal Design justified why the coordinator must always bring the student to the classroom. Students usually need assistance to come to the SEN.

(Fieldnote 3rd February 2020)

These observations depict the variation in disablement from one impairment to another (Thomas 1999; Shakespeare 2013). Variability in schools' responses to impairments also illuminates HTs' role in mediating between policies and inclusionary enactments (Martin-Denham 2021). These findings further question the MoE's stance on inclusion in facilitating an accessible curriculum for all regarding school infrastructure and funding because the accessibility of schools' infrastructure reflects the inclusivity of the curriculum (Rowe 2001; Kyriazopoulou and Weber 2009). While the MoE is responsible for maintaining the building of schools and funding necessary resources for public schools (Riyadh Education Office 2021), HTs and teachers in this study suggest that this government-allocated funding is insufficient to cover

schools' needs. For example, HT Suliman (Main Interview, Aug 2020) commented on the shortfall of funding to purchase resources for the school:

*The MoE provides us with etc., but we barely buy the most necessary things.*

Similarly, HT Qassim elaborated on funding as a barrier to affording relevant resources and reported:

*The main barrier is money! So, I paid around 30.000 SR for the garden, which was all personal diligence! No one adopted this project... No one helped us with it.*

(Main Interview, Feb 2020)

Conceivably, school funding affects the school's performance and ability to utilise aids and needed resources for inclusion. Nevertheless, issues around funding reiterated concerns about how policy-makers, as in the MoE, actually *understand* supporting and resourcing schools related to the inclusion of disabled learners (Banks et al. 2015). For instance, HT Suliman insisted on funding as a barrier to the school's performance when not offered the necessary resources and asked, "*would the school performance be the same as a school where they have projectors, circular tables, square tables, instructional aids etc*" (Main Interview, Aug 2020)? Whereas Barrack, who is also a headteacher, did not indicate any issue related to funding but instead expressed financial efficiency in his school budget and commented, "*We now have a projector in every classroom, and a laptop for every teacher*" (Barrack, Main Interview, Jan 2020).

The interviews' data also reported disagreements between HTs concerning the disproportion of funding based on SEN provision. HT Qassim pinpointed the issue with school resources and instructional aids for SENU as he commented, "*visual aids such as projectors' are not available for disabled pupils in the school*" (Main Interview, Feb 2020). HT Qassim explained that resources for the SENU are retrieved from salvage resources from general education classrooms.

As Qassim shared:

Usually, inclusive programs in schools have no special funding! The program has no spending plan! So, it is a burden on schools! For example, you have a spending plan for computers in general education;

as when these computers or anything else is salvaged or oversupplied in general education, they advise us to give it to the SEN!

(Main Interview Feb 2020)

Contrarily, Nawaf (Main Interview, Feb 2020), a special educational needs teacher working under Qassim's leadership, shared that the SENU benefits from instructional aids, which contradicts HT Qassim's earlier comment. Special educational needs classroom at Kuhraim School offered the following resources:

A projector, laptop, smart board, microphone, visual aids attached to the wall, whiteboard, puzzle games, and many more educational methods were observed.

(Fieldnotes 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020)

However, the GE classroom in Khuraim school suffered a deficit in the availability of resources such as projectors, computers, and hearing aids. For example, responses from a post-observation-interview with GET Abdelwahab revealed this:

**Q.** Why did you heavily rely on lecturing and not using other instructional approaches? (*Fahad*)

**A.** Because we lack instructional aids! (*Abdelwahab*)

**Q.** What do you mean by instructional aids? (*Fahad*)

**A.** I mean devices, computers, projectors and a math case! (*Abdelwahab*)

(Post-Observation-Interview 16th February 2020)

Whereas HT Hani contradicted Qassim on the shortfall of funding for the Special Education Programme as he commented, "*special education have their own budget! They are making it easy on us*" (Main Interview, Aug 2020). Both sentiments illustrate two sides of the narrative. Perhaps, HT Qassim understood disproportionate resourcing from an inclusive view. He believed adequate resources should also be available in all classrooms because separate funding from the MoE based on the availability of a special educational needs programme could be costly and require substantive resources, as HT Qassim asserted. Whereas HT Hani believed that designated funding from the MoE based on the SEN programme made it easier for him to distribute funding and resources. All these sides of the argument rendered Braham Norwich's contribution to the policy document debate titled "Special Educational Needs has outlived its usefulness: a debate", as Norwich claimed that

there should not be extra funding based on SEN, but rather resourcing and support should ultimately focus on improving learning in the mainstream (Williams et al. 2009, pp. 209). GET Mesha'l (Main Interview, 2020) substantiated Norwich's claim and commented on how the disproportion of funding negatively affected the availability of resources in mainstream classrooms:

GE students would be damaged too! Firstly, a third of the building, including rooms and halls, is gone. It has all gone! Due to this *occupying*, and closed! Halls, activities, and math or computer science labs are no longer there! Usually, you do not find these labs when the school has a Special Education programme because they took these labs as *classrooms for them!*

GET Mesha'l (Main Interview Aug 2020)

The odd locution of *occupying* in Mesha'l's wording towards the SEN programme renders Becker's phrase "*outsiders*" as "*Those people who are judged by others to be deviant and thus to stand outside the circle of "normal" members of the group*" (Becker 1963, p. 15). The disproportion of funding to general education and special educational needs programmes signalled the quality of policy-makers planning for inclusive schooling. Nevertheless, inclusion is a "continuous process", as indicated in the *Index for Inclusion* (Booth and Ainscow 2011), wherein facing obstacles to funding and resources is not uncommon.

## **5.2 Curriculum Accessibility**

In this section, I explore teachers' and HTs' approaches to curriculum accessibility—drawing on teachers' and headteachers' interviews, fieldnotes, and observation data of teaching in GE and SEN classrooms to illustrate the approaches taken to teachers' pedagogic planning for curriculum accessibility. The commonly encountered discourses within educators' narratives relating to curriculum accessibility revealed low expectations from disabled learners, issues around classroom management, and feeling not responsible towards ensuring pupils' accessibility to the curriculum.

### **5.2.1 Teachers' Pedagogic Planning and Expectations from Disabled Learners**

Teachers should promote curriculum accessibility for all classroom learners through pedagogic planning corresponding to all pupils' learning needs (Webster et al. 2010). However, the curriculum relates to learning objectives or pedagogic planning and

impacts all school activities (Booth and Ainscow 2011). Evidence from the findings suggests that some disabled pupils are hindered from accessing the Saudi National Curriculum (SNC) based on SEN statement or impairment, as the national curriculum seemed to “*Resemble an assimilation process through which pupils with disabilities and SEN were required to ‘fit into’ the existing...curriculum as already planned*” (Smith and Thomas 2006, p. 73). As Smith and Thomas (2006) referred to, ‘the assimilation process’ contradicts teachers’ commonly encountered assertions on finding it difficult to integrate disabled learners in teachers’ pedagogic planning. Therefore, this view has often provoked a tendency to perceive lower expectations about disabled pupils’ academic performance. For example, GET Waddah doubted inclusion success for disabled learners and commented, “*about those who have SN, I do not know! Let us say ten skills! Ok? Those with SN are expected per se 10 out of 50 skills; it is still even difficult for them to learn these ten skills*” (Main Interview Aug 2020). Equally, special educational needs teachers expected low performance from pupils *except for* SENT Battal, who was more supportive towards disabled pupils’ inclusion. Contrary, SENT Salem commented that his perception of disabled pupils’ *abilities* was negative, but after being committed to the field he learned to distinguish between pupils’ *labels*.

As he commented:

My idea in the past was that the disabled pupil could not do anything; a student has limited comprehension capacity and unusual behaviour, but in the field, I could distinguish between the LD and the talented students.

SENT Salem (Main Interview Aug 2020)

The above comment reconciles the labelling dilemma and teachers’ pedagogic expectations towards learners (Lozano et al. 2022). Labelling students based on impairment was not found to be an allocation strategy in promoting relevant support as proposed in the Salamanca document (Ainscow et al. 2019, pp. 672). Still, labelling was the foundation for the exclusion process of disabled pupils from the mainstream classroom. For example, SENT Battal suppressed the labelling process of the behaviourally troubled pupil, advising the school to assign the pupil to the disciplinary team to learn the school’s conduct. Therefore, teachers seemed influential stakeholders in the school’s decision to prolong labelling and exclusion or



to suppress the exclusion process.

As SENT Battal shared:

The Vice headquarters told me that one student is having many troubles. I told him to assign him to the disciplinary team! So instead of you disciplining him, let him organise and discipline others! The student significantly changed, thanks to Allah! He became one of the most successful students in the school! He became very behaved!

(Main Interview Sep 2020)

Battal's advice to the vice headteacher in assigning the pupil to the disciplinary team stopped the labelling and exclusion process and promoted the pupil's self-esteem in learning and following school discipline (See and Arthur 2011). Also, Battal's method sought an unconventional support strategy in which new meanings for learning and discipline were constructed (Barrow 2002). Nonetheless, assigning the pupil to the school discipline team does not inevitably entail inclusiveness because the pupil perhaps acted out following school norms, which school norms often operate as a:

Power [that] is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings...all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism.

(Foucault 1991, p. 197)

School policies and cultural norms often shape teachers' classroom management approaches (Bean and Rush-Marlowe 2019). Therefore, it was not unanticipated that teachers' self-reports of their approaches to managing pupils' behaviour reflected schools' strict policies. The precedence of classroom management skills in pupils' accessibility to the curriculum cannot be undermined in the data.

### **5.2.2 Classroom Management Skills**

Analysis of observation data showed that GETs were more authoritarian than SENTs in addressing unwanted conduct in classrooms. For example, GET Rawaf was beating children because pupils were teasing one another during one of the physical education lessons:

*As students sitting next to me talked, teased one another, and hit one another. The teacher noticed this; he beat them on their heads and shoulders, forcing them to stop their behaviour.*

GET Rawaf (Observation 1st February  
2020)

Managing pupils during lessons seemed difficult for Rawaf, as learners were not engaged in the lesson, walking around the arena, or leaving the lesson. Such frustration urged Rawaf to hit pupils to regain more control over pupils misconduct. The observed incident justifies why Rawaf is not happy with current MoE regulations "*Now students have a big mouth and say teacher it is prohibited to hit ... you may be able to hit him in the past, but if the student escalated it and told his parent, issues would be more complex*" (Main Interview, 2020). A tendency to adopt an authoritarian stance might be related to how teachers describe their relationship with pupils as fatherhood, "*I mean you do what his father does to him, as you follow his father's pathway so that he would accept you*" (SENT Khalid, Main Interview 2020). Fatherhood stance towards pupils is not uncommon in the Saudi education system, as SENT Battal commented, "*I am going to say what we always say, the relationship is fatherhood! This is very common between teachers, as we always say fatherhood*" (Battal Main Interview 2020). While compassion serves as a cornerstone in understanding pupils' academic needs (Conklin and Hughes 2015), teachers must recognise their professional duties to ensure a positive learning environment in the classroom (Oliver and Reschly 2007). However, teachers' professional skills in classroom management require continuing professional training (Freeman et al. 2013; Conklin and Hughes 2015). The following observation illustrates the impact of training deficiency on teachers' skills to sustain pupils' focus in the lesson as GET Awadh "*kept shushing pupils when they were socially talking with one another, as he tried to regain their attention*" (Awadh, Observation 1, Jan 2020). Awadh's method may relate to how Khuzama School operates as a system of norms in managing pupils' conduct, in which each school has a set of norms. When learners seemed to act beyond school norms, as in socially talking with one another, learners were seemingly judged against the "*Power in operation*" of school norms (Allan and Harwood 2022, p. 29). Furthermore, a default of continuous and practical training on

classroom management skills seemed to impede teachers' ability to manage lessons on their own as they often ask for specialist help:

The applied behaviour specialist is an expert and very specialised. He would give me an answer that would save me a lot of time, and at the same time, he would offer me a solution!

SENT Nawaf (Main Interview Feb 2020)

Other observations of teachers' enactments regarding classroom management entailed a shortfall of practice-based training on classroom management approaches (Ingvarson et al. 2005). For example, GET Abdelmalik, a PhD holder in teaching the Arabic Language, reasoned his approach to asking a pupil to stand as the only permissible means for conduct management. When asked why he used the standing punishment approach, he responded this:

Frankly, some only respond when you punish them like that. What punishment can I use? The teacher is prohibited from hitting, and I cannot expel him from the class, so it is hard to manage the classroom without such power.

GET Abdelmalik (Post-Observation1-Interview Jan 2020)

The above data aligned with repeated assertions in the published research literature regarding the need for teachers to practice more than learn abstract knowledge about classroom management approaches (see Campbell and McNamara 2009).

### **5.2.3 Responsibility and Blame**

Drawing on teachers' responses from interview data, it identified how teachers and parents could allocate blame to one another. While I did not interview parents, teachers and HTs' accounts suggest that parents also blame teachers' pedagogy and often feel sceptical about teachers' competence in teaching disabled learners.

As SENT Hamad reported:

The parent is the one who makes the student love or hate his teacher! I mean, some of them take it personally! For example, the parent would come to us every day to say, "My son has this issue",... but I think this does not affect what is happening inside the classroom.

(Main Interview Aug 2020)

The above quote shows that parents mistrust teachers' pedagogy. Equally, teachers blame parents on issues around parents' supervision and support with learning at home; as SENT Meshari argued, "*most students who have LD do not have LD, it is because there is a huge parental carelessness! Thus, you would see that some students have no motivation*" (Main Interview 2020). Similarly, GET Awadh believed that parents are not collaborative enough with schools' requests such as homework, "*fingers crossed they will do the homework! Because parents are not cooperating at all*" (Post-Observation-Interview 1, 2020). HT Suliman blamed parents for perceiving schooling as entertaining for disabled pupils, which in his sentiment, parents should be more critical about disabled children's learning at school and home:

So, should I pressure students? Even if I do so, he will not benefit because [disabled] students' home environment does not encourage him to develop further! I mean, parents of these students understand schooling as a nursery: 'Let him be nursed at your school only during the morning...some of them believe that: let him go and have fun at school!' I am not an animal park, [zoo], or a park so that I can entertain them!

HT Suliman (Main Interview Aug 2020)

Despite these discourses of blame and responsibility regarding teaching and learning, HT Suliman's statement depicts the risk of perceiving school as predominantly a disciplinary environment and not a joyful learning experience. This view resonated with a quote about school structure:

*If they are schoolchildren, there is no copying, no noise, no chatter, no waste of time.*

(Foucault 1991, p. 201).

A strict approach to discipline further complicates what teachers feel appropriate to say to pupils and what parents feel about their child's behaviour and progress in the classroom. For example, GET Ahamd expressed discontent with a parent regarding a comment that the teacher had said to the child:

A parent yelled in the hallway, 'where is teacher Ahmad' and asked me, 'why did you break my child's heart and say clean your nose in front of his peer'. I was shocked because I only said to the child hey, you are swamped; clean the mucus from your nose. I was only laughing with him, but the parent seemed not to have the information from the original source, as his child is always right, and the teacher is always wrong.

Instances of teachers and parents blaming children's cognitive and academic ability were also found in the data. GET Waddah blames a pupil's ability to be integrated into the mainstream classroom, which he believed to be not responsible for teaching him in the mainstream classroom "*I cannot deal with this student as he has limited mentality! By the way; it is not required from me*" (Main Interview Sep 2020). Parents blaming their children's abilities or impairment were also reported. SENT Omar was baffled about one of the parents' comments asking the teacher to work on the pupil until the child's IQ is gone, "*A medicine practitioner at one of Riyadh's Hospital visited and told us that I want my son to learn until his IQ is gone*" (Omar, Post-Observation-Interview 4, 2020).

The findings presented earlier in this section revealed variability in teachers' pedagogic responses to supporting disabled pupils' accessibility to the SNC. Findings illuminated a shift towards ableism in teachers' pedagogic planning, as some teachers expect less from disabled learners than their peers regarding planning learning (Campbell 2009). Other findings also revealed a professional default in teachers' skills to manage lessons more effectively and inclusively, which seemed to trigger parents' concerns about the safety of the learning environment in schools. Issues around trust between parents and teachers appeared to shirk teachers' responsibility to ensure inclusion in the mainstream class. These findings signalled that the concept of curriculum accessibility for disabled learners is not promoted, as teachers' discourses around the curriculum rendered deficiencies *within* disabled learners, and therefore teachers seemed daunted to foster participation and accessibility to the curriculum (Ainscow 1991).

### **5.3 Planning and Involvement**

This segment explores four emergent themes: the Planning Inclusion theme, the Decision Involvement theme, the Accountability and Evaluation theme, and the Teacher Training and Development theme. The main findings under these themes are as follows: the planning of inclusion policies does not often reflect the reality of schools, resentment among school educators about limited involvement in planning and developing inclusion policies, teachers' and HTs' self-autonomy in committing to the inclusion ideology, and referral to the SEN or outside the school as a standard

response, and constraints around professional training and development as these professional underpinnings are not appropriately addressed and supported for schools.

### 5.3.1 Planning Inclusion

Policy-makers are pivotal in inclusive education planning (Ainscow 1999; Florian 2014; Morris 2014). Participants' self-reports suggest a lack of field-based MoE planning documents to support inclusion in mainstream schools. HT Qassim (Main Interview, 18<sup>th</sup> February 2020) found it challenging to cope with ever-changing policies and decisions as policies and decisions from MoE lack practical mechanisms on how to address issues his school faced in enacting inclusion as a policy:

To make my decisions based on the fact that I worked and lived in the field! You make your decisions once you walk in the field, observe what is happening, and meet with school headteachers! We are struggling with arbitrary decisions in education.

Qassim (Main Interview Feb 2020)

Therefore, GET Wadah reflected that the MoE needs to base future planning documents for teachers to support inclusion in mainstream schools on grounded research and draws on various stakeholders' sentiments about the efficacy of inclusion for disabled learners in terms of academic function and attainment.

As Wadah argued:

I have to conduct a study, like what you are doing now, which I conduct a study about SN students, their performance, psychological aspects, scientific aspects and their scientific performance.

(Waddah, Main Interview, 26<sup>th</sup> August 2020)

Similarly, GET Ahamd suggested actively including teachers, researchers, and other stakeholders' voices in planning and further developing inclusion. However, he stressed the importance of research-based decisions regarding inclusion "*you have to make your decisions after extensive studies, surveys, seminars, and meetings*" (Main Interview, 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020). Following Ainscow (1999), inclusive education development is a perpetual process, whereas three SENTs, two GETs, and one HT

reported that the MoE does not seem to develop inclusion policies further as could be related to the MoE commitment to the concept of inclusion.

As SENT Salem commented:

The idea of inclusion was applied for quite some time, and it was a great idea, and some people were strongly advocating for it! Now, the upper administration seems to abandon the idea of inclusion as they think it is old fashion! So, they try to decrease inclusion, or they try to abolish the inclusion idea! So, it all depends on the mentality.

(SENT Salem, Main Interview 2020)

As Salem reported, abolishing inclusion from the upper administration resembles an international issue related to inclusion, as policies about inclusion often pressure schools to perform and compete on national and global levels. Therefore, inclusion becomes problematic when disabled pupils perform less than standardised objectives in the prescribed curriculum (Armstrong et al. 2011; Hart and Drummond 2014). The following comment by GET Waddah (Main Interview, 2020) illustrates the tensions and contradictions between what policy-makers expect from teachers in terms of higher achievement from disabled learners but also illuminates the marginalisation of general education teachers from taking an active role in disabled learners' academic achievement in the mainstream.

As GET Waddah reported:

Last year, the Education & Training Evaluation Commission [ETEC] conducted a test on all primary, secondary and high school students...Students achieved the minimum required scores, particularly in Math and Science...The outcome of inclusion, Mr Fahad, is very weak! You ask me why; I will tell you that because I have to sit with Yaseer and LD advisors to see the problem! I did not sit with them! Is it their fault? Does the program as a whole have an error?

GET Waddah (Main Interview Aug 2020)

The above quote conveys concerns regarding teachers' involvement with LEAs in planning and mediating inclusion policies but also presents tensions around abilities-based curriculum (further on how abilities-based curriculum shaped teachers' enactments is found under the 7.1 sub-heading). If LEA supervisors effectively included GETs in the inclusion planning policies, GET Waddah could engage more with special educational needs teachers. While the RGSE and RPSE documents

explicated school educators' collaboration with one another (Ministry of Education 2015a,b), there seem to be shortcomings in planning practical mechanisms for teachers to collaborate towards the inclusion of disabled learners in mainstream school (Idol 2006). However: "*In the end, it is teachers who mediate policy through their activities in and out of the classroom, through their participation in the realisation of the curriculum*" (Clough 2005, p. 76). Despite the commonly held view that inclusion was not planned based on the empirical issues teachers and HTs face in the field, participants reportedly signposted that they feel marginalised from participating in policy-making inclusion (Ball et al. 2011). The following theme explores this in more detail.

### **5.3.2 Decision Involvement**

The analysis of interview data revealed that teachers and HTs were often uninvited to plan inclusion. This finding rendered earlier literature about the importance of involving school educators in decision-making regarding planning inclusion (Ainscow et al. 2000; Ainscow 2018). Also, GETs felt untrained or offered continuous programmes - programmes that were continually sustained over time to working with disabled pupils. The following statement presents almost total irrelevance of policies to what teachers observe in daily practice, which GET Waddah calls upon policy-makers to base decisions on the reality of teachers' voices:

It would be best if you [policy-makers] met with responsible practitioners, whether with teachers who work with these students or supervisors who are accountable and have relationships with [SEN programs]. So yeah, there should be meetings and workshops to mainly discuss practical issues and constraints, then overcoming these issues... *You have to put your hand on the source of the fault*, then, you can take off.

GET Waddah (Main Interview 26<sup>th</sup> August 2020)

Similarly, Meshal expressed a lack of awareness in terms of policies and working mechanisms to work with pupils registered in the Yaseer Programme, as this rendered very little involvement from school educators in the policy-making of inclusion:

Unfortunately, there is an error in the communication between departments! I mean, the Yaseer program, based on what I heard, hmmm, I had to search the internet! I searched about the Yaseer Programme on



the MoE website to learn about this program. After all, no one knew about it! So, I had to search to understand it better.

GET Mesha'l (Main Interview 25<sup>th</sup> August 2020)

The above comments align with (Ball et al. 2011) ideas of how policy is just a text on a page - words on a paper and governments need to attend to the enactment, which will depend greatly on the teachers as social actors and the material context of the setting. For example, issues around decision involvement extend to most curriculum segments, including distance learning which teachers' self-report suggests that decision involvement is *off-the-table* in all curriculum areas.

As SENT Salem indicated:

There is a massive gap between the upper administration and the teacher in the field, wherein teachers' opinions should not be undermined! Teachers' opinion matters because the teacher is the one who is in the field, knows best about his students, and knows the best instructional approaches for learning! Presumably, *there should be regular meetings with teachers about distance learning* and involving the teacher with the distance learning team, taking teachers' opinions, and making a coherent plan for distance learning. The teacher must participate in everything.

(Main Interview August 2020)

While teachers were not involved in most curriculum decision-making, state policy-makers still expect accountability for implementing policies even if policies are not well-articulated for teachers (Braun et al. 2011). Between the pressure of decision involvement and responsibility in interpreting policies, tensions with policy-makers towards inclusion may also articulate concerns regarding HTs and teachers' positionality and self-accountability towards disabled learners' inclusion (Avramidis and Norwich 2002). The adjacent section explores this emergent theme in more detail.

### **5.3.3 Accountability and Evaluation**

(Ainscow 2014, pp.190) asserts that promoting inclusive schooling requires HTs to foster accountability and agency autonomy among teachers. As in referral, exclusion from the mainstream classroom was a commonly reported response for general education teachers. However, it was sometimes ambiguous and somewhat unclear how teachers realised that a pupil has LD and/or needs additional support from

specialist teachers or requires extra help in the mainstream classroom before they refer pupils to the SEN specialist.

As can be observed below:

As a GE teacher, I would come across this student because I find out he has LD, and then I refer him! Then the student will leave the classroom, as the LD teacher will take control.

GET Meshal (Main Interview Aug 2020)

Teacher referral does not only constitute within the same school but also extends to a different school that offers SEN programmes unavailable in the referring school.

As HT Qassim reported:

The teacher from a different school would advise the child's father: '*Since your son is not passing, I think he is in the boundary class*', so they would report and transfer him to a school that offers the Yaseer Program or any relevant program.

(Main Interview Feb 2020).

Contrary, teachers' autonomy can stop the referral and exclusion process. SENT Battal investigated why a pupil failed several years and then discovered that the mainstream teacher had located the pupil at the end of the classroom, which was then found to be causing the pupil to fail three times.

As SENT Battal explained:

A student failed the 1<sup>st</sup> grade three times in a row; as he was studying under one teacher, they talked with me about him, and I asked them: *does he still study under the same teacher?* They said yes! I replied: you are making a colossal mistake...If I go to a supermarket once twice and do not find what I am looking for, would I go to the same supermarket the third time?...this teacher has a preconception that this student is terrible or weak... so I told them to transfer him to a different classroom... when we checked his placement, the teacher placed him in the corner! We asked the teacher why did you put him in the corner. He says he will fail like last year and *is not learning*.

(Main Interview 2020)

A sense of accountability in ensuring pupils' learning and safeguarding disabled learners from exclusion starts from the GET. However, a sense of autonomy in

Battal's position tackled the exclusion process by not proceeding to register and label the pupil as LD. However, Battal's sentiment reflects that instances of exclusion are not theoretically investigated to tackle similar cases but instead illuminates a temporal solution for exclusion. For example, Battal advised the school to change the pupil's classroom instead of addressing *why* the teacher realised the pupil was not learning. Despite this analogy, inclusion lies in the exclusionary enactments, which addressing conditions to exclusion helps to map out inclusion (Slee 2011; Ainscow 2018). The situation from the abovementioned narrative illuminates that searching for a label is the foundation of exclusion. Although *LD* or any form of SEN label is documented in the literature to provide a toolbox on how best to help disabled pupils in developmental skills such as math, reading and writing (Algraigray and Boyle 2017), stigma may affect the pupil's future life as HT Qassim shared:

When you request a report for your son and enrol him on the Yaseer Program, it means you have stigmatised your son; you are just giving him a stigma! Just let him live with you and act like you. Let him fail once, two or three times, even if he cannot complete more than sixth grade...Just do not stigmatise your son with a report...He could be unemployed and unable to attend college, so why do you do all this?

(Main Interview Feb 2020)

However, issues around accountability may also relate to the LEAs' framework regarding evaluating and monitoring schools' enactment of inclusive education policies. GET Abdelmalik criticised the evaluation process, commenting, "*all schools have inclusion programs, but you have to look carefully after these programs*" (Post-Observation-Interview 4 2020). HT Suliman commented on the Yasser programme, "*like as I said, I think it needs to be re-evaluated and re-organisation! It needs in-depth studying, and it needs further and further studies so it can be effective*" (Main Interview, 2020). GET Meshal *suspected* the trustworthiness of the MoE mechanisms of evaluating inclusion. Alternatively, he suggested evaluating inclusion from an independent entity apart from the MoE.

As Meshal commented:

Evaluators should be independent, not part of the MoE. I mean another system that is separated from the MoE...Then, we might identify the problem and understand the reality of inclusion, whether it is beneficial or not.

As the data indicated, decisions on opening SEN programmes are within the control of HTs. Financial gains for HTs' accepting SEN programmes could have influenced HTs' decisions, as SENT Battal commented below. Financial gains on accepting to open the SEN programme raise ethical and practical concerns about schools' ethos towards inclusion.

As SENT Battal reported:

When the Special Education Department tells the school headteacher that he will receive 20% and those who are in school counselling and vice headteachers will also receive 20% extra on their salary if the school agrees to establish SE classrooms, you are talking about SR1600 on top of their salaries. So, when they hear 20%, they immediately agree and will allocate the whole floor for them.

(Main Interview Sep 2020)

While the Special Education Department (SED) incentivise HTs and other school educators with 20% encouraging gatekeepers to establish special needs education programmes, the SED seems to overlook the school's preparation to integrate disabled learners into the mainstream classroom. For example, did the SED train all teachers on inclusive pedagogies and offer the school all necessary resources to promote accessibility and inclusivity? However, these were commonly reported constraints in the data.

Battal's comment also deduced that inclusion is seen as a charity for disabled learners, not a profound right (Alsaif 2008). Teachers reportedly emphasised training to be a missing component for their needs, as SENT Battal rhetorically questioned, *"did you give him training? Did you train him on how to work with those pupils? No"* (Main Interview, 2020). GET Azaam aligned with Battal and said, *"if I can teach him, I will let him stay in my classroom! But my integrity restrains me from letting him stay in my classroom"* (Main Interview, 2020). This constraint to training conveys that physical integration seems to be the primary expectation from SED, and SED is perhaps hesitant to develop undercurrent arrangements further.

As SENT Battal clarified:

We talked with LEA supervisors, and we had meetings with them. We also spoke with elites in the SE department, and they replied: *'Thanks to Allah*

*that the school headteachers approved to open programs in your school'. We told them we were not begging them to do it from their own pocket; this is a public school! There should be an official circular requesting him to open... but sometimes HTs are correct as they would say my school classrooms are packed with students and have no vacancy to open the SE programme!*

(Main Interview Sep 2020)

### **5.3.4 Teacher Training & Development**

*"The last four years, I never wanted to undertake any workshop! The LEA tried many times to convince me to take workshops, but I refused"* (HT Qasim Main Interview Feb 2020). *"I undertook a workshop in 1990 or 1991 in the institute of preparing leaders, 22 hrs of training... It is almost 30 years now"* (GET Rawaf Main Interview March 2020)! The purpose of commencing this theme with these statements accentuates that teachers' continuing professional development and professional learning are *fundamental hindrances* to teachers' inclusion enactment. Responses from teachers and HTs can be summarised as follows: the method of offered training is perhaps not practical and slightly off pedagogic challenges teachers face in the field, the duration and context of workshops were separate from day-to-day school activities (Kennedy 2005), and training does not seem mandatory for teachers' and headteachers' professional growth.

The method of learning in workshops, which is often carried out in a lecture approach, seemed to impede teachers' passion for training and development (Vangrieken et al. 2017). As Azzam commented, *"let us be real and not lie to one another, as I have been in so many workshops; they were only lecturing us...But, for someone holding his book like a teacher, no! I do not want that"* (GET Azam Main Interview Sep 2020). Because *"learning in one system must affect and be enacted and supported in another system"* (Opfer and Pedder 2011, p. 386), observed pedagogic approaches in teachers' enactments seemed to be relevant to what Azzam referred to as *lecturing* in these workshops (Further is found in 7.1). SENT Battal aligned with Azzam and commented on the nature of learning in workshops as he described it as abstract knowledge and containing little practical training on pedagogies.

As SENT Battal reported:

It depends on the trainer or the lecturer! Some of them would enter and feel like he is entering on students! From the start till the end, he is lecturing nonsense! I am not here to be lectured! I am looking for a workshop! Give me applications.

(Main Interview Aug 2020)

Limited practice in professional development programmes seemed to urge teachers to explore pedagogies on their own “*there is no specific experience! Except the fact that with practice and teaching*” (SENT Meshari Main Interview Feb 2020). Similarly, SENT Riyadh reported self-development and experimenting pedagogic approaches in practice “*we develop ourselves in learning these new technologies, then we teach students about these technologies*” (SENT Riyadh Main Interview Jan 2020).

Therefore, motivation to attend official training offered by the Training Centre at LEAs is often conflated with teachers’ preferences or needs, “*I only need workshops for normal students, not for the visual impairment speciality*” (SENT Khalid Main Interview Sep 2020). The above data elicit that training must be rooted in practice, relevant to teachers’ demands, and consistent with pedagogic approaches for inclusive schooling (Hargreaves and Dawe 1990; Burstow and Winch 2014). For example, there seems to be consensus in teachers’ discourses regarding the need to train on inclusive pedagogies, “*of course practically, I need pedagogical skills in how to teach them [disabled learners]*” (GET Abdelwahab Main Interview Feb 2020). “*Unfortunately, I am still in need...I, pedagogically, need a lot in my teaching*” (GET Meshal Main Interview Aug 2020). However, SENT Nawaf underlined that training should be sustained over time and be in teachers’ daily routines.

As he commented:

I want to emphasise workshops, especially training and awareness workshops for general education teachers about SE. It is crucial! *It should be routinely done! Teachers will not stay in one school forever, as they will relocate from time to time!* So, it is for sure that a GE teacher would not have experienced these cases if not continuously developing!

SENT Nawaf (Main Interview Feb 2020)

Exposure to inclusive pedagogies requires policy-makers to promote professional learning for school gatekeepers. Headteachers are also key actors in promoting teachers’ values of professional practice and learning (Forde et al. 2016). Values and professionalism towards inclusion are no exceptions; as HT Barrack commented,

“every school that has inclusion program should nominate teachers, school headteachers, and vice headteachers to train and develop to get the best of these programs. This will benefit the program and SEN students” (Main Interview Jan 2020). While HT Barrack signalled that professional training programmes should continue to be sustained over time, it does not seem to render professional learning. Professional learning, however, anticipates a radical change in teachers’ practice, which often leads school educators to consider new means of learning (Boylan and Demack 2018). In comparison, HT Barrack’s comment did not appear to articulate new means of learning. For example, two Visually Impaired teachers working under Barrack’s leadership found it difficult to learn from offered workshops; in turn, they sought to build a network of volunteered teachers outside their school to develop pedagogic skills further.

As Omar elaborated:

Sometimes we voluntarily carry out workshops between us, only blind people who live in Riyadh! Sometimes we carry out workshops from time to time, so we learn new things and exchange ideas. For example, some teachers would do stuff that we do not do or do not have in this school, and we learn about these new ideas, but if we do not have the resources, we would have to adapt it to our best interest.

(SENT Omar Joint Interview Jan 2020)

## 5.4 Conclusion

Alignments between policy-makers and teachers were profoundly centred on viewing the curriculum as the textbook and following the referral procedures as documented in the RGSE and RPSE. They reported how tensions in practice were caused by broader (but key) features of curriculum delivery, such as resources to support learning, professional learning and development, planning, and decision involvement. These are not appropriately addressed in the SNC. Teachers’ self-reports regarding the SEN system strongly align with the official Saudi disability and SEN rhetoric, in which categorisation serves as a tool for pupils’ eligibility to allocate relevant support and integration (Thomas 2014b; Norwich 2014c). However, tensions arose between teachers and policy-makers when learning in the mainstream became problematic for some learners. Limitations in offering practical mechanisms regarding teachers’ *Code of Practice* (RPSE) raise tensions between teachers and headteachers to enact the inclusion policy. Thus, mainstream education teachers

expressed doubts about the effectiveness of the inclusion policy. Still, they also gave a sense that the SNC is designed based on abilities hindering curriculum accessibility—not only for disabled learners—but for all (Allan 2005; Garcia and Alaban-Metcalfe 2005).



## Chapter 6 Findings: Perceptions and Attitudes towards Disability, Inclusion, and Pedagogy

### Chapter Overview

This chapter continues to explore educators' discourses on educational policy but moves to a particular focus on disability, inclusion, and pedagogy. The purpose of this increasingly focused analysis is to understand whether educators' views and discourses of the Saudi National Curriculum, presented previously in chapter five, shape their views of disability and inclusion, and the extent to which their understandings of disability and inclusion influence their self-reported pedagogic response. As such, this helped to compare educators' views with the observed enactments which will be presented in chapter seven. There are two subheadings to this chapter. Subheadings are as follows:

#### (1) ***Interpretations of disability and inclusion:***

This section addresses findings related to different understandings of the individual model as in categories, patterns, appearance, and extent of difficulty in addressing disability or special needs. From educators' comments, these concepts seem commonly used in pre-service teacher education programmes in Saudi Arabia. The chapter then proceeds to a sub-section focused on findings related to participants conceiving inclusion as integration. Understanding inclusion as the locational integration of disabled learners into the mainstream classroom resembled the textual policies outlined in the Regulatory Guidance for Special Education (Ministry of Education 2015a), which the RGSE document did not seem to outline *participation for all* as charted in the *Index for Inclusion* (Booth and Ainscow 2011). Also, the literal interpretation of inclusion as locational integration rendered that inclusion was *literally* interpreted rather than socially and educational contextualised. Baker (2018) argues that the risk of literal translation between English and Arabic is that meaning is not fully conveyed or could even be lost in the target text of a translation. As discussed in the literature chapter, concepts and practical mechanisms for special education and inclusion of disabled learners were adopted from ADA (Alquraini 2011), suggesting that Inclusion as a policy was not contextualised in the Saudi context. However, inclusion extends beyond the location placement of learners; further, it is about all pupils' participation in the mainstream

curriculum (Ainscow 2018). Therefore, it was not unanticipated to find limited data on school educators perceiving inclusive pedagogy as theorised in the literature (Rouse 2017).

**(2) *Pedagogic responses to disabled pupils:***

The second section of the chapter focuses on the theoretical construct of teachers' responses and fieldnotes of teachers' pedagogic responses to disabled learners. Pedagogic responses were as follows: referral, limiting learning objectives, varying instructional approaches, and issues concerning collaboration between teachers. The referral procedure is triggered when a pupil is participating less in classroom activities or if there are concerns about the pupil's academic attainment. Limiting learning objectives was another frequently reported and observed response, and teachers often considered it a convenient approach for pupils. This approach was likely related to mainstream teachers' perceptions that dedicated specialists should be the ones to teach disabled learners, and therefore limiting learning objectives is somehow a midway solution. Varying instructional approaches response was reported and observed to be a pedagogic response for disabled learners. There were two contesting arguments regarding varying instructional approaches. One argument regarded teacher diversification and specialisation as essential for some learners. The second argument identified varying and personalised learning approaches as a foundation for all pupils' engagement and learning. Teachers' self-reports depict that various pedagogic approaches are contingent on the teacher's timetable, resources offered in the classroom, and teachers' professional skills to collaborate with other school educators. There were mixed perceptions towards collaboration in the school. Inconsistency in teachers' and HTs' perceptions of collaboration could be at least attributable to the following reasons: feeling unhappy with current inclusion arrangements, general education teachers feeling marginalised from working with disabled learners, the separation between teachers in schools, and a 30% difference in salaries between teachers and SENTs for being specialised in Special Education. These could have hindered the quality of collaboration between school educators.

## 6.1 Disability and Inclusion: Interpretations

Understanding disability from within the individual model rhetoric was frequent. This section explores (a) different patterns of understanding disability within the *individual model*, (b) issues with disability and special needs terminologies and the extent of *ableism* on pupils' integration and effective participation, (c) the prevalence of the interpretation of inclusion as integration, and (d) very little data on inclusive pedagogy as theorised in the literature.

### 6.1.1 Individual Model

All sixteen teachers and four headteachers (HTs) interviewed in this study conceived of disability as an impairment. However, a few participants also showed in their responses some understanding of the social model of disability. For example, SENT Battal, who taught LD pupils for nineteen years, defined disability as a barrier any person may encounter. However, he contextualised disability in terms of patterns and effects on disabled people's inclusion as he commented:

Disability is anything that disables the person from achieving anything in this life for any individual! But if we talk about human disability, *it means any interior or exterior disability within the person which disables him from being able to integrate or socialise with the surrounding society.*

SENT Battal (Main Interview, Sep 2020)

SENT Nawaf, who taught for ten years, also articulated ideas of disability as a barrier, but Nawaf categorised disability as a different spectrum of impairments:

Anything that hinders the student or humm... from his learning or hmmm... I mean anything that hinders the human from achieving goals that he wants to achieve... I mean, the disabled are very well-known! *Their category is known!* For example, hearing, like those with hearing disability. Visual disability, Down Syndrome as in mental, and LD.

SENT Nawaf (Main Interview, 19 Feb 2020)

GET Wadah, a science teacher with a background in the medical industry, categorised disability within the individual as he prioritised the ability to distinguish norms, as he commented:

There are different types of disability, but it prohibits the person from doing a particular thing or from understanding a specific thing...it is the opposite

of the *typical person*, as what the normal person can achieve, the disabled person can't reach.

GET Wadah (Main Interview, 26 Aug 2020)

Similarly, HT Qassim synonymously defined disability as a means of categories.

However, he also conveyed differential responses to each impairment:

Intellectual disability, I see it as a bit advanced as it can be combined with other disabilities! For example, multiple disabilities, which he would have autism and hyperactivity or have intellectual hyperactivity! Usually, hyperactivity would be combined with attention deficit. So, each category has a special treatment!

HT Qassim (Main Interview Feb 2020)

Similarly, GET Rawaf, a physical education teacher in the profession for twenty-eight years, interrelated disability with disabled pupils' appearance, but also suggested it was a struggle working with disabled learners as he commented, "*Their appearance is normal, look brother we're tired of them, I don't know how to work with them*" (Rawaf, post-observation1-interview, 2020). Whereas Awadh, an Arabic language teacher for nine years, seemed to locate disability within the individual as he demonstrated a range of impairments as the meaning for disability:

Either physical, one of the body organs, or anything, or mentally, or the person has a problem with comprehension or problem with the speed of response to information. I mean, disability is in his body or something that is inside his body.

GET Awadh (Main Interview, 2020).

"*Disability is usually an impairment or a problem, or a disorder in children... disability is permanent and within the person*" (Salem, SEN Teacher, Main Interview, 26<sup>th</sup> Aug 2020). The prerequisite of appearance, as Rawaf expressed, the permanence of disability Salem commented, and the various categories shared by Qassim —are the embodiments of the medical model underpinning the locating of disability within the individual (Davis 2013; Oliver 2013; Thomson 2013). However, the teachers' comments demonstrated that categorisation was also associated with conceiving disability from an Islamic perspective. HT Qassim, HT Barrack, GET Meshal, and SENT Battal were consistent in stating the words *valuable category* along with the word Allah. For instance, HT Barack (Main Interview Jan 2020) deemed disability as destiny, "*From Allah, either you're born with it from birth, or an accident that*

*happened to a person. In education, particularly in our school, you're talking about hearing impairment".* GET Meshal agreed with Barack's sentiment as he recognised disability as from Allah, "*This student, Glory to Allah; he took something from him, but he gave him the love of people*" (Main Interview, Aug 2020). SENT Battal aligned with this perception, "*Allah took something from him and gave him something else*". Aligning understanding of disability with Islamic beliefs is commonly misinterpreted in Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia (Alquraini 2011). In contrast, HT Suliman (Main Interview, Aug 2020) opposes using the term *valuable category* as he commented that everyone is valuable, "*I mean, personally, I don't say this as a valuable category because all people and all my students are a valuable category*".

The data inferred that conceiving disability as an impairment could be relevant to SENT's share of knowledge regarding disability with other school educators. Also, individualising disability in teacher education programmes as in separate pathways was reported to be an attributable factor to limit teachers' perceptions of disability within the accordance pathway they undertook in the teacher education programme. The following comments depict the efforts of SENTs to share their knowledge with general education teachers, as GET Rawaf reasoned the shift of terminology used in impairment to his colleagues in the special needs department, "*as we used to say Mongolian, then they told us you don't say the word Mongolian, use Down Syndrome! Autism and so on*" (Rawaf, 2020). HT Suliman also highlighted the Special Needs (SN) influence of using terminologies in disability as he commented, "*They say this disability, that disability, and so forth! For example, mental disability*" (HT Suliman Main Interview Aug 2020). Advising mainstream teachers to use different terminologies in disability originates from the SENT's earlier studies and training. Their background appears to have shaped their ability to define disability and work with pupils. SENT Omar shared that the learning difficulty programme (LD) in his school does not accept teaching visually impaired pupils, particularly if the pupil is thought to have multiple disabilities. Omar further shared that SENTs are committing to only develop in their field of speciality:

They only develop in their field of speciality. For example, mental retardation, so they expand in mental retardation... I don't know if universities teach disability in general or have categorical disciplines.... But I think the problem is that universities don't teach disability in general.

SENT Omar (Joint Interview Jan 2020)

SENT Riyadh also signalled that Special Education pre-service teacher programmes in higher education offer specific pathways based on individual models in disability, where there is a shortfall of broader training on disability and special education, as he commented:

There are one or two modules about disability and special education, as there is no speciality in disability in its broader sense, but instead, there are different pathways in the universities.

SENT Riyadh (Joint Interview Jan 2020)

The comments made by Suliman, Omar, and Riyadh infer concerns regarding teachers' self-efficacy to implement and enact inclusion policies. In Savolainen et al. (2012) comparative study, the researchers employed cross-analysis methods to compare Finnish and South African teachers' perceptions of teachers' self-efficacy towards implementing the inclusion of disabled learners. The researcher revealed that issues around self-efficacy towards enacting inclusion could be attributable to some teacher education programmes not developing practical approaches to enacting inclusion for pre-service teachers (Savolainen et al. 2012). Similarly, Alnahdi (2020) conducted a quantitative study to examine Saudi teachers' self-efficacy in enacting inclusive education. The researcher identified constraints related to teachers' practice-based training for pre-service and in-service teachers, which stalled teachers' self-efficacy in enacting inclusion (Alnahdi 2020). However, teachers' comments in my research study also indicate that different pathways in teacher education programmes could be valuable if they aimed to prepare teachers to learn about the impact of each impairment (Shakespeare 1998,2013). However, focusing on specialising in specific fields establishes a sense of belonging within a particular discipline and of being an expert within it. For example, SENT Hamad shared a story concerning a Local Education Authority (LEA) supervisor visiting his school. Hamad explained that the LEA supervisor expressed concerns regarding the writing skills of pupils identified with Profound Learning Disability (PLD) as Hammad explained about the student's intellectual abilities, which the supervisor was unaware of as he commented:

The LEA supervisor was standing, and because the teacher wasn't there, he took a pen and asked students to write their names! *As teachers in the field, we know that*, umm, for example, you have ten students; two students out of ten would perfectly write or perhaps write what is

requested from them due to their intellectual ability! Three to four out of those ten, write a single word in 2-3 minutes! Two to three out of those ten wrote letters, writing the first or second letter! Two of the ten students didn't know anything.

SENT Hamad (Sep Main Interview 2020)

The above story demonstrates that aligning with the medical model of disability foregrounds ableism. Ableism frequently shapes teachers' expectations of disabled pupils and therefore determines the efficacy of integration for these learners in the mainstream (Campbell 2019). Six general education teachers out of eight reported finding learners' physical, sensory, or learning abilities as barriers to inclusion. Four SENTs also reported the same ideas regarding being *body-abled* and IQ scores as prerequisites for inclusion. Azzam, who is a GE teacher, reasoned his rejection of teaching visually impaired pupils as VI pupils are unable to visualise his pedagogic approaches in teaching math:

*As for a healthy student*, hmm, I mean, he would visualise my taught steps! Whereas blind student, he has his way [of learning]... he is not my responsibility, and even for the MoE's regulations, this student doesn't take such lessons except with a specialised teacher who is also blind.

GET Azaam (Main Interview 2020)

The above comment suggests that Azzam's selection of pedagogic approaches to teaching math prevented visually impaired pupils from participating in a mainstream classroom (Spratt and Florian 2015). However, Azzam seemed to enact MoE categorical policies in working with VI pupils, in which visually impaired pupils learn math, science, and literacy in the SEN unit as outlined in the Regulatory Guidance for Special Education (RGSE) (Ministry of Education 2015a). While *ableism* shaped general education teachers' approaches to inclusion, *ableism* also seemed to shape SENTs' sentiments regarding the MoE policy towards integrating disabled pupils into mainstream schools or classrooms. For example, SENT Hamad questioned schools' policy to accepting profound learning-disabled pupils without characterising certain traits within the profound learning disability:

If we go back to accepting students at the primary level... accept any student! Does he have SE? Accept him! As long as he has an intellectual education, take him! This applies to the fact that he is capable of learning, training, incapable of hum, or even if he is aggressive.

SENT Hamad (Main Interview, 2020)

### **6.1.2 Terminologies Used for Disability and Special Needs**

For all SENTs included in the sample, two out of eight GETs, and all HTs included in this study, there was no profound difference in their use of disability and special needs (SN) terminologies. Whereas six GETs out of eight GETs believed that disability is somehow different from SN. The broad interpretations were: (a) SN and disability are mere terminologies which reflect disability, but SN is a softer term used to describe disabled pupils; (b) SN is a label for disabled pupils which summarises and addresses their various needs. These issues demonstrate that the SEN system in Saudi Arabia has created a parallel between disability and SN. It also highlights concerns about the risks of conditioning support based on the SN label, as Florian (2014) warned against narrowing educational support for pupils with SEN stating as it often attributes to (1) marginalising other pupils who need further educational support but do not have SEN statements; (2) continuing to use labels as means for any form of educational support.

As discussed in the literature and methodology chapters, the SN term is used in Saudi Arabia. However, the Warnock Report proposed the SEN term to help identify educational or vocational needs for disabled pupils. In contrast, disability was approached from different paradigms, namely, the medical and social models. Despite how these terminologies differ, the focus on this area was proposed to investigate whether the social model of disability exists in Saudi Arabia or were there other disability interpretations related to the medical model, biopsychological model, and capability model. Researching disability terminologies not only helped the researcher to compare disability and inclusion as sphere terminologies but also contributed to capturing participants' pedagogic response to disability and inclusion in terms of how disability is viewed.

Concerning teachers who perceived a difference between disability and SEN, disability was perceived to be more profound than SEN or SN. However, disability was usually related to learning, as GET Azzam commented:

I know someone who is healthy, but he has no intelligence! This is called disability! As there is no disabled and SN at the same time, although they say this is SN, this is disabled and this and that, but in my opinion, no! SN is a person labelled as one of these SNs but not disabled.



GET Azzam (Main Interview, 2020)

GET Ahmad had a clear distinction between disability and SEN, which he articulated that disability is a barrier which anyone can face:

Disability acts as a barrier that human beings face! However, SN would be missing something, but he was given something else instead! Honestly speaking! We have students here, I mean SN students, Visual, LD, as when they need something, we support them, and within time, they carry on... but for SN students, no, he doesn't have a disability! I personally think that learners with SE have no disability!

GET Ahmad (Main Interview Sep 2020)

GET Abdelmalik contradicted Ahmad as he considered disability to be more profound, whereas SN covers a broader range of needs which may not always resemble disability:

I think that on many occasions, some students would have special needs, but they don't have a disability. However, they have special needs... For instance, orphans have special needs that you have to look after them, but at the same time, you don't make them feel like orphans. But you have to bear in mind that he's an orphan, and he has needs to be considered, and it becomes much more difficult if he is disabled.

GET Abdelmalik (Main Interview, 2020)

The above comments depict two assumptions: (a) disability is permanent but can or cannot be addressed even with specialised support; and (b) SN is permanent, and unlike disability, it can be often addressed. For example, GET Ahmed replied that disability is permanent and difficult to overcome, "*For disability, I don't think repetition method would be effective for them! It's a bit difficult for them... [and SN] It can be cured! As it gets better with time*" (Ahmed, Main Interview, 2020). However, all SENTs included in this study, four HTs and two GETs, believed that there was no functional difference between disability and SN and that SNs describe the needs of a disabled person. As HT Qassim commented on how he sees the differences as he thought SN is a broader terminology used to describe the various needs of physically impaired people:

The disabled is the one who has needs, as he has special needs... for example, special needs parking bays on the streets! Do you think someone with a disability doesn't need that spot more than anyone who doesn't need it? He needs it more than anyone else! The one who doesn't

see [visually impaired] needs someone to help him, and the one who doesn't hear [hearing impaired] needs someone to help explain ideas to him.

HT Qassim (Main Interview, 2020)

Similarly, SENT Omar (Joint Interview Jan 2020) commented, "*Special needs are the things that the disabled person needs*". While SENT Khaled believed there were no functional differences between disability and special needs, he suggested that SN is often paralleled with physical or sensory impairment, "*SN is what is called for disabled people, particularly for those who are visually and physically disabled*" (SENT Khalid Main Interview Sep 2020). Understanding disability as SEN could have contributed to articulating that effective participation in the mainstream is perhaps impossible to illuminate a deficit within the learner. This finding is explored more in detail in the next section, as inclusion was often viewed as integration.

### **6.1.3 Inclusion as Integration**

The data suggest that two-thirds of teachers and all HTs, except HT Suliman, understood inclusion as integration. This could be related to education stakeholders' interpretations of inclusion policy as text in Saudi Arabia, the influence of the categorised synthesis in the SEN system on teachers' understanding of inclusion as locational placement, and related to linguistic underpinnings regarding integration and inclusion.

Concerning the influence of policy as a text on education stakeholders' understandings, HT Hani perceived inclusion as integration in terms of policy mandate to mitigate the so-called feeling different among disabled learners as he commented:

They put SN pupils with GE pupils as they don't want them to feel less or different compared with other pupils... what I felt is that they wish SN to feel no different than GE and that he is a normal human being and has rights as anyone else, and as any student.

HT Hani (Main Interview, Sep 2020)

Similarly, SENT Khalid rendered that the purpose of the integration of disabled learners was to normalise disability within mainstream education, allowing pupils to understand impairments categories and potentially leading to acceptance in society, as Khalid noted:

Based on what they said when the inclusion program started, they would include disabled SN students with their normal peers! I mean, the purpose of this is that they will know each other and would know each other's specifications, as this will help disabled students to access society easily! He will not face any difficulties in the future since it started from the primary level.

SENT Khalid (Main Interview, 2020)

Understanding inclusion as integration illuminates the practical embodiment of textual policies about inclusion as outlined in the RGSE document (Heimans 2014). For example, "*They put*" in HT Hani's comment depicts a shift of responsibility to the MoE, which reflects how inclusion is governed in Saudi Arabia (Ball et al. 2011; Milner et al. 2020). In line with HT Hani's sentiment, SENT Riyadh perceived inclusion as integration, but rather based on taught modules:

It is about including students with subjects, sorry, I mean with other students in some subjects except Math, Science, English and Arabic language as the Arabic language is a foundation subject it would be taught here in this program. The rest of the subjects are taught in the mainstream classroom.

SENT Riyadh (Joint Interview, 20 Jan 2020)

However, instances of resisting textual policies in terms of different interpretations of inclusion outlined in the RGSE document were observed in the data (Ball 2012). For example, SENT Battal (Main Interview, 1 Sep 2020) signified a struggle to overhaul his school management's interpretation of inclusion as in physical integration; instead, Battal urged his school to consider disabled pupils' participation in all taught subjects, including art and physical education:

We try our best to clarify for the administration the process of inclusion and the benefits of inclusion! We tell them *inclusion is not to put him in place...you have to make him participate* in Art lessons! I went to the Art teacher, and he told me that he is blind, so how can I bring him to the Art lesson? I told him I didn't want him to draw. I didn't want him to shoot a ball so he could score a goal! I want him to participate in society so he can represent himself as different.

SENT Battale (Main Interview, 1 Sep 2020)

Similarly, SENT Omar commented that his school headteacher insisted on Omar teaching art activities to visually impaired (VI) pupils, as the Art teacher does not want to facilitate sensible art for VI pupils within the mainstream. However, he

contested the difficulty in teaching art given that little training on art is offered in the school:

The headteacher asked me to ask the students to craft a painting, but how would they paint, when the Art teacher didn't want him to do sensible things? Whereas at Al-Noor Institute, they craft objects and do lots of crafting. Nevertheless, normal students are not equal in their abilities to paint, so how would you ask them [visually impaired learners] to paint? In addition, as SEN teachers, we don't teach them art because we don't know! However, if we undertake workshops, it would be a game-changer. You also talk about resources, so many issues are involved.

(SENT Omar post-observation interview 3, 5 Feb 2020)

Following Battal and Omar's sentiments, integration is perhaps daunting and pedagogically less effective than when visually impaired pupils are taught in specialised institutes (Allan 2014). This is because art and other taught subjects are effectively offered for these pupils in special institutes, where teachers are trained to teach these modules, specialised resources are available, and an assigned teacher for each module is available, as SENTs Riyadh and Omar noted. Policy-makers could facilitate all needed materials for mainstream schools, such as sensible geometrics and other means for learning art. Nevertheless, would the availability of resources solve the dilemma of mere integration and effective inclusion, or does inclusion entail broader but more profound questions? For instance, how do teachers perceive disabled learners in the mainstream classroom (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011; Black-Hawkins and Florian 2012)? How practical is teachers' training in promoting positive perceptions and inclusive pedagogies in mainstream classrooms (Guskey 2014)? How do disabled pupils participate in curriculum designing and development (Booth and Ainscow 2011)? These are essential questions when articulating the placement of learning, as Winzer (2009, p. 220) contends:

It is ludicrous to assume that all students be placed in general classrooms as a matter of policy. Inclusion should be regarded as an organisational rather than an educational intervention: it is not a place where student with disabilities receive services but a way to deliver services effectively. The opportunities made available by the setting, not the setting itself, are important.

The second cause for school educators to address inclusion as integration seemed to be related to the SEN system. All SENTs except Omar correlated inclusion with a *label* of SEN. SENT Hamad (Main Interview 2020) linked *inclusion* to categorical

assumptions in SEN; he thought that *inclusion* rendered the integration of pupils in mainstream classrooms, whereas he categorised self-contained classrooms for profound learning disabilities as integration, "*Your study is about inclusion, wherein Yaseer student is already with GE! This is tooooooally [emphasis in tone] different than SE, but it is totally different than intellectual education, huge difference*". This comment demonstrates that different levels of integration in Saudi education regarding SEN inclusion remain unchanged (Aldabas 2015; Alharbi and Madhesh 2018), as SENT Meshari previously explained:

There is full inclusion, and there is partial inclusion! This is what I know! Full-inclusion is like LD pupils, Yaseer pupils, those are pretty much considered full-inclusion! This is because he lives with normal students and stays in the mainstream classroom! Partial inclusion is, for example, those who are in intellectual education and deaf, who are included in the same building but have special classrooms.

(Meshari, Main Interview Feb 2020)

Similarly, SENT Battal (Main Interview Sep 2020) noted that inclusion occurs "*when you integrate two different categories which are different from one another*". SENT Salem (Main Interview, 2020) also commented that he perceived inclusion as when an SEN unit is available to support disabled learners within the school, "*It's when you integrate normal students with SE students in one school! Of course, there have to be special classrooms for SE students, or programs for them, or RR for them...the student who has a disability can attend to these venues under one school*". These comments convey the unintended consequence of linking support and inclusion with SEN statements (Florian 2014; Hart and Drummond 2014) but also reveal the complexity of inclusion when there is categorisation of disabled learners (Norwich 2014c). For example, HT Suliman shared the difficulty of addressing inclusion while disabled pupils are separated into different floors as organised by the SEN department of his school as a response to *social embarrassment* from disabled learners, as this contradicts the core values of inclusion. This made it difficult for Suliman to enact inclusion continually, as he commented:

When you say inclusion, it means he goes out with students and lives normally with GE students...It's a lot more complicated, though... we tried once and twice and many more times! We found it very, very, very difficult! But this requires continuity, support, acceptance from this party and the other party... *The very tick in GE and SE is we just can't, I mean hum, we're tired of it* ...You can observe that they placed them on the ground

level, second, and third floors, so they don't get embarrassed or anything... It's a process of enlightenment for society, which needs a lot! It's not a day or two! It requires a long, long time!

HT Suliman (Main Interview Aug 2020)

Similarly, SENT Omar placed inclusion within the social model rhetoric, as his view of inclusion was broader than what is found in schools, as he highlighted the need to consider social inclusion as he commented:

I see inclusion as not only within the school setting but also *within the society and how the community facilitates their needs*".

SENT Omar (Joint Interview Jan 2020)

Whereas linguistic influences were understood to be an additional factor for understanding inclusion as integration, frequently found amongst teachers within general education. Because inclusion is a social policy (Barnes 2007), addressing the linguistic<sup>2</sup> underpinnings of inclusion is essential to interpreting educational and social policy (Ball 1990). For example, Arabic language teachers, such as Awadh and Ahmad, shared the linguistic and literal view of inclusion as "دمج", corresponding integration in English. GET Awadh (Main Interview, Jan 2020) reported, "*I understand it as including people or students in one place whether males, females, healthy, sick and whatever it is*".

The literal translation for integration and inclusion in Arabic is the same: "دمج" which means a mix of two components or more. However, during data analysis, I was able to differentiate between educators' comments on whether they seemed to address دمج as the core value of inclusion theorised in the literature, or the literal meaning of integration as following two steps. First, I searched for the specialised terms used in Saudi Arabia corresponding to inclusive education and inclusive pedagogy. The corresponding terminologies used in Saudi Arabia are Full Inclusion & Inclusive Pedagogy which are translated as التعليم الشامل & الدمج الشامل, as these terminologies are mostly relevant to the Western inclusion literature (Alkeraida 2020). Second, I checked educators' statements on whether their views rendered a contextual inclusion or a "mixed" place of learning, specific learners or categories, or the

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<sup>2</sup> Inclusion in Arabic means integrating two or more objects, parts, or humans into one place or one thing.

broader meaning of inclusion as how effectively all learners participate in the school (Ainscow 1999).

GET Ahmad related inclusion with the gender integration of boys and girls in schools as he commented, "*It is about educating children male and female... Perhaps I could include pre-school children with primary education students, as they are in the same school*" (GET Ahmad Main Interview Sep 2020). The literal interpretation of inclusion as locational integration implies a lack of contextual definition to inclusive education in MoE policy, as SENT Riyadh (Main Interview Jan 2020) stated, "*but again, I have to ask you, what do you mean by inclusive education? Because currently it's not clear for me*". Similarly, GET Azzam (Main Interview Sep 2020, emphasis added) redirected a question on inclusive education into a particular context as he stated, "*Do you mean inclusion in the first years of primary education? [boys and girls]*". Following Slee (2013), unpacking how "*cruel policies*" are interpreted into practice helps to reconcile the difference between locational placement of learning and effective participation as in inclusion—recognising means of integration foregrounds the contextualisation of inclusive education. The core value of inclusive education as (Runswick-Cole 2011; Slee 2013; Tomlinson 2017; Slee 2018; Ainscow 2020) outlined, is about the social recognition and acceptance of all learners in the school, but it is also about ensuring curriculum accessibility to every learner. From this standpoint, the lack of understanding of inclusion aligns with previous studies conducted in Saudi Arabia (Boqlah 2002; Alanazi 2012; Aldakhil 2017; Alhammad 2017; Alshahrani 2018; Alkeraida 2020; Alkhunini 2021). These studies found that inclusion was often perceived and enacted as integration. To conceptualise the tension between integration and effective participation, SENT Omar (Joint interview Jan 2020) highlighted concerns around the effectiveness of teachers' efforts to include disabled learners as he commented, "*Honestly, the student would be present in the mainstream classroom, but at the same time he is not there*". Equally, SENT Riyadh (Joint interview Jan 2020) shared concerns with integration as a policy regarding the curriculum, as there is very limited conjunction between what is taught at the SEN unit and mainstream classroom as he commented, "*The student is learning special subjects within the special program, but also undertaking general subjects within the mainstream education*". Therefore, Ainscow (2020) urges policy-

makers and education stakeholders to recognise educational and social values when designing a curriculum that must offer accessibility for *all learners*.

#### **6.1.4 Understanding Inclusive Pedagogy**

Inclusive pedagogy was viewed as a pedagogic approach that values every learner in the classroom. One GET (Abdelmalik) perceived it as disabled pupils' participation in group learning. However, inclusive pedagogy was not understood in terms of offering a selection of learning materials for all pupils or as learners shaping their own learning as theorised in the literature (See for example Florian and Beaton 2018). GET Abdelmalik commented that he uses competitions between learners to induce participation from all learners

I do competitions and encourage them to do the activity first; whichever group does the activity first and correctly, will receive a prize and candies. *But it has to be all the group members.*

(Main Interview Jan 2020).

While collaborative learning could fall under active learning strategies, the very meaning of inclusive pedagogy, which anticipates learners to shape their learning, as theorised by (Rouse 2008; Florian and Rouse 2009; Black-Hawkins and Florian 2012; Florian et al. 2017), was not found in the data. In other words, inclusive pedagogy, at its best, was viewed as a means of group learning and using pre-selected learning materials from the teacher for all pupils to follow, as Ahmad commented:

It depends...It also depends from one lesson to another! For example, the student would accept this particular lesson when you use specific approaches, but he wouldn't be responsive when using other approaches!

GET Ahmad (Main Interview Sep 2020)

Similarly, in the SEN programme, SENT Battal believed that his pedagogy is inclusive given that he forecasts pupils' preference for learning before offering approaches to the lessons, as he noted:

Look, based on my experience. I know that this student prefers Direct Instruction and doesn't need any aids or something! Some students would come in and tell me just give me what you have and let go.

SENT Battal Main Interview Sep 2020)



GET Meshal reasoned that the shortfall of inclusive pedagogy within mainstream classrooms resulted from the nature and history of the pedagogic environment in Saudi Arabia, which often expects teachers to be the centre of learning (Main Interview Aug 2020). Therefore, no further evidence was found from the data of articulating pupils shaping their learning (for example Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011).

## **6.2 Pedagogic Response to Disabled Pupils Learning: Teachers and HTs Views**

This section draws on teachers' and HTs' responses to demonstrate teachers' pedagogic views on responding to disabled learners. The thematic analysis of interview data illuminates the following responses to teaching disabled learners: *referral, limiting learning objectives, varying instructional approaches, time extension, referral, and extrinsic support*. Each response will be individually explored below.

### **6.2.1 Referral**

Before discussing findings regarding pupil referrals, it is worth addressing how understanding students' needs in Saudi MoE rests on a series of procedures. Procedures are assessments, scanning, and diagnostic tools as outlined in both documents of the Regulatory Guidance for Special Education (Ministry of Education 2015a) and Regulatory Procedures for Special Education (Ministry of Education 2015b). These outlined procedures are often preceded by a referral to the SEN unit or a referral to the relevant educational provision within or outside the school, particularly if the school does not offer relevant support (Ministry of Education 2015a). Most school educators believe that the pupil's academic attainment and function are signs for referral. For example, HT Barrack (Main Interview Jan 2020) explained that referral occurs when a pupil struggles in literacy and speech skills as he commented, "*The student is classified or discovered during the studying year, the LD teacher will receive a referral letter from the GE teacher suggesting that this student has problems in reading, writing, and in speech*". Concerns regarding pupil participation were also viewed to indicate a need for a referral to the SEN unit. For instance, GET Waddah commented that if the pupil is not participative as expected, the pupil will be referred to the SEN specialist or the school's health counsellor:

I mean, when I found a student rarely, if any, participates, even in the simplest things or the most uncomplicated information... In this case, I use the help of my colleagues, whether at the Yaseer program or at the health counselling unit. And I tell them that this student has problems, so let me know what is happening with him.

Waddah (Main Interview Aug 2020)

Similarly, GET Azam articulated that referral starts when he observes incorrect answers from the pupil. GET Azaam follows a series of procedures, including working closely with the pupil, writing notes to the parents, and counselling the SE specialist. If these steps fail, the pupil will be referred to the SE unit, as Azzam commented:

If you ask him what this number is, for example, 4, when he says 3, this is one of the signs! These signs start to appear to me that this student is an LD! Then, I start the steps! If he is not responsive to me, I review his HW notebook log [*used to communicate with parents*]. If there is no response from that either, I call the LD teacher and transfer him to the LD teacher.

GET Azzam (Main Interview Sep 2020)

These comments rendered (Norwich 2014d, pp. 503-505) findings as Norwich conducted a study to analyse the tensions arising from inclusion policy and practice. Norwich (2014d) emphasised concerns regarding teachers' trust in pupils, as well as pupils' willingness to participate in mainstream classrooms. These are deemed as barriers to pupils' participation (Norwich 2014d). However, although it is unclear whether teachers in this research use sophisticated approaches before initiating the referral process, GET Meshal explained that referral to the SENU is an appropriate solution because GETs are not as specialised as SEN specialists in teaching disabled pupils:

*"I am not specialised in students with disabilities! I am not specialised for them".*

(Main Interview, Sep 2020)

Similarly, GET Waddah commented that he pedagogically has nothing to do with disabled pupils, as they have their own teachers. For example, a Yaseer Programme staff member advised him not to work with disabled pupils, "*[SEN specialist] told me that you have nothing to do with him, even if he achieved 0 on the exam... as I am the only one [referring to SENT] who interacts with him*". However, GET Waddah

seemed unhappy with this protocol as he believed that he should be more involved in teaching disabled learners:

For your information, we should've been involved with Yaseer advisors, so we could have a background about programs they do; in my school, and I don't know about other schools, we don't thoroughly meet with them. It's just quick meetings! He was telling us that 'you are not responsible for them'. So, we felt like we only should teach our students, and we have nothing to do with that student, as they are responsible for him.

GET Waddah (Main Interview Aug 2020)

The above comments reveal weaknesses in the collaboration between general education teachers with SENTs to plan and work on pupil's participation and academic achievement in mainstream classrooms before referring pupils to the SEN unit, whereas the RGSE document (Ministry of Education 2015a, p. 80, §13) expects mainstream teachers to uphold "*leadership towards classroom learners...and investigating on causes for low achievement and work to mitigate these issues through collaboration with all school stakeholders*". However, participants' self-reports also suggest that SENTs do not assist and participate with general education teachers in planning and teaching disabled learners in mainstream classrooms. In contrast, the RGSE (2015a, p. 69) document expects special educational needs teachers to '*Participate in planning learning and timetable for each disabled student through co-ordination and collaboration with all school stakeholders*'. However, the RGSE document contains contradictions – rendering that most policies are practically challenging to articulate and enact in practice (Maguire et al. 2015). For example, in the RGSE, inclusion for SEN was addressed based on a categorical basis, as only relevant specialists to the pupil's impairment can work with them in the SEN unit (Ministry of Education 2015a). Therefore, it seemed reasonable for SENTs to refer disabled learners to other schools if they are not specialised in the pupil's impairment. For example, SENTs will assess a disabled pupil as if they have multiple impairments. The SENT would then refer the pupil to a specialised institute as SENT Riyadh (Main Interview Jan 2020) commented, "*because if he is visually impaired and has multiple disabilities, then he cannot proceed in a mainstream classroom... Whereas AL-Noor Institute has a specialised LD teacher who helps blind pupils*". As a Saudi researcher has argued, rights to placements in mainstream schools align with the medical model underpinnings (Alsaif 2008). Alsaif (2008, p. 52) cross

analysed Saudi, UK, and U.S. disability laws and contends that “*the medical model of disability risks isolating disabled people from their societies and making them subject to more discriminatory treatments*”. Whereas *The Comprehensive Teacher's Guide to Multiple Disabilities* documents identified difficulty to integrate pupils with *multiple disabilities* in mainstream schools given the complexity and wide range of needs which cannot be met in mainstream schools:

Multiple disabilities are the appearance of more than one category of disability for the pupil from within the categorised disabilities in Special Educational Programmes. For example, deafness and blindness, blindness with mental retardation and deafness, etc. By which these categories may lead to profound educational issues as they cannot be dealt with through designated educational provisions as these programmes are pre-established to serve one category of disability at a time.

(Ministry of Education 2020, p. 12).

### **6.2.2 Limiting Learning Objectives**

GET Abdelwahab explained his pedagogic approach to teaching disabled learners, which involves limiting learning objectives to most basic skills taught in maths, expecting less homework and assignments, but also offering individualised support as he commented:

I try my best to deliver the most effortless skill from the required skills for him to learn! I mean the most fundamental skills... I decrease the number of HW on him as I try not to give him a lot! I try, for example, if he doesn't understand, I explain to him the most straightforward skill in the lesson.

(Main Interview Feb 2020)

SENT Meshari conveyed that he urges general education teachers to decrease the workload on disabled learners as it relates to a defect in disabled pupils' memory to recall a poem, for example, which limiting the memorisation of learning materials into smaller chunks is a reasonable adjustment:

Sometimes, the student himself can't memorise. As you know, he is one of those with SN! He has more difficulties than his peers! So, he is unable to memorise this poem or this passage! So, I would ask him to tolerate it for the student or to break up this poem into two lines so he can memorise it.

SENT Meshari (Main Interview Feb 2020)

Similarly, GET Meshal (Main Interview 2020) characterised his support to Learning Difficulties (LD) and Yaseer pupils as expecting fewer learning objectives as he commented, "*You start to request from him with 40-60% of the things that you request from GE students*". Whereas SENT Khalid reasoned that limiting learning objectives for disabled learners is perhaps a proper response, as he described his pedagogy to be homogenous as he commented, "*I don't have an approach because my teaching style is only one...when you have SN student, you look after him more, and you try to limit the module for him as what he should take and what not*" (SENT Khalid Main Interview Sep 2020). Whilst the tendency to expect fewer learning objectives results in teachers' negative presumptions about disabled pupils' abilities (Allan et al. 1998; Norwich 2014a,2014c), it also conveys the curve-bell that is rooted in the school's curriculum, which distributes pupils based on abilities, in turn, expecting less from learners (Black-Hawkins and Florian 2012). SENT Salem aligned with the above proposition and challenged the curriculum in terms of the relevance of expected skills to pupils' academic level, particularly when addressing inclusive education, as he commented:

When the skills and lessons in the curriculum are unsuitable for the SE student, it could hinder inclusion...A student in 1st or 2nd grade would have fractions or decimal numbers, presumably not suitable for the student! It is not even appropriate to be taught in an inclusive classroom.

SENT Salem (Main Interview Aug 2020)

The above comments demonstrate problems in the abilities-based curriculum when attempting to integrate and teach disabled learners in mainstream classrooms (Ainscow et al. 2006; Hart and Drummond 2014; Spratt and Florian 2015). In turn, limiting learning objectives as a conventional approach was often linked with positioning deficiency within the learner (Sharma et al. 2018).

### **6.2.3 Varying Instructional Approaches**

Varying instructional approaches was another found method in teachers' educational response to disabled learners. Davis et al. (2004) systematically reviewed U.S. and UK literature on studies related to pedagogic approaches in teaching disabled and SEN pupils. The analysis of the systematic review of the literature suggested that varying instructional approaches often promote all pupils' participation, including

disabled learners (Davis et al. 2004). The findings of my research suggested two viewpoints regarding varying instructional approaches: (1) it is intended chiefly for disabled learners, and (2) teachers must otherwise diversify pedagogic approaches to avoid repetition. Concerning varying instructional approaches for disabled learners, GET Ahmad (Main Interview Sep 2020) reported, "*I could vary my teaching because of him so that he can move away from routine in the classroom, but it does not work all the time*". Whereas SENT Hamad, Main Interview, 2020) deemed diversifying instructional approaches essential as he commented: "*It is an obligation to vary! Any teacher who wanted to reach out to the student, it's natural that you must vary your approaches*". These opposing statements agree on varying instructional approaches corresponding to pupils' needs. However, Ahmad viewed his response as moving beyond the ordinary academic routine, whereas Hamad viewed it as an essential step to meet all pupils' needs. Similarly, SENT Riyadh (post-observation-interview 1) justified using YouTube as another pedagogic approach to move away from repetition and routine as he commented, "*to vary my approaches from indoctrination, repeating, direct reading from the textbook*". Although teachers acknowledged there is an 'ordinary routine' for their pedagogy, teachers often ascribed these repetitive rituals to constraints regarding teachers' timetables, resources, and teachers' professional skills to manage lessons.

About teachers' timetables, GET Waddah (Main Interview, 2020) commented that he does not have enough time to vary instructional approaches, "*there is not enough time for me to vary my instructional approaches*". In comparison, GET Abdelwahab (Post-Interview-Observation, 2020) reasoned his reliance on one approach as being unable to secure *resources* such as maths labs. Similarly, GET Awadh (Post-Observation-Interview 4, 2020) evaluated a default in his pedagogic performance compared to what he wished to offer. However, he attributed the default to financial constraints and resources as he reported, "*I think there is much more to be done which is better than what I did... I painted one of the classrooms and worked on developing it from my own budget*" (Awadh, Post-Observation-Interview 4, 2020). This comment intersects with GET Rawaf's reflection on his professional skills to carry out lessons, which he thought was professionally untrained to teach physical education given the hardship of managing pupils' conduct as well as his lack of enthusiasm about working as a teacher as he shared:

Let's be clear here, and I have to be honest with you, this was a lousy lesson...Because they have so much potential and capabilities, they have everything...They are missing a lot! It's supposed that I have to be in direct contact with them, to be closer to them and be a referee... it's possible that I don't have the readiness to work and be productive, and also because managing students is very hard, and you have to be perhaps very strict!

GET Rawaf (Post-Observation-Interview 4, March 2020)

#### **6.2.4 Perceptions of Collaboration Between Teachers**

While the Regulation Guidance for Special Education Saudi Arabia document (Ministry of Education 2015a) and The Comprehensive Teacher's Guide to Multiple Disabilities Programs (Ministry of Education 2020) advise teachers to work collaboratively, a lack of collaboration and co-ordination between general education teachers and special educational needs teachers was articulated in teachers' self-reporting. Indeed, collaboration and teamwork between stakeholders, particularly between GETs and SENTs, is a central element in developing an inclusive culture in the school (Farrell and Ainscow 2002). Simply put, teachers need to work collaboratively to support disabled pupils within the general education classroom, within the SEN provision, within the school's activities, and to work hand in hand with parents. This section articulates why there is a lack of collaboration between teachers.

Six SENTs, five GETs, and one HT clearly indicated the lack of collaboration between teachers. SENT Riyadh commented on the nature of his work with his fellow general education teachers as challenging to maintain regular contact, which instance of contact was managed when GET consulted him regarding working with a disabled pupil as Riyadh commented:

I don't see any interceptions between us, except when the GE teacher comes to me and asks for consultation or help regarding how to work with disabled pupils... But as to have something in common, no! We don't! Everyone is working on what he is assigned.

SENT Riyadh (Joint Interview Jan 2020)

His colleague Omar contested Riyadh's statement as he categorised collaboration as offering advice for GETs about working with visually impaired pupils in the mainstream classroom (Joint Interview Jan 2020). However, Omar highlighted the GETs' role in their relationship with one another, as he thought that the relationship

between him and his fellow teachers in GE is reliant on how general education teachers are attached to the concept of inclusion, "*GE teachers' are disavowing the idea of including blind pupils in general education classrooms*" (Omar, Main Interview, 2020). Therefore, resistance to accepting integration and working with SENTs was observed in several data scripts. For example, SENT Nawaf, who taught for ten years, found it difficult to enforce or promote a specific learning environment in the GE classroom and seemed to excuse his fellow teachers given that GETs are often busy with their timetables:

The teacher would be busy or restricted with a specific curriculum to complete, so you cannot enforce something on him like that... I can be the youngest here in this school, so compared with their experience, there is no way they accept or would change the classroom environment or the general environment.

SENT Nawaf (Main Interview, 2020)

Similarly, GET Abdelwahab emphasised workload and busy schedule as hinderers to collaboration with SENTs as he thought that he needs to fulfil his responsibility in the mainstream before he can collaboratively engage with SENT, "*let me do my responsibilities first so I can do SE*" (Main Interview, 2020). GET Ahmed replicated Abdelwahab's statement and commented, "*I don't have time to collaborate with the SENT teacher*". HT Suliman reflected on GETs lack of involvement with SEN pupils, as when SEN pupils academically progress, general education teachers would not be aware of SEN pupils' progress because teaching disabled learners in the mainstream is seen as an extra load on general education teachers' responsibilities:

When you ask fellows at the GE, he wouldn't know about this! Why? Because he is at a pathway in the GE and would say, 'I don't have this level of knowledge, and I don't want to because I have enough responsibilities to teach other students.

HT Suliman (Main Interview Aug 2020)

It is evident that perceiving disabled pupils as "outsiders" from the mainstream classrooms and teachers' responsibilities hinders teacher collaboration.

Nevertheless, GET Meshal rhetorically questioned the MoE arrangement in how teachers are expected to work with disabled learners whilst their names are not on the attendance sheet and GETs are also not expected to assess the pupils' academic progress "*His [disabled pupil] name is not present on the attendance*



*sheet, or the [Noor] system? And I am not the one who assesses him"* (Main Interview Aug 2020). Similarly, GET Abdelmalik reported the same perception, which general education teachers are marginalised from directly working with disabled and pupils with additional learning needs and commented:

I don't see any effectiveness from this department. Since I got here in the school, they have all these divisions as the Department of LD and ADHD, but I don't feel their existence and effectiveness here. This is because they take them there in their divisions! So, I just see that the SEN teacher takes his student and leaves... I wish there were no LD divisions or special classrooms so that you could see real inclusion! Can you imagine that even in exams, they take their exams away from this class? They undertake their exams in their own division.

GET Abdelmalik (Main Interview Jan 2020)

Whereas HT Hani reported that there might be struggles in organising duties and responsibilities between teachers if arrangements are addressed properly for vice headteacher/SE as well as vice-headteacher/general education:

SE have a designated vice headteacher to follow up with them! They also have a supervisor who monitors their teachers! If there is an organisation, there shouldn't be problems! There might be problems in other schools if they don't have good organisation.

HT Hani (Main Interview Sep 2020)

Therefore, HT Hani divided teachers' responsibilities based on their specialities, as he believed that managing the school based on speciality would help mitigate daily problems for each deputy HT. However, SENT Khalid opposed Hani's method, in which he thought that the separation between departments contributed to marginalising disabled learners from the mainstream, as mainstream teachers do not accept disabled learners when the SENT is absent:

When the SE teacher is absent in one of these modules, and let's say the teacher was absent in the first or second lesson or at any lesson time! When the student doesn't find his main teacher, he returns to the upstairs GE classroom, and some teachers don't accept them! The teacher would *kick him out of the class and say, go downstairs to your teacher, as I have nothing to do with you.*

SENT Khalid (Main Interview Sep 2020)

Consequently, the SEN department in the school was observed to be on the other side of the school, albeit in the same building as Meshal commented: "*SE students are physically integrated inside the school, but they are not integrated into the classroom, as you could say two schools in one school*" (Main Interview, 2020). SENT Battal criticised this form of integration and commented, "*you didn't do inclusion! You merely opened a program within the school, and you, the school headteachers, financially benefited from this*" (Battal, Main Interview, 2020).

Different salaries and financial incentives as HTs and deputy HTs receive 20% on the opening inclusion programme. SENT receives 30% allowances for being specialised in SEN but no extra financial subsidies for mainstream education teachers. These were found to have interdependence with teachers' collaboration to work as a team. This is because special educational needs teachers receive a 30% extra allowance more than what general education teachers typically receive. As SENT Riyadh highlighted, "*there are financial differences as we receive more allowance and bonuses more than they do. As we are blind + teach disabled pupils. So, I think this has resulted in a lot of problems*" (Main Interview, 2020). GET Abdelwahab confirmed Riyadh's sentiment and argued:

When you integrate, let's talk about job allowances, we all know that SE teachers receive extra allowances! And you took from his already fewer responsibilities and included his students in the mainstream education classroom! So once that student is attending with the GE teacher, shouldn't he equally receive the same as what his colleague in SE receives?

GET Abdelwahab (Main Interview Feb 2020)

The difference in allowances has resulted in jealousy between teachers. Therefore, no social inclusion between teachers was observed. The 'no inclusion between teachers' *theme* emerged because teachers and HTs repeatedly signified the following categories: (bullying on SENTs, SENT isolated room, SENTs' social withdrawal from their colleagues, and separate common room for SENTs). For example:

When I visited the Khuzama school, I had to drink tea with general education teachers in their common room or the HT's office. I also had to sit with SEN teachers in their common room and drink tea with them. SENTs' common room is located conveniently next to visual impairment

classrooms and juxtaposed to the LD resources room, while the ADHD teacher's office is upstairs on the third floor, away from everyone else, and he rarely meets with his fellow SENTs. Although going to each party gave me a sense of being welcomed every time I stepped in, it felt like I was going to different schools within the same school because each department was decorated differently. Each party have their own way of apprehending disability and inclusion.

(Fieldnote 28 Jan 2020)

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented and discussed findings regarding teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards disability, inclusion and pedagogy. Participants' self-reports positioned disability within the individual. Inclusion, in turn, was perceived as a locational process which signs of inclusive education proposed by, for example, (Ainscow 1999; Dyson 1999; Allan and Slee 2008; Allan 2010; Runswick-Cole 2011; Goodley 2014; Harris et al. 2020b). National policies as text related to inclusion also seemed to shape teachers' responses to inclusion, but instances of teachers contradicting what was outlined in textual policies were observed (Ball et al. 2011; Ball 2012). Tensions can be seen in teachers' struggle to implement the integration of disabled students into mainstream classrooms on a pedagogical level. Training and teacher continuing professional development or professional learning was a missing pattern in participants' responses – indeed, its absence was striking. As a result, a shift towards sending pupils to a specialist seemed an understandable decision for teachers and HTs. Chapter Seven addresses and discusses the variability of teachers' pedagogic practices of inclusion policy enactments.

# Chapter 7 Findings: Inclusion Policy Enactment in Practice

## Chapter Overview

This chapter presents and discusses the key findings related to teachers' pedagogical approaches and their enactment of inclusion policy in practice. The purpose of this chapter is to bring about a sense of how school educators' perceptions of the curriculum, views of disability and inclusion, their understanding of policies, discussed in previous chapters, are interpreted and enacted in their actual practice, and in their interactions with their pupils, whether disabled or non-disabled.

This is discussed under three sub-headings:

(1) Pedagogic enactment of inclusion in mainstream classrooms illuminates findings around the variability of teachers' pedagogic interactions with learners, the nature of the inclusive practice, and participation and involvement themes. Teachers' interaction with learners did not indicate sustained inclusivity, as all learners' needs were often unaddressed or negatively perceived by mainstream education teachers. This could be related to teachers' approaches to classroom management as in organising lessons as a whole classroom organisation, which distanced teachers from learners. Still, it also could be related to teachers managing lessons less effectively. These constraints not only unveiled teachers' professional aspects, such as training. Further, they unveiled ableism to be a key barrier for teachers' active and extensive interactions with disabled learners, which seemed to make it difficult for teachers to offer a sense of belonging for all learners, including disabled pupils, as teachers' pedagogic enactments resembled universal planning based on prescribed curriculum as data suggested. At the same time, commonly observed pedagogic approaches centred on the teacher and the modules' textbooks. Therefore, very little data regarding supporting pupils' active participation in meaning-making learning in the mainstream classroom, as theorised in the literature, was observed.

(2) Pedagogic enactment in special educational needs units (SENU) explores and discusses lesson arrangements in the Resources Room (RR) and the nature of the individualised learning environment in RR. The findings highlighted constraints on disabled pupils' independence to move around the school freely, as Special

Educational Needs Teachers or SEN specialists must supervise and guide disabled learners to RR. This was likely related to the following: schools' infrastructure offered little accessibility for all learners, diminutive attention to the collaboration between teachers, particularly around arranging lessons at the SEN unit, and disabled pupils' preferences not to attend lessons at the RR as being excluded. These attributed to significant delays in starting lessons at the SEN unit. Although the nature of learning was individualised and resembled the (IDEA 2004b) guidance regarding *standardised intervention* and Response to Intervention (RTI), SENTs were more actively engaged with learners in dialogic pedagogy. They offered more learner-centred pedagogies compared with the mainstream classroom. However at times, it was perhaps confusing to deduce that SEN units offer less pedagogic inclusivity, as learners seemed more actively engaged with SENTs.

(3) The Hidden Voices: Distance Learning (DL) sub-heading explores and discusses the overall sphere of distance learning. Findings indicated that the MoE did not offer accessibility for disabled learners to the online learning portal; however, it also showed a response variability to Al-Tinhat school as this school offered periodic support for all learners except for visually impaired learners. This suggests schools' little trajectory to extend beyond MoE policies. Like conventional schooling, findings unveiled limited dialogic pedagogy between teachers and learners and pupils' self-exploration in learning—both contexts shared that teachers are far-off enacting inclusion considering that MoE and other education stakeholders seemed to curb the very training teachers need to enact inclusive education.

### **7.1 Pedagogic enactment of inclusion in mainstream classrooms**

This section explores and discusses findings under the themes of variability in *interactions*, the *nature of inclusive practice*, and *participation and involvement*.

#### **Variability in interactions**

Findings showed variation regarding pedagogic interactions and limited interactions regarding pupils' shaping their learning. This was related to teachers' approach to organising classrooms, teachers' attendance to classrooms and managing lessons promptly, issues around addressing all pupils' needs, and negative perceptions towards disabled learners. These were seemingly related to the quality of

professional learning opportunities for teachers to interact with learners more inclusively (Lefstein and Snell 2020).

Most mainstream classroom teachers used a whole classroom organisation approach through paired lines, as two pupils sat in the middle of the classroom, two pupils sat at the right wing of the classroom, and two pairs of learners sitting at the left of the classroom, but all pupils were facing the teacher and the whiteboard like the illustrative image found below:



(Source: Mojaznews 24/08/2022)

Although Awadh and Abdelmalik taught the Arabic language to pupils' levels from fourth grade and upwards at Khuzama School, there were differences observed regarding classroom organisation approaches. For example, Abdelmalik based his classroom on a grouping approach, as four to six pupils sat in a circle working on handouts and discussing activities together while the teacher sat at the front of the class: "Each group has 4 to 6 students and is set in a circle... Groups with pupils thought to be SEN were less in numbers compared with other groups" (GET Abdelmalik Observation 1). This approach to classroom organisation seemed to promote more active learning and dialogue between disabled learners and their

peers (Berk 2011). As observed: "*Pupils identified as SEN were actively engaged in discussing grammar errors with their peers, and they were solving grammar errors on their handouts*" (GET Abdelmalik Observation 4). Whereas teacher Awadh's approach to classroom organisation was to sit pupils next to one another, facing the teacher and the whiteboard in paired rows: "*Mr Awadh walks between class rows from time to time*" (GET Awadh Observation 1). Despite paired organisation, an indication of peer learning, as theorised in the literature, which expects two learners to work together, was not observed in Awadh's lessons (Cole 2014). For example: "*The teacher recites travelling prayers. This was done through whole classroom instructional approach as in one group*" (GET Awadh Observation 2). From the above example, it can be articulated that Awadh's approach to the organisation was in conjunction with reciting prayers for pupils, "*demonstrating skills to improve aspects of the learners' work*" (Souleles 2017, p. 5933). In relation to teachers' punctuality, the findings elucidated that ensuring keeping to time and developing the skill to be punctual with tasks was somehow problematic for teachers and learners. For instance, teachers were frequently observed attending lessons late to lessons: "*Teacher Awadh met us in the hallway and apologised for the delay, as he just had breakfast with teachers. It was 16 minutes later after the scheduled time*" (Awadh Observation 3). Similarly, "*10 minutes before the lesson ended, the teacher left the class and didn't return till the bell rang*" (Abdelmalik Observation 1). This lack of attention to timing raises concerns regarding teachers' self-agency as professionals (Shchaveleva et al. 2021). This lack of awareness of time also appeared to affect the depth of dialogic pedagogy between teachers and learners. For instance, when teacher Awadh arrived sixteen minutes later than the scheduled time for the lesson, the teacher and learners had limited trajectory to interrogate learning and reflect on the crafted document. This was apparent in teacher Awadh's request to complete the document at home as observed, "*students identified as ADHD didn't participate in the lessons...teacher Awadh reminded students to work on the document at home as a HW*" (GET Awadh Observation 3). Awadh leaping to go through the *detailed craft* of learners could have undermined the prominence of interacting with disabled learners in mainstream classrooms (Mercer et al. 2020).

The findings also showed variation regarding teachers' understanding of pupils' needs, including disabled learners, but also showed that teachers understand pupils'

needs through the SEN statement. Two GETs seemed to know that few learners attending the mainstream classroom were registered as SEN but did not seem to be aware of how to address their needs, particularly when no *label* has been given to the pupil.

Mr Fahad, mate, what do you think of Saleh? Can you diagnose him for me? Because we really don't know what is going on with him, he is brilliant, and at the same time, he doesn't know how to learn (GET Abdelwahab post-observation-interview 3)

Conversely, two general education teachers included in the sample before the COVID-19 data collection perhaps appeared hesitant about knowing if pupils registered as SEN or if pupils have needs. GET Abdelmalik asked pupils to raise their hands if they are registered as SEN: "*The teacher asked students who is LD here or ADHA please raise your hand! Two pupils raised their hands and said: we are LD, we go to resources room*" (GET Abdelmalik Observation 2). Being unaware of pupils' needs in enacting inclusion and understanding all students' needs was reported to be difficult as related to the excess number of pupils attending mainstream classrooms: "*there should be inclusion if the number of students is less than 35 up to 40 or 45 students because this is very difficult to do*" (GET Abdelmalik Main Interview Jan 2020). Teachers' struggle to enact inclusion policy in practice may be at least partially attributable to teachers' skills in managing mainstream classrooms with this capacity of learners attending the mainstream classroom. This leaves little attention to all pupils' unique needs, whereas understanding all pupils' needs is crucial in successfully managing lessons and interacting with learners (Noddings 2012; Elvey and Burke 2023, pp. 202-203). Different to Dicke et al. (2015) assertion on highlighting that novel teachers often find it difficult to interact with learners, mainly when classrooms are relatively large. Contrarily, teachers included in this research sample had been in the teaching profession for at least nine years at the time of data collection. This suggests that the number of learners attending the classroom may not be the core barrier to understanding pupils' needs. Still, it indicates that opportunities for meaningful professional learning were missing in their needs (Gage et al. 2018).

Teachers' perceptions towards disabled learners' abilities in learning also seemed to shape teachers' pedagogic interactions with learners. Teachers' negative perceptions could have influenced non-disabled pupils' perceptions towards disabled peers



(Ware 2018). Whilst pupils were often respectful towards one another, verbal and physical bullying of pupils by other pupils was also frequently observed. What seemed striking was that disabled pupils were often observed to be bullied and viewed as deviants: "*One of the students walked over to me and pointed his finger towards Moath [a pupil registered at Yaseer programme] and said he is sick*" (GET Rawaf Observation 3). Pupils' negative perceptions towards disabled learners might be learnt from teachers, as Awadh's comment to a pupil registered at the LD programme appeared to resemble *ableism*: "*The teacher asked him, are you sure you wanted to tell us the story? Do you think you're ready...Do you know what mice is, or you don't know*" (Awadh Observation 4)? *Ableism* and negative perceptions towards disabled learners are still socially produced and culturally accepted in the school context (Tomlinson 2017).

It was found that the more attentive the teacher and the more intensively they were engaged with pupils, the less likely it seemed for bullying to occur between pupils. For instance, when GET Rawaf left pupils unsupervised, it was strenuous for Rawaf to restore unity to the classroom as Rawaf then used physical force to regain attention and control, as observed, "*Students sitting next to me were talking, they were teasing each other and hitting one another. The teacher noticed, then he beat them on their heads and shoulders*". In Rawaf's defence for using physical force, "*No matter what your personality is, you have to be very strict to control them, and you have to be a bit hard on them*" (Post-Observation-Interview 4). It rendered §32 under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF 1990) about safeguarding children from harm: "*States Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the present article*". However, the instance of learners being at the centre of learning in managing their classroom was observed once. Awadh reported asking fourth-grade pupils to develop their own classroom rules (Observation 3). In this lesson, pupils were more actively engaged with the teacher and less distracted than in other lessons. Pupils designing their classroom rules appeared to position pupils as active agents in their learning (Noddings 2012), which could have anchored trust between learners and teachers. A network of trust and common interest towards learning may promote more *learner-centred* (Freiberg 1996).

The interactions variability theme showed that there was a conjunction between teachers' approaches to classroom organisation with the quality of pedagogic dialogue and pedagogic approaches used in lessons. It was apparent in the teacher's use of grouping and inclusive organisation, which attributed to exchanges in interactions between learners and teachers. Contrary, passive communication with learners could be related to self-agency in attending lessons late and issues around managing lessons more promptly and actively. These highlight concerns regarding the quality of training in interaction skills with all learners (Gordon 2009; Florian and Rouse 2010; Darling-Hammond et al. 2017; Braun et al. 2021).

### **Nature of Inclusive Practice**

This emergent theme revealed little evidence regarding teachers' actively planning and enacting inclusive practice in the mainstream classroom. These could be related to teachers' reflexivity of pedagogic planning and issues around offering a sense of belonging to disabled learners, as disabled learners were often viewed as outsiders or thought to be less abled. Overwhelmingly, instructional approaches in mainstream classrooms were rote learning and learning through retention. These perhaps hindered the nature of inclusivity to these lessons as learners had little trajectory to meaning-making of their own learning. These were critical barriers to planning and enacting inclusive policy into practice.

Concerning lesson planning, GET Abdelmalik, for example, expressed clarity and consistency in lesson interviews for his lesson planning. Still, observation of enactments to lesson plan indicated limited reflexivity to teacher's planning. As Abdelmalik reported in the interview: "*They will understand the Subject in grammar, its position, and how it is grammatically analysed, also, with Object, its position in the sentence, and how it is grammatically analysed*" (pre-observation-interview 4). The observation of the same lesson interview indicated that learning paused when reached a desired learning objective suggesting less reflexivity to enact inclusive planning (Black-Hawkins et al. 2022). As observed: "*students who finished the activity on the handout... returned to their seats and were not doing further activities*" (Abdelmalik Observation 4). Comparatively, GETs Rawaf's, Abdelwahab's and Awadh's lesson plans were unclearly articulated in lesson interviews. For instance, GET Rawaf commented in all pre-observation-interviews that he *did not* plan for the lesson, for example, "*I didn't prepare*" (Rawaf, Pre-observation-interview1), "*There is*

*no lesson*" (Rawaf Pre-observation-interview 3). Similarly, it was difficult to articulate inclusive planning in GETs Abdelwahab's and Awadh's written or reported lesson plans, given that the source of lesson objectives was often revealed from what was assigned to be studied in the textbook: "*Abdelwahab went to check the textbook and read the lesson from it and stated: to use percentage fraction tables to represent equivalent proportions problems, and to solve it! There are also vocabularies in this lesson that students should know*" (GET Abdelwahab pre-observation-interview 3). However, one instance of reflexive planning was observed in Abdewahab's fourth lesson, as he seemed to foreground pupils' exploration to measurements as in making sense of their own learning: "*Pupils were actively learning and using their rulers to measure every object they see in the classroom*" (GET Abdelwahab Observation 4). Abdelwahab's approach rendered Piaget's cognitive constructivist pedagogy, in which the teacher paved the ground for pupils to construct knowledge and self-explored learning (Berk 2011). The observation also depicts that inclusive pedagogy requires *reflexive* planning making learning a "*Challenging... [experience for learners] rather than the activities originally planned*" (Florian and Beaton 2018, p. 878, emphasis added), For instance, during the same observation of Abdelwahab lesson, pupil Nasser was sitting alone and not participating in the lesson (GET Abdelwahab Observation 4). This raised concerns about how teachers interpret inclusion policies for all learners (Ball et al. 2011) and invite all learners to shape their learning as one classroom community (Brennan et al. 2021; Black-Hawkins et al. 2022).

Most educators reported viewing disabled pupils in GET classrooms as intruders: "*From his participation with us*" (Awadh Pre-observation-interview). Abdelwahab articulated similar views as he thought it is best to teach disabled learners in a separate classroom from the mainstream: "*No! I want him to learn in a better environment!*" (Abdelwahab Post-observation-interview). GET Abdelmalik discussed working to ensure disabled pupils' sense of belonging through enforcing group learning: "*To concentrate on him, even if they fight one another, I have to go over them and help*" (Pre-observation-interview). These responses indicate that SEN (and indeed all) pupils' sense of belonging is most likely contingent on the school's approach to an inclusive environment for all learners (Moore and Slee 2019). Teachers would appear more supportive and inclusive if schools consistently

coordinated with teachers about pupils' sense of belonging. Sense of belonging is about "*joining and being present in their classroom, and being welcomed in its spaces, places and activities*" (Black-Hawkins et al. 2022, p. 583). Teachers' sentiments on viewing disabled learners as *intruders* to the mainstream classroom rendered the social structure of the so-called *social norms*. Once individuals do not align with socially constructed *norms*, they will likely be stigmatised and excluded from the social mainstream (Goffman 1986; Becker 2018). Another barrier to promoting a sense of belonging in the classroom is general education teachers' low expectations towards pupils' *abilities*. For example, GET Awadh seemed to expect less from disabled learners: "*I don't expect him to raise his hand or ask him to answer the question if he raises his hand*" (GET Awadh Post-observation2-Interview). Teachers' low expectations about disabled learners made it apparent that working with a disabled learner in the mainstream classroom is perhaps impossible, suggesting that *integration and ableism remain* unchanged in schools' context: "*You teach, or you don't, it's the same [referring to Ahmad, a disabled learner], and if you push him to learn he would scream, so why would I bother myself*" (GET Abdelwahab Observation 4). In line with (Goodley 2014, pp. 111-114; Derby 2016) propositions, data showed that low expectations towards disabled learners might relate not only to teachers' training but also to negative perceptions of disability. For instance, Abdelwahab reported that disabled learners should only be taught by specialised teachers "*we don't know how to work with him [referring to Ahmad, a disabled learner], even if we undertake workshops, it won't be enough, as we are not specialised in this*". Other scholars ascribed ableism in the classroom to the education systems that run on assessment, categorisation, and treatment, which seem to have constructed *norms* in learners. Thus, pupils who do not fit within these prescribed norms are then excluded from the mainstream to a more specialised learning context (Cline and Frederickson 2014).

In relation to instructional approaches, findings illuminated that rote-learning and teacher-centred learning were seemingly the overwhelming approaches observed in mainstream classrooms but also showed limited instances of using active learning pedagogic approaches as in group learning. GET Awadh, who works at Khuzama school and teaches Arabic, focused on rote-learning as pedagogy as he expected learners to answer questions about meanings rather than extending beyond the

lesson objective: "*the teacher presents different words and their meaning*" (Awadh Observation1). Awadh rationalised that he adopted this approach as related to the simplicity of the task, which he deemed questions and answers to be the appropriate approach to teach literacy in the lesson. Similarly, in a math lesson, GET Abdelwahab used rote learning and focused on the retention approach as a means of learning: "*pupils answered the question, but teacher replied No, then immediately gave them the correct answer without showing them why their answers were incorrect, and why his answer was correct*" (GET Abdelwahab, Observation3). Awadh's and Abdelwahab's focus on rote learning and retention construe (Smith et al. 2004, pp. 407- 410) critique of pedagogies in literacy and numeracy. Smith et al. (2004) argued that these pedagogies are often shaped in terms of questions and answers, though restricting learners' interactions with one another, delimiting learners' cognitive learning into a desired learning objective. Therefore, *funnel learning* approaches seemed to hinder teachers' inclusivity in terms of offering a selection of pedagogic approaches for learners to choose from (Blundell 2021). This, again and over again, underpins the quality of teachers' continuing professional development as a fundamental element in developing teachers' pedagogic knowledge and interpretation of knowledge into inclusive practice (Stewart 2014; Savery 2019). As GET Awadh said, "*if there is a special training for us on how to work with SEN, it would be great...add instructional approaches to be used in the classroom*" (Awadh Post-observation-interview 3). Ball (1990) infers that curriculum often portrays industrialised means of *power* which coerce skills required for learning on teachers and learners. Therefore, it is not uncommon to observe a learning environment that concentrates on pupils' required retention of skills (Ball 1990). However, GET Abdelmalik was less *authoritarian* in knowledge exchange with pupils as he seemed to establish grounds for pupils' self-exploration and construction of learning (Black-Hawkins 2017; Florian et al. 2017). For example: "*Students were working with each other, discussing questions on the handout, and they were asked to double-check their answers with their peers*" (Abdelmalik Observation 3).

The nature of the learning theme illustrated that inclusive pedagogy was not enacted as theorised in the literature (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). This could be related to the fact that lessons were not reflexively planned to be inclusive to all learners (Black-Hawkins 2017), as disabled pupils were not viewed as an integral synthesis of

the classroom community (Black-Hawkins et al. 2022). Therefore, a limited selection of pedagogic approaches and learning materials offered in the classroom seemed to hinder the inclusivity of learning in the mainstream classroom.

### **Participation and involvement**

Findings about pupils' participation and involvement theme showed variability in terms of fostering dialogic pedagogy and ensuring pupils' involvement and participation in learning. The variation in teachers' inclusivity towards learners' participation was not, however, competitively observed between disabled and able-bodied learners, but rather was somehow problematic when teachers found it difficult to include some disabled learners—rendering concerns related to the quality of professional training mainstream education teachers have received. It was also found that teachers' intersubjectivity and sensitivity towards learners were pillars for pupils' active participation and involvement (Florian et al. 2017; Black-Hawkins et al. 2022)

Three out of four GETs observed in the two schools prior to the Covid-19 pandemic seemed to promote dialogic pedagogy: For example, GET Awadh acknowledged pupils' opposition to one of their classmates' suggestions on classroom rules and followed students' desire towards their classroom rules "*I agree that's too harsh, we want something less harsh*" (Observation 3). Similarly, "[GET] Abdelwahab asked one student about a math problem if he can break it down for his peers! The pupil was able to demonstrate the answer as he discussed math problem steps with the teacher" (Observation 1). This example of a pupil expressing his own thoughts towards learning in the classroom seemed to conform to the literature on the efficacy of dialogic pedagogy and pupils' engagement, participation, and learning construction (Stetsenko 2011; Hardman 2019; Howe et al. 2019). Actively listening to pupils in the classroom, as (Robinson et al. 2019) argued, not only encouraged non-disabled pupils to participate in this lesson but further enabled pupils with learning impairments to actively discuss answers with peers: "*disabled students were actively engaged in discussing grammar errors with their peers and were solving grammar errors on handouts*" (GET Abdelmalik Observation 4). GET Awadh seemed confident to allow participation for a physically impaired learner but did not seem convinced to teach pupils *categorised* as ADHD as he asked an SEN specialist to work with them alone: "*Students were actively engaged in the lesson and participating including*

*physically disabled pupil. Except two pupils registered as ADHD weren't involved with the rest of the class. The ADHD specialist sat right in front of them and worked with them alone*" (GET Awadh Observation 3). The disparity in teachers' Awadh responses towards ADHD and physically impaired pupils' participation clearly elucidates that teachers continuing professional development is integral to teachers' knowledge and practical development in manifesting dialogic pedagogy with all learners (Darling-Hammond 2017; Darling-Hammond et al. 2017). It also supported (Shakespeare's 2013) assertion that disability should be understood not only as a physical impairment but also as a combination of personal experience and different responses to different impairments.

Findings also suggest that participation and engagement require teachers' intersubjectivity to understand pupils' needs and involvement in learning (English et al. 2002; Gillespie and Cornish 2010). For example, GET Abdelwahab sensed that a pupil was under pressure to solve a math problem, for which he offered support and involvement: "*Mr Abdelwahab stopped next to one of the students and noticed that he has a difficult time answering this question, he commented: think, and I'll think with you*" (Observation 1). Whereas lack of guidance and mentoring, resulting in passive participation, was observed in a physical education lesson: "*students were aggressively playing football...as no sign of Rawaf sensing that pupils were playing aggressively towards one another... and many students were sitting on arena chairs and not participating in the football match*" (GET Rawaf Observation 1). The teachers' sensitivity to learning is a *linchpin* of inclusive practice and participation (Conn 2018), but the lack of sensitivity was observed frequently throughout the observations.

The theme of participation and involvement illustrated disparities regarding dialogic pedagogy and participation. Such disparities could be related to teachers' pedagogic intersubjectivity and sensitivity to pupils' needs, but also could be related to how teachers view the challenges of working with some disabled learners. However, this indicated a lack of professional learning about promoting inclusive participation for all learners (Booth and Ainscow 2011), but also underlined the *different experiences* depending upon the disability (Thomas 1999; Shakespeare 2019).

## 7.2 Pedagogic Enactments in Special Educational Needs Units (SENU)

This section explores SEN teachers' pedagogic enactments in the SEN unit regarding the arrangement of lessons and collaboration between teachers, as well as the individualised learning environment in the Resources Room. Findings under this section highlighted a limited ability for disabled learners to independently move around the school, which was related to the schools' infrastructure and concerns around the quality of collaboration between teachers for arranging lessons at the SEN unit. Findings also showed that even though learners were taught in a segregated environment, some SEN teachers' enactments elicited inclusivity in their pedagogies. These findings will be explored and discussed under the subsections of organisational arrangements and Individualised learning environment. To clarify, in Saudi Arabia, the Resources Room (RR) is a designated classroom within the mainstream school which offers "*educational alternatives through which educational services are provided to students with learning disabilities*" (Al Ghbar 2021, p.345).

### Organisational arrangements and teachers' collaboration

Findings illuminated concerns about *disabled pupils' independence in attending lessons at the Resources Room (RR), the accessibility of schools' infrastructure, and issues around collaboration between SENTs and GET* regarding orchestrating learning at the RR for disabled learners. This affected arrangements for lessons at the SEN unit, as disabled pupils often attended late. The findings showed this was because collaboration between teachers was often cursory and only related to who should or should not be attending mainstream. When exploring this, it became apparent that General Education Teachers' resentment regarding the pay gap between mainstream education teachers and special educational needs teachers, in terms of 30% allowances for SENTs, seemed to hinder the quality of collaboration between teachers.

Under dimension (C) in the *Index for Inclusion* (Booth and Ainscow 2011), it is suggested that an inclusive curriculum should promote independent knowledge of the surrounding 'locality' for all learners. However, instances of promoting disabled pupils' independent knowledge, in moving around the school were difficult to find in the data. This could be related to the accessibility of the school's infrastructure and pupils' preferences regarding attending lessons at the RR. SEN coordinators or



teachers often accompanied disabled pupils attending lessons at the RR. As for visually impaired learners, “*VI Josef was brought to the class by another teacher*” (VI SENT Riyadh Observation 1).

Similarly, for learning-disabled pupils: “*teacher Nawaf along with Moat’z attended Yaseer RR together*” (SENT Nawaf Observation 4). As presented in the context chapter, the lack of resources seemed to hinder VI pupils’ independent movement around the school, as there were no tactile flooring, accessible ramps, accessible lifts, or audio-visual aids across the four schools included in the sample. This finding suggests that environmental barriers remained unaddressed in schools (Barnes 2019; Ainscow 2020). This finding also echoes those of a Saudi researcher who reported environmental and social barriers to disabled people’s access to schools, shops, malls and other public buildings in Saudi Arabia (Yousef 2018). However, issues found in my research data around infrastructure accessibility and pupils’ independent knowing of surroundings validate (Barnes and Mercer 2010) argument that environmental barriers are the product of social disablements, as social responses towards disability shape the resources offered in schools and elsewhere. For example, learning-disabled pupils were not visually impaired but were still not allowed to be independent in attending the RR. However, disabled pupils did not prefer to attend lessons at the RR. Observations suggested they felt excluded from the mainstream when required to attend the RR, as SENT Meshari reported, which resulted in the need for SENTs to supervise these pupils’ attendance at the SEN unit

The student sometimes feels shy about being taken from his classroom in front of his peers and bringing him to the LD [unit]. He would feel less worthy... *He would question why it is me that you come in to take.* (Main interview)

The lack of accessible infrastructure for the Special Educational Needs Unit (SENU), as well as pupils’ reluctance to attend lessons in a segregated learning context, affected the timing and punctuality of attending lessons at the SENU: “*Mr Nawaf and the pupil were 15 minutes late...the lesson ended 10 minutes before the scheduled time*” (SENT Nawaf Observation 2). Similarly, SENT Riyadh had to pick up a visually impaired learner, resulting in a delay in attending the lesson, as observed “*after 23 minutes, teacher Riyadh came into the lesson*” (VI SENT Riyadh Observation 3). This is likely to significantly impact the time these students are being taught, and if this practice continues over time, this will likely affect their progress negatively.

These findings support a qualitative study conducted in Saudi Arabia to understand parents' and teachers' views of inclusive education (Alanazi 2012). The Saudi researcher in the study elaborates that disabled pupils' parents were unhappy about the arrangements and timing of pull-out sessions, as new learning materials taught in the mainstream were not addressed, and that pull-out sessions at the RR did not incorporate skills taught at the mainstream classroom (Alanazi 2012, pp. 168-170). The data in this research similarly corroborates Alanazi's (2012) concerns about the quality of arrangements and collaboration between SENTs and general education teachers (GETs) related to disabled pupils learning the SENU, as Alanazi also highlighted poor collaboration between general education teachers and special educational needs teachers.

Special Educational Needs teachers (SENTs) and GETs shared consensus on issues in establishing cohesive and continuous collaboration between one another. For instance, GET Abdelmalik explained the constraints on the quality of collaboration between him and the LD programme at his school as he commented: *"I don't feel their existence and effectiveness [referring to SEN Staff]...what I just see is that the SEN [specialist] take his student and leaves"* (Abdelmalik Post-observation-interview 4). Whereas SENTs opposed GETs proposition that the shortcoming of collaboration was due to the SENTs, arguing that general education teachers were often unresponsive and uncooperative to their requests and suggestions. For example, SENT Omar commented, *"frankly...I served in 4-5 schools, and I never observed any sort of cooperation! Maybe this school could be the best of the worst ones"* (VI SENT Omar Post-observation-interview 2). SENT Omar reasoned that the lack of collaboration was related to the extra financial incentives that Special Education teachers receive compared with mainstream education teachers: *"It is because we receive 30% as a Special Incentive [for working as SEN teacher] and GE teachers don't have this"* (VI SENT Omar Post-observation-interview 3). GET Abdelwahab argued that SENTs work less and receive more salary compared to GETs, as he reported

Let's talk about job allowances. We all know that SE teachers receive extra allowance! And you took from his already fewer responsibilities and included his students in the mainstream education classroom.

(Main Interview Feb 2020)

Collaboration between education stakeholders as school staff and teachers, is considered a fundamental practice in inclusive education (Booth and Ainscow 2011; pp.69-81; Ainscow 2020). Resentments about different salaries and views about inclusion and responsibilities seemed to hinder interactions and collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers. There was a sense among special educational needs teachers of viewing GETs as untrained or unready to work inclusively with disabled learners. Still, it also created a sense among general education teachers as viewing disabled learners' inclusion as a burden on their pedagogic responsibilities, given little collaboration with SENTs is maintained (Moore and Slee 2019).

### **The individualised learning environment in the SEN unit: do constructivist pedagogies survive?**

The nature of learning in the SEN unit was *individualised*, but instances of fostering *peer-mediated learning approach, use of handouts and Response to Intervention (RTI) approach, Braille and sensible materials, and constructivist pedagogies* were consistently observed. They were in stark contrast to learning in the mainstream classroom. However, the data indicated a discrepancy between teachers' self-reporting of using a pedagogic approach in lessons and what was enacted during the observed lessons. Shortfalls of training were repeatedly evident, as teachers were unable to interpret theoretical knowledge about pedagogies into practice. It was also found that the more SENTs engage with learners in dialogic pedagogy, the more disabled learners actively participate in learning.

In Saudi Arabia, the Regulatory Procedure for Special Education (RPSE)/Saudi MoE expects Special Education (SE) to follow an Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) and Individualised Educational plan for all learning with a Special Needs statement (IEp). (Ministry of Education 2015b).

Since IEPs are established individually as part of the Regulatory Procedure for Special Education (Ministry of Education 2015b), it was not unexpected to observe an individualised learning programme for disabled pupils. However, what seemed striking was that even if more than one pupil was present in the RR, some SENTs relied on individualised learning: "*The teacher then asked Moath to start reading loudly! Moath was reading...while Khaild was assigned to do other activity on the handout...teaching was individualised for each pupil*" (LD SENT Nawaf Observation 1). Similarly, individualised learning and Peer Mediated Learning (PML) were

observed in the VI classroom. However, no substantial interactions between learners were observed, as suggested in PLM literature (Havnes 2008). For example:

Teacher Riyadh told two students that they now had to ask each other questions! I want Sultan to ask Joseph, the teacher says. Joseph was facing the teacher and said I would have to face Sultan. The teacher replied: don't look at him, just stay where you are. (VI SENT Riyadh Observation 2)

It was also apparent that Individualised Educational Plans were extracted from the textbook, as SENT Meshari reported:

When you do the diagnostic test, you must start from a lower level than his current level. Then you level your way up until you identify his current level! But for fourth grade, there is a textbook for LD students, so you start with him from the beginning of the textbook (Main Interview Feb 2020).

While learning at the Visual Impairment (VI) and Learning Disability (LD) programme contexts shared the use of handouts in learning, differences were seen in how handouts were written and how they were used. For example, handouts at the LD classroom were printed on paper and often used to assess pupils' responses to teachers' *intervention*

As Moath finished the activity on the handout, the teacher informed Moath of his errors. Moath got upset and commented, 'Let me correct it, please'. The teacher replied, 'No, but I can repeat the lesson for you and give you a similar paper to work on.

(SENT Nawaf Observation 4)

This approach is well-documented in the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA 2004b), which emphasises that *Response to Intervention* (RTI) offers a research-based tool for teachers to identify pupils' learning needs in the mainstream classroom and to examine and correlate disabled pupils' progress with the *intervention methods* regarding learning objectives outlined in the IEP (IDEA 2004b; Fuchs and Fuchs 2006). However, the Braille handouts used in the VI programme did not seem to assess the effectiveness of teachers' intervention but instead used to support the literacy of visually impaired learners (Emerson et al. 2009). For example,

The teacher asked me if it was ok for me to wait some time so he could get a Braille paper...He handed a Braille paper to Josef and *asked him to insert it into the Perkins Brailier*, Josef tried but couldn't, and the teacher offered his support to teach him how to insert the paper into the Perkins Brailier—then *asked Josef to write his name on the paper*.

(SENT Riyadh Observation 4)

Constructivist pedagogy was observed across VI and LD SEN units. As discussed in the literature review chapter, Vygotsky believes that constructivist learning occurs through various learning approaches: the zone of proximal development, intersubjectivity, scaffolding, and guided participation—all of which are interpreted into practice as reciprocal or cooperative learning (Berk 2011). The data revealed that all SENTs' pedagogic enactments reflected some level of scaffolding, intersubjectivity, and the zone of proximal development. For instance, SENT Omar appeared to prompt students' learning by using scaffolding, as observed:

The student struggled to find the letter D. The teacher went to bring Braille paper and started using Perkins Braille to demonstrate the letter D and a word that begins with the letter D. The teacher then explained to the student how he should use his finger to sense the lines in Braille.

(VI SENT Omar Observation 1)

Theoretically, guidance and prompting, as in *scaffolding*, should be gradually adjusted so that the pupil does not need the teacher's direction to complete a learning task (Berk 2011). "*Omar continued guiding him throughout this process until he completed the task*" (Observation 2). Comparatively, SENT Meshari used *intersubjectivity, scaffolding, and zone of proximal development* to meet one learning objective

The teacher then wrote these letters on the whiteboard...The teacher then...*distinguished* the differences between Symbols and Long Vowels Sounds! Then asked...*what is the difference between these letters and symbols when we pronounce them?* Mohammad didn't answer... the teacher then *wrote a complete word with symbols and Long Vowels Sounds, which Mohammad could pronounce correctly.*

(LD SENT Meshari Observation 4)

The segue in SENT Meshari's transition from scaffolding by distinguishing the differences between symbols and long vowels to asking the learner about differences using the intersubjectivity approach, then switching to the zone of proximal development approach when writing the whole word on the whiteboard – all seemed to promote learners' active participation in the lesson. However, in another observation, SENT Meshari did not practice a constructivist pedagogy. Still, a rote-learning pedagogy, he directly informed the pupil about errors: "*the teacher was*

*directing Faisal when he makes mistakes! For example, pupil Faisal wrote number 11. 'No it is not', teachers' feedback'* (Observation 2). Similarly, SENT Nawaf systematically adopted a traditional pedagogy when answering math problems or filling in the gaps in the handout. SENT Nawaf was only observed once using the scaffolding approach, expanding learning more effectively: *"Mr Nawaf was explaining to Moath not only the differences between these numbers, further, he explains to him how he should pronounce these numbers"* (Observation 4). These observations suggest SEN teachers did not systematically enact constructivist pedagogy in all taught modules. For instance, SENT Meshari enacted scaffolding in teaching the Arabic language but was seemingly challenged to enact this approach in math lessons. This finding suggests that systematically using constructivist pedagogies requires vigorous and continuous training (Otara et al. 2019). Without this training, the observed teachers relied on traditional pedagogy, such as rote-learning, whenever taught materials were considered difficult to teach (Strom 2015). As SENT Meshari explained, there was a shortfall of practice-based training on pedagogies for teaching math or the Arabic language in teacher education programmes:

Look, most LD specialist graduates or, generally speaking, SE graduates didn't dive deep in speciality...So, there is no specialisation in Arabic Language studies or math...Our speciality was more academic and educational, as it lacks specific track or pathway... [whereas] curricula have become slightly harder...particularly math and science.

(SENT Meshari Main Interview)

A lack of practice-based training on pedagogies could have hindered SEN teachers in consistently enacting active learning approaches. For instance, some teachers suggested in the interview that they used constructivist pedagogic approaches, but enactments in observations indicated otherwise. SENT Riyadh reported that he used active learning: *"I think I have done everything! From Active learning, role play"* (post-observation-interview 2), but observation of Riyadh's enactment suggested that rote-learning was the pedagogic approach used:

There were two students, Joseph and Sultan...Go on, Sultan, ask a question! Sultan asked, who protects our country? Police, detectives and firefighters, Joseph answered! The teacher replied that your answer was correct, but it was too many. Just say, police officers! Joseph, ask Sultan a question, the teacher remarked. I don't know, teacher, Joseph says. The teacher reiterated to Joseph to ask a question! Joseph says I really don't

know! Do you want to pass? Teacher asked. (VI SENT Riyadh Observation 2).

Riyadh's perceptions of learning could have hindered him from articulating what was enacted in practice (Otara et al. 2019; Savery 2019). Therefore, some scholars argue for improving teachers' theoretical knowledge regarding active learning pedagogies through teachers' professional learning as communities of practice (Kennedy 2005; Ball and Forzani 2009; Opfer and Pedder 2011; Darling-Hammond et al. 2017). As SENT Riyadh reported in the interview:

We strongly hope for that [training]. The development centre offers workshops, but these workshops are very broad and general. It only has general educative aspects, and we try to use it in our pedagogy! But we don't have specialised workshops for pedagogies related to teaching visually impaired learners! Unfortunately, we don't.

(Riyadh, Joint Interview, Jan 2020)

Concerning disabled learners' participation in the SEN unit, the findings inferred that SEN teachers' active observation of progress in learning through pedagogic dialogue with disabled learners often shaped disabled pupils' participation in observed lessons (Howe et al. 2019). Pupils' involvement was interpreted as the pupil completing learning tasks and engaging in back-and-forth pedagogic dialogue with the teacher (Gamlem 2019). For example, SENT Omar appeared to be actively listening to the pupil's remarks and observing Faisal's progress in the task:

Faisal informed the teacher that his writing would be slow and he would take his time doing the task. The teacher replied that's fine...Faisal was relatively slow in using Perkins, but the teacher was closely observing him and brought back a tiny device to write other letters and other words... then asked him to write Tiger on Perkins Braille...Faisal then wrote the word Tiger correctly on the paper. (VI SENT Omar Observation 2).

SENT Nawaf followed a similar approach, as observed "*wait a minute, let me see my mistake! Moath replied. The teacher sat down with him to show him his error...Mr Nawaf kept reviewing with him until Moath resolved mistakes on the paper*" (LD SENT Nawaf Observation 3). Moath's questioning of errors on the paper and Nawaf's explaining the mistakes illustrated the quality of communication between them, which helped Moath realise the correct answers for the given task and helped Nawaf construct the means for learning (Barnes 2008). Conversely, SENT Riyadh

struggled to maintain adequate communication with pupil Joseph, which seemed to obliterate the quality of dialogic pedagogy:

When Joseph made a spelling mistake in the word الهادي, *the teacher shouted at him NO NO NO NO!* The teacher then asked him what type of vowel is in this word. Josef tried many times until he got the correct answer! My mind is getting confused, Joseph says.

(VI SENT Riyadh Observation 4)

Succinctly, whether using individualised or rote learning, constructivist learning may still be practised when teachers engage extensively with learners in dialogic pedagogy (Mercer and Howe 2012; Howe et al. 2019). However, analysis has shown that teachers need thorough and practical training in enacting more active approaches. Regarding policy enactments of RPSE, teachers did seem to follow individualised planning for each learner, as described in the document (Ball 2006; Ball et al. 2011). However, the source of learning objectives in these IEPs often followed what was required in the module's textbook, which could have undermined the *so-called* individual differences described in the RPSE. This was similar to Alkhunini's (2021) findings, as special educational needs teachers in his research sample relied on modules' textbooks to craft learning objectives in the IEPs.

### **7.3 The Hidden Voices: Distance Learning (DL)**

While observations in schools demonstrated the variations in teaching practices dependent on setting, there was a much more stark reminder of the distinction between the treatment of disabled and non-disabled pupils with the advent of the pandemic, as the MoE did not offer online access to the Madrast Portal for disabled learners. The Madrasati Portal is an Educational Platform launched in 2020 as an alternative to conventional schooling during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis (Aldossry 2021). In the on-line lessons observed, there was little dialogic pedagogy and no synchronous and asynchronous learning by pupils. Lessons were often one-sided—broadcasted by teachers—with little interaction between teachers and learners using the principles of dialogic pedagogy. There were also issues around promoting access to online resources and materials in these lessons. These could have hindered pupils' active participation. It again echoes the quality of teachers' professional training on active learning approaches, but in this case, for distance learning. Importantly, findings highlighted concerns about the need for a diagnosis or 'label' to



be eligible for educational support and accessibility to mainstream on-line learning (Florian 2014).

Findings indicated that the decisions of the Saudi education system regarding on-line learning disabled most pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN) statements, as they were not given access to the Madrasti Portal. For example, the visually impaired and pupils with profound learning disabilities were fully segregated from the Madrasti platform. Comparatively, pupils *with* learning difficulties (LD) had access to the portal, the same as their peers (Fieldnotes 21<sup>st</sup> Sep 2020). In addition, most teachers during distance learning were unsure about pupils registered as LD or requiring educational support. However, there was one exception: all pupils registered at Al-Tinhat school were invited once a week for *educational support*, except for visually impaired learners, who were fully excluded (Fieldnotes 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2020 & SENT Khalid Main Interview Sep 2020). At Al-Tawgi school, there was no sign of disabled learners being invited for educational support (Fieldnotes 6<sup>th</sup> Sep 2020). This variation in schools' responses to inclusion suggests that teachers and headteachers interpreted policies based on what they felt best regarding distance learning (Ball et al. 2011). It also suggests that structural disablements remain socially rooted (Corker 2001; Shakespeare 2013). This finding concurs with Madhesh's (2021) findings, which found that hearing-impaired learners in Saudi Arabia were not offered alternative means of learning through Sign Language or approaches that promote inclusivity during the period of distance learning during the Covid-19 crisis.

However, the depth of dialogic pedagogy between teachers and learners varied. For example, back-and-forth discussion was observed two times in all eight observations of Distance Learning (DL) lessons: "*Ahmed engages in back-and-forth dialogue with a pupil about the synonym of the word 'discover', then illustrated how to use synonyms of 'discover' in real-life examples*" (DL GET Ahmad Observation 1). Similarly, GET Wadah asked a pupil to elaborate on an answer. "*Pupil Ebrahim answered Cell! So, what do we call when two particles get together? Teacher asked? It is a component, Ebrahim replied. Okay, give me an example of something with two particles in our body cells. Carbohydrate! Excellent, the teacher commented*" (DL GET Wadah Observation 1). In contrast, GET Azaam did not answer one of the pupils' questions. The pupil seemed confused about a math problem, and instead of engaging in dialogic pedagogy with the pupil, the teacher informed him, "*lets focus*

*on the lesson*” (DL GET Azzam Observation 2). In the interview, GET Azzam raised scepticism about distance learning, reporting that learning should be postponed: *“If there is no returning to school, just postpone... you are just spending a lot on very trivial things! There is no productivity! Let’s not lie to one another. There is no productivity and no follow-up”* (GET Azzam Main Interview 2020). Azzam’s perceptions towards online learning disposed him to query the validity of dialogic pedagogy with learners, but these perceptions also illuminated concerns about the quality of training on promoting dialogic pedagogy (Gordon 2009; Ertmer et al. 2012; Mercer and Howe 2012; Souleles 2017). For example, teachers’ comments in the interviews indicated the absence of training before implementing online learning:

There is no workshop explaining my role in this... based on what we heard, the lesson will be pre-taught [pre-recorded], and you [as a teacher] are requested to initiate a dialogue to discuss with students! But we should’ve practised this before we implemented it.

(GET Waddah Main Interview Sep 2020)

Similarly,

The teacher should be trained to use such a channel! This should have been the case before the coronavirus pandemic! While the teacher works at school, he should be trained to use it and attend workshops on this platform.

(SENT Khalid Main Interview Sep 2020)

Learning materials were the module textbooks posted on the Madrasti portal and an electronic whiteboard the teachers sometimes used for illustration. These learning materials seemed to align with the structure of the Madrasti Portal, which could have hindered learners and teachers from employing more constructivist learning. For instance, each lesson on the portal had a link with a specific page number in the textbook:

When I accessed the portal, I observed teachers’ timetables for each module and teacher’s assigned lessons with a link to the textbook’s page number.

(Fieldnotes 13 Sep 2020 at Al-Tinhat School)

During the visit to the Al-Tinhat school, I observed GET Ahmad’s pedagogic enactments face-to-face, as there were constraints to accessing lessons online. Ahmad was not prepared and did not readily procure learning materials, but instead,

he looked edgily in abandoned boxes to locate the module's textbook: "*GET Ahmad was looking for Lughaty textbook in the school as he went to search in the boxes*" (Fieldnotes 13<sup>th</sup> Sep 2020). In math lessons, learners were expected to read the question about a math problem in the textbook and then provide answers—suggesting retention in learning

Mr Azzam went to the portal and asked students to look at the activity in the textbook. The teacher asks students to read the exercise and calls on each student's name to answer the activity...then asks them to write correct answers on their textbooks. The teacher told learners they might leave once they finished writing the activity in the textbook.

(DL GET Azzam, Observation 1)

Instances of pupils and teachers simultaneously exploring learning in synchronous learning were not observed. Instead, teachers often broadcast lessons as a means of *knowledge transfer* to learners (Pokorný 2023). Therefore, pupils had no opportunity to participate and shape their learning in online sessions, as learners were seemingly viewed as mere knowledge receivers (Singh and Richards 2006). For instance, "*students' cameras were switched off*" (DL GET Meshal Observation 1), "*The teacher refused to allow students to open their cameras, and he used his smartphone camera to broadcast the lesson*" (DL GET Ahmad Observations 1&2). There was only one exception: one of the eight observations entailed learners' use of *asynchronous* learning (Glenn 2018; Pokhrel and Chhetri 2021). In a science lesson, GET Waddah asked pupils to carry out an experiment at home using a piece of bread to experiment with fungus as follows:

Fungus like to live on dead objects but also can live on life objects. The teacher asked pupils to carry out an experiment at their homes. Try to put a piece of bread in a bag, one in a fridge and the other outside at room temperature, and explain the difference between them in the next lesson.

(DL GET Waddah Observation 2)

All of the above observations of distance learning indeed revealed the structural disablement of learners, particularly when Covid-19 hit the education system in Saudi Arabia. However, the variation in schools' responses was noticeable, as one school offered educational support for all learners, whereas the other did not. It was evident in the observations that disabled learners were not actively accessing the mainstream. Also, all learners could be at risk due to the lack of constructivist

pedagogy employed on-line, enabling them to make learning more meaningful. It also highlighted that even when teachers had access to online resources, pupils did not explore learning on their own, and only one observation entailed traits of asynchronous learning. Conclusively, the findings revealed the *urgency* of re-assessing the quality of professional development and considering new teacher training in inclusive pedagogies in the online learning environment.

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

In each of the schools, inclusion was systematically enacted only as locational placement of disabled learners in mainstream classrooms (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Runswick-Cole 2011; Conner 2016; Derby 2016; Harris et al. 2020b; Goei et al. 2021). Enacting inclusion as integration aligns with the Saudi MoE definition of inclusion in the RGSE document regarding inclusion as locational integration based on categorising a particular group of learners (Ministry of Education 2015b). SEN categorisation, therefore, seemed to influence teachers' judgments about the eligibility of pupils' integration in the mainstream classroom (Braun et al. 2021). Some scholars have argued that categorisation in SEN incorporates psychometric assessments into mainstream education and disability (See for example Thomas 2014b). Therefore, the abilities-based-curriculum did not only seem to hinder disabled pupils' participation in the classroom but further suggests that pupils who are thought to be struggling in the abilities-based system are likely to be at risk of being excluded from the mainstream classroom (Cline and Frederickson 2014). Pedagogic approaches such as rote-learning and teacher-centred pedagogies were overwhelming in mainstream classrooms, whether in conventional schooling or in distance learning. This was related to the lack of practice-based training in learner-centred pedagogies (Forlin et al. 2009; Opfer and Pedder 2011; Darling-Hammond et al. 2017). In addition, teachers were sceptical towards one another's professional competence. In turn, this seemed to affect the quality of interactions between them and the extent to which teachers supported or opposed disabled learners' inclusion. Succinctly, inclusive education policies in Saudi Arabia remain a paradox, given that there is a mandate for schools to be inclusive. Still, there is little training for teachers, schools have inaccessible infrastructures, and the individual model of disability persists. Therefore, there was little inclusive enactment of pedagogy in schools included in the sample. This central finding replicates earlier Saudi literature, as

integration was the broad theme of research exploring how schools enact inclusion (Alanazi 2012; Alhammad 2017; Alshahrani 2018; Algraigray 2019; Alkeraida 2020; Alkhunini 2021).

## Chapter 8 Discussion and Conclusion

### Chapter Overview

As presented in the introduction chapter, this research employed the construct of inclusion as policy and practice as a lens to explore the meaning of inclusion and ways of enacting inclusive education in the Saudi school context. Uncertainties about inclusion propelled some scholars to argue that research needs to explore how inclusion is continuously planned, developed, and enacted (Ainscow 1991; Ainscow 1999; Booth and Ainscow 2011; Runswick-Cole 2011; Slee 2018). In line with these scholars' recommendations, the research aimed to understand: (a) how inclusion as a policy and practice is developing in mainstream schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; and (b) how textual policies regarding the inclusion of disabled learners are differently interpreted and enacted, because it is in the enactment of inclusive education that the policy succeeds or fails, rather than through the act of *policy-making* (Ball 1990; Ball et al. 2011; Maguire et al. 2015). These research aims commenced my research journey of exploring the variability, dilemmas, and views of inclusion as a policy, but also helped to capture how inclusive learning is theorised in the Western literature, regarding inviting and valuing every learner to participate, and how this is pedagogically enacted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (Allan 2005; Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011; Spratt and Florian 2015; Braun et al. 2021).

However, the very theoretical foundation for this research was the social model of disability. The social model of disability, as discussed in the literature review chapter (Section 2.1.1), views disability as a product of social and cultural disablement, which is regarded as distinct from the impairment itself (Oliver 2013; Barnes 2019). The social model has been considered political (Shakespeare 2013). Therefore it was reasonable to adopt the policy enactment theory proposed by (Ball et al. 2011), to understand better how teachers as social actors make meaning of policies, and enact them in practice. As these theories anchored my theoretical framework, I articulated three research questions. The research questions were as follows:

**RQ1.** What are the alignments or tensions between educators' knowledge, understandings and practice of inclusion in schools and classrooms, the Saudi National Curriculum and other policies related to disability and inclusive education in primary schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia?

**RQ2.** How do primary school educators in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, perceive the current approach to supporting disabled learners?

**RQ3.** To what extent do primary school educators in Riyadh/Saudi Arabia enact inclusion policies for disabled learners in mainstream classrooms?

## **8.1 Addressing The Research Questions**

**RQ1. What are the alignments or tensions between educators' knowledge, understandings and practice of inclusion in schools and classrooms, the Saudi National Curriculum and other policies related to disability and inclusive education in primary schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia?**

Findings presented in chapters five and seven suggested mixed views regarding the Saudi National Curriculum (SNC), although school educators' contempt towards the SNC was prominent. Most school educators raised tensions about funding and pedagogic resources offered for schools, a limited trajectory for teachers to enact and make meaning from policies, constraints to the quality of professional learning provided for teachers, and a lack of practical mechanisms for enacting inclusion policies. Crucially, tensions between school educators and policy-makers arose when learning objectives in the curriculum were prescribed based on abilities, making it significantly challenging for teachers to incorporate inclusive pedagogies (Brennan et al. 2021). In contrast, alignments were often in line with the Saudi MoE-prescribed curriculum, and when using referral procedures to the SEN unit or another school corresponding to policies in the Regulatory Guidance for Special Education (RGSE) and Regulatory Procedures for Special Education (RPSE) documents (Ministry of Education 2015a,b).

It was a significant undertaking to address tensions and alignments regarding the Saudi National Curriculum (SNC) and inclusion policies because participants' overwhelming perception was that the curriculum was simply the learning objectives outlined in the module's textbook. However in exploring the implicit understanding of the curriculum in school educators' comments, I unveiled discontent among most participants about the curriculum arrangements. I must consider definitions provided

by scholars in the literature to discuss tensions and alignments regarding the SNC. The curriculum has been defined as follows:

Not only the official list of courses offered by the school... but also to the process, contents, activities, and organisation of the educational program actually created in schools by teachers, students, and administrators.

(Walker and Soltis 2004, p. 1)

As findings in chapters five and seven corroborated, the reality of exclusion is that structural disablement through definitions in the Saudi National Curriculum focused on individual pupils' abilities (Allan 2008). My research findings supported the view that learning was planned and prescribed based on a determinist idea about abilities in these education settings, as proscribed in the SNC (Black-Hawkins and Florian 2012; Knight and Crick 2022). The determinist view about learners' abilities made it challenging for teachers to respond inclusively and promote participation for all learners. Challenges to lend credibility to teachers' stories and practices are seen in observations, suggesting that inclusion as a policy *cannot be enacted* if the curriculum poses antithetical values to inclusion (Slee and Allan 2001). Some scholars have argued that an abilities-based curriculum functions on a bell curve, which anticipates that the majority of 'average' learners benefit from ordinary pedagogies and resources offered in the school but that there would also be learners performing lower or higher than average *despite* the nature of learning in the classroom (Florian 2015). Learners' abilities, thus, are classified to identify pupils with SEN and learners who need additional support beyond those traditional 'average' learners (Florian 2015). This view of learners was a fundamental characteristic of the SNC, in which assessments in the SEN and the mainstream classroom are enacted to identify impairments and educational needs in Saudi Arabia (Alhammad 2017).

Identifying needs based on assessments and abilities was critiqued in the literature. For example, Stuebing et al. (2002) conducted a meta-analysis to examine the discrepancies between psychometric assessments and identifying learning disabilities. They found little evidence to support the belief that IQ and relevant psychometric assessments correctly diagnose specific learning needs. Stuebing et al. (2002) further contend that other alternative assessments to IQ tests may retain



similar determinist views of the learners, which are also unfeasible in pinpointing social or functional needs. My research findings suggested there was reliance on determining the ability and biological forms of assessments in the Saudi National Curriculum, which is a reported constraint across education systems around the globe (Anderson-Levitt 2008, pp. 359). My research findings have shown that the conflict between biological assumptions in the curriculum and pressure on school educators to be inclusive is "*far from easy*" (Ainscow 2008, p. 244). As gatekeepers commented in chapters five and six, they faced challenges mainly when resources and other means in the curriculum were not inclusively addressed and offered for school educators in mainstream schools (Ainscow 2008). Most school educators included in my research sample have raised concerns about the physical structure of schools and the resources offered in the mainstream.

Structural, environmental, and perceptual constraints towards disability and inclusion hinder curriculum accessibility for disabled learners (Oliver 1990; Oliver and Barnes 2010). For example, there was an apparent dispute in teachers' comments towards the resources offered to schools and the accessibility of school buildings. These disputes were articulated along with the quality of Saudi government-allocated funding schools should have received and the level of participation in influencing and making policies. Gale et al. (2017) argue that the shortage of funding and resources for schools significantly affects inclusive education in terms of offering pedagogic resources and professional learning, which seemed evident in my research findings that substantially impeded the enactment of inclusion. These pressing constraints of resources for the SNC echoed those of a Saudi researcher who found similar findings. Alanazi (2012) urged Saudi policy-makers to recognise the significant shortfall of resources offered for mainstream classrooms and the lack of infrastructure for accessibility in schools. My research findings corroborate Alanazi's (2012) recommendations but also reconcile with Norwich's segment on Williams et al. (2009) debate about the efficacy of the SEN system. Norwich asserts that resources and teachers' training should be fundamentally focused on the mainstream classroom because most referred pupils to the SEN provision are not receiving adequate learning opportunities in the mainstream classroom (Williams et al. 2009).

In contrast, Connor and Ferri (2007) refute the influence of the material context on the inclusivity of learning in the mainstream classroom. Connor and Ferri (2007) argue that there will always be claims about the shortcomings of resources to accommodate disabled pupils, suggesting instead that negative perceptions towards inclusion are the main hindrances to inclusive practice. While my research findings align with the impact of negative perceptions towards disability on school practitioners' enactments of inclusion (Further is found under **RQ.2, RQ.3**), my research data revealed that the deficiency of pedagogic and other resources in the school was undoubtedly notable. Limitations to resources were also challenging when viewed in conjunction with the quality of involvement between school educators and the MoE. School educators' comments in chapters 5,6 and 7 reverberated sentiments of being marginalised from participating in the inclusion mandate and being unheard regarding what they needed to make the enactment of inclusion possible.

The overall concern learnt from the findings of my research is the involvement between the MoE and social actors of policies illuminated a lack of field-based curriculum development and planning for the practical mechanisms for inclusion, which has been argued by (Ainscow 1999). The gap between the reality of day-to-day schooling and the unwavering policies in the Saudi National curriculum distanced school educators from actively participating in inclusion policies. Saudi MoE decisions and curricular objectives did not account for teachers' professional learning and development, were not thoroughly explained to school educators, and policies about the curriculum contradicted one another, which these constraints to policies are well-reported in the literature (Ball et al. 2011; Braun et al. 2011; Maguire et al. 2015). These constraints suggest a *magnitude* of disconnect between policy stakeholders and schools. The gap between policy created by the MoE and teachers raised profound concerns about HTs' leadership skills in advocating for schools' needs and the MoE's role in planning and coordinating the inclusion mandate within the national curriculum.

Eddy-Spicer et al. (2019) conducted a multidimensional study using a systematic literature review, surveys, interviews, and case studies methods to explore headteachers' (HTs) performance of the leadership model in England. The researchers concluded that trust and accountability between HTs and the body of

practice (for example, the MoE) are central elements for effective performance leadership. The researcher also reported that a decline in HTs' leadership performance is inevitable, particularly if the body of practice is not responding to the daily challenges HTs face in schools. Therefore, uncertainties among gatekeepers about inclusion as a policy and the SEN system in this contemporary research were unsurprising. A rediscovering of the gap between policy bodies, school educators and HTs' leadership role in this gap should not be underestimated, given that there are several Saudi research studies which found the same constraint (See for example Alhammad 2017; Alshahrani 2018; Alkhunini 2021).

Concerning planning and preparation, the Saudi MoE defines inclusion as the locational integration of disabled learners rather than aiming for effective participation for all. This position does not, therefore, require policy-makers to include practical mechanisms for school educators regarding maximising participation in the curriculum. My research findings have also shown that referral to the SEN was appropriate when prescribed curriculum objectives were too challenging for learners, similar to what (Allan 2008) has argued. In addition, the shortcomings of training for school educators on inclusive practice created challenges to inclusive planning and delivery. As Morris (2014) observed, there is a conspicuous alignment between training and inclusive enactment. SNC planning and development policies render inclusion merely the locational integration of disabled learners. The SNC's position on inclusion prevents adequate theorising and development of a relevant framework for practice in the Saudi context. Although curricula are becoming increasingly globalised (Anderson-Levitt 2008), the challenge for the SNC lies in the development of a national framework for inclusion which relinquishes the deficiency model, helps teachers to develop more inclusive practices, and promotes teacher agency in interpreting inclusion policies (Barrett et al. 2015). For example, the RGSE and RPSE (Ministry of Education 2015a,b) provide broad suggestions on working with disabled learners but expect teachers not to deviate from what is prescribed in the modules' textbook. Whereas a Saudi *national framework* for inclusive education seeks to plan inclusion relevant to barriers school educators reported in the findings and expound pedagogic practices in the interest of all learners, by which teachers construe inclusion based on the *reality* of different encounters for learning (Ainscow et al. 2006). Although this may render

school educators to have a complete control of the inclusion agenda, which may result in a conflict of interest between inclusion as a policy of principles and school educators' attitudes towards inclusion, the message that needs to be conveyed is that the Saudi MoE must recognise that inclusion is an interactive and dynamic process, and therefore it is necessary for teachers to have a toolbox as a reference for *good practice* and a trajectory for teacher autonomy to enact in accordance with *all pupils' needs*.

## **RQ2. How do primary school educators in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, perceive the current approach to supporting disabled learners?**

Overwhelmingly, school educators were disgruntled with the current approach to supporting disabled learners. Before I discuss this main finding in more detail, I must reconcile school educators' view of disability as impairment, and their view of inclusion as locational integration, with their positions towards the current approach to supporting disabled learners. As presented in chapters five and six, disability was commonly viewed as a deficiency within the individual (Oliver 1990; Barnes and Mercer 2010), and therefore disabled learners were considered "*as 'other' and outside of a 'normal' frame of reference*" (Barton 1997, p. 232). The "outside of a normal frame", as Barton inferred, aligned with the fact that school educators viewed inclusion in chapter six based on abilities. The negative perception of disability rendered ableism to be socially learned and culturally structured (Campbell 2001; Cherney 2011; Campbell 2019). The conceptual parallel between deficiency and integration combined functionalist and materialist positions towards disability and inclusion, formulating the idea of the *perfect* school (Barnes 1996). My research findings showed that negative perceptions and lack of professional development and professional learning have at least been attributed to holding school educators in contempt for the current Saudi approach to inclusion. The discussion will, therefore, focus on the interrelationship between the individual model of disability as applied in the processes of SEN and integration, issues about professional learning, and concerns about collaboration between school educators.

Unambiguously, school educators' interpretations of disability and inclusion are analogous to the MoE policies regarding disability and the inclusion of disabled learners, although many school educators included in the research opposed the Saudi inclusion mandate. However, a possible cause for inclusion policy in Saudi

Arabia and the participants included in this study to arrive at the *integration* junction is perhaps related to the symbolic conjunction of the SEN system with integration (Ferguson 2008). In the literature, inclusion encompasses the diversity of all learners rather than a rigid view of inclusion as the physical integration of learners (Ainscow 1999). However, the Special Education system in Saudi Arabia, which is similar to SEN, seemed problematic for teachers as school educators relied on labelling as a pre-condition for educational support. This finding regarding labelling aligns with (Mittler 2000; Farrell et al. 2007) assumption that learners are often excluded from the mainstream classroom or outside the school if no label is attained.

However at times, the findings showed that the quality of teacher education programmes before joining the teaching profession and professional development seemed to play a critical role in shaping educators' views towards disability, inclusion, and the enactment of inclusion policies (Forlin et al. 2009; Bosma and Goei 2021). Comparatively, Kearney (2013) conducted a study in Ireland to understand post-primary teachers' attitudes toward including immigrants in the mainstream. Kearney (2013) found that although teachers' personal beliefs towards immigrants shaped the inclusive response for these learners, training was a fundamental factor in promoting or hindering teachers' acceptance of inclusion. My research findings also align with Kearney's (2013) findings, in which school educators included in my research sample reported concerns regarding the quality of pre-service training and professional development programmes offered to them. Chapters five and seven concluded that teachers lacked pedagogic practice in pre-service and in-service training, which impeded their ability to foster inclusive learning for all. Several studies found a connection between the quality of training and positive attitudes towards learners and inclusive practice. Al Ghamdi (2015) signifies that teacher education programmes in Saudi universities and relevant training centres should not reinstate traditional pedagogical repertoire. Instead, teachers' training must reconcile with the pedagogic challenges in the classroom and offer more robust approaches to learning (Al Ghamdi 2015). Al Ghamdi's (2015) critique of the quality of training and development in Saudi Arabia inferred that it was challenging for teachers in my research study to accept the Saudi inclusion mandate, given that little training is offered in terms of inclusive practice (Forlin 2010; Slee 2010). The findings of my research study add that viewing the inclusion of disabled

learners as a burden often coincided with poor quality training for pre-service teachers and very little development and professional learning for in-service teachers, all of which are well documented in the literature as constraints for positive sentiment towards disability and inclusion (Guskey 2002; Ainscow and West 2006; Forlin et al. 2009; Guskey 2014; Sharma et al. 2018). Therefore, Savolainen et al. (2012) argue that pre-service training must develop a positive perception towards disability, which requires recognising the cultural context from which teachers come and offering practical training on inclusive education relevant to teachers' context. However, there was a commonly shared agreement among school educators included in my study that pre-service training did not promote practices reflecting the reality of schools. The misalignment between pre-service training and the reality of practice suggested that there seem to be concerns regarding the quality of collaboration between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and local education authorities. For example, some participants shared scepticism towards pre-service training and its relevance to what they observe in practice. To make sense of the misalignment related to theorising inclusion and practice, Tournaki and Samuels (2016) conducted a quantitative study to examine general education and special educational needs teachers' efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion prior to and after a graduate coursework programme focused on inclusion. The researchers revealed that special educational needs teachers developed more lasting positive attitudes towards inclusion compared with general education teachers, as general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion declined at the end of the programme (Tournaki and Samuels 2016). The researchers recommended that lasting improvements in teachers' attitudes and efficacy towards inclusion requires *fieldwork* and continuous training on inclusive practice – addressing challenges teachers face in the field (Tounaki and Samuels 2016). In line with the above claims, fostering inclusive perceptions, attitudes, and practices among Saudi school educators require Saudi social and cultural reforms and require effective professional development that is sustained over time.

Constraints to training and professional learning made it challenging for school educators to recognise inclusion as a fundamental value not only for disabled learners but also for all. This central finding substantiates Ainscow's (1991) claim that teachers need to develop and train to respond to all learners' pedagogic challenges,

which helps lessen the focus on viewing disabled learners as troublesome. Teachers' professional learning is a multifaceted system that recognises "*Local knowledge, problems, routines, and aspirations shape and are shaped by individual practices and beliefs*" (Opfer and Pedder 2011, p. 379). Following Opfer's and Pedder's (2011) proposition, although there was variability in teachers' knowledge of inclusion, as the findings have indicated, there was a clear inverse relationship between views of inclusion as a value and the current training offered to support disabled learners in the mainstream classroom. For example, the more school educators viewed inclusion within the social model, the more likely they articulated shortcomings of practical training on inclusive pedagogies, as was highlighted by some scholars (Florian and Becirevic 2011; Florian and Spratt 2013). However, school educators raised significant resentment towards the timing and the nature of workshops as workshops were invariably conducted outside the school routines. Findings revealed limited opportunities for professional learning in schools, in which teachers found it challenging to observe other teachers' pedagogy, to practice approaches, and to reflect on their learning with colleagues as a community of professionals, as theorised in the literature (Duncombe and Armour 2004; Guskey 2014; Darling-Hammond et al. 2017). Conversely, school educators were developing through optional seminars conducted outside school fences. This pressing constraint to training offered less trajectory for teacher agency to grow professionally and collaborate inclusively with other school educators towards the inclusion of disabled learners (Florian and Linklater 2010; Rouse 2017).

Collaboration and effective communication between school educators are indicative of the inclusivity of school culture and practice (Booth and Ainscow 2011; Slee 2011; Köpfer and Óskarsdóttir 2019). School educators described their relationship with one another as shallow. This shallow relationship was likely related to the fact that there was contempt among mainstream education teachers towards disabled pupils' academic functional performance in mainstream classrooms and resentment towards the difference in their counterparts' SEN teachers' salaries, as SEN specialists are incentivised by 30% for working with disabled learners. Although Alanazi conducted her research (2012) on mainstream female schools implementing inclusion of disabled learners, the findings regarding constraints to collaboration are almost identical, suggesting that limitations on improving learners' academic

attainment along with issues regarding sustaining professional collaboration between teachers remain unaddressed in Saudi policy implications.

The impetus for higher academic attainment in school educators' perceptions of inclusion is well-documented in the literature (Farrell et al. 2007). School educators' alignment with the abilities-based in the Saudi National Curriculum (SNC) and school educators' views that teaching disabled pupils in the mainstream classroom would be at least at the expense of all learners made it easier for mainstream education teachers to put the responsibility on SEN specialists. Removing disabled learners from the mainstream classroom based on abilities has relinquished collaboration between teachers – as disabled learners did not have a presence in the *mainstream classroom*. At the same time, Norwich (2013) stresses that inclusive education must question the *assumptions* of all pupils' academic attainment. The formidable subdivide between teachers and the failure to sustain a healthy communication channel created a scenario where each party advocated and demanded resources from headteachers —suggesting that *lobbying* in Saudi schools is similar to that theorised in the literature (Ball 1990). It also elicits the sense that headteachers do not have complete control of the school's agenda, but instead, they negotiate LEAs expectations with teachers, as Ball (2012, p. 82) puts forward:

The assumption is that headteachers maintain absolute authority in their organization. This is a misleading simplification. Whatever the extent or limits of the power of heads their organizational task can be expressed in terms of an essentially micro-political conundrum. The head must achieve and maintain control (the problem of domination), while encouraging and ensuring social order and commitment (the problem of integration).

The conflicted views of disabled learners' attainment and abilities made it challenging for headteachers to reconcile this relationship, pushing them to call upon policy-makers for inclusion re-evaluation. Despite grounds for teachers' disputes about inclusion, headteachers should constructively manage conflicts, presenting inclusive leadership (Mittler 2000; Ainscow 2018; Clark et al. 2018). However at times, headteachers were pressured to implement restrictive policies regarding the inclusion of disabled learners, which left little room for them to incorporate and reflect on their leadership in managing disputes regarding collaboration (Ball et al. 2011). Concerning discrepancies in teachers' allowances, that is, the 30% extra wages that SEN specialists receive, several Saudi studies found that the pay gap between



teachers in public schools was attributable to a lack of collaboration between teachers (e.g. Alanazi 2012; Alhammad 2017; Alshahrani 2018). Conversely, Alkhunini (2021) conducted a study exploring Saudi teachers' perceptions of autism spectrum disorder and understanding teachers' inclusive practice at Tatweer schools. He reported that general education teachers at a government-owned private school receive 20% extra on their basic salary to teach in inclusive classrooms. However, Alkhunini (2021) found critical concerns regarding teachers' collaboration with one another as there were very few meetings and little commonly-shared objectives between SEN and general education teachers. Incentivising teachers to work with disabled learners also suggests a form of charity work, not a profound right for all learners to be included. Such views contribute to low expectations of disabled learners (Moore and Slee 2019). The argument presented here is not to infer that teachers should not be incentivised to be in the teaching profession but to emphasise that a lack of collaboration between teachers remains unaddressed in MoE policies, notwithstanding the recurring constraints to collaboration in the Saudi literature. The division between teachers embodied the teachers' contempt towards the current approach to supporting disabled learners in the mainstream.

### **RQ3. To what extent do primary school educators in Riyadh/Saudi Arabia enact inclusion policies for disabled learners in mainstream classrooms?**

As discussed above, Saudi inclusion policies are not inclusive and lean towards the individual model of disabilities, focusing on an abilities-based curriculum. This policy rhetoric made it challenging for school educators to be in a long and overdue quest to enact inclusion. Equally, school educators were powerful agents in interpreting, reshaping, and enacting inclusion policies based on their views of disability and inclusion and the pedagogic skills they are equipped with (Ball et al. 2011). Most school educators in the study raised significant concerns about the efficacy of mainstream education teachers' pedagogic skills in working with disabled learners. A defining feature of the low efficacy of teaching disabled learners is the noticeable shortcomings in teachers' pre-service and in-service training on inclusion and inclusive pedagogy, as discussed earlier. Drawing on chapters five and seven findings, general education teachers seemed professionally timid about their competence in promoting inclusivity in their pedagogy and responding to all learners.



The above flowchart depicts the two forces – inclusion policy and school educators' views towards disability and inclusion policy – to shape the enactments of integration in mainstream schools. As you can see, learners must *fit-in* with the prescribed curriculum, and if the pupil fails to fit in, a labelling process initiates searching for the relevant support. Suppose the learner does not fall under a known label in the prescribed Saudi Special Education policy. In that case, the school will fail to accommodate the learner in the relevant support area or integrate the learner into the mainstream. Although school educators conceded constraints to the current diagnostic mechanisms and labelling, labelling remains a powerful tool for school educators to exclude learners from the mainstream. And even though Saudi policies regarding disabled learners' integration are sometimes rigid, there was a trajectory for school educators to interpret inclusion policies based on their views of disability, quality of training, and the availability of SEN programmes in the school.

These main findings coincide with (Alkeraida's 2020) findings, which reported that teachers' presumptions towards pupils' abilities shape teachers' pedagogic perceptions and practices of inclusion. This view of the learners contributed to shaping teachers' pedagogy to a more abilities-based pedagogy. For example, Brennan et al. (2021) conducted an experimental study to understand how teachers enact inclusive pedagogy after an intensive professional learning programme. The researchers reported a significant improvement in teachers' shift from low expectations about disabled pupils to a more inclusive perception and practices towards all pupils. However, some scholars inferred that abilities-based pedagogy reflects the school's position in the curriculum. Schools' positioning in abilities-based pedagogy is assumed to distribute support based on the SEN statement. Therefore learning is proffered in SEN provisions relevant to the pupils' diagnosed abilities and needs (Spratt and Florian 2015). Spratt and Florian (2015) further argued that abilities-based pedagogy is often enacted to counter low school performance by offering alternative learning environments for SEN pupils. Whilst the Western education system uses pupils' performance as a means of evaluating school performance in the LEA league (Armstrong and Ainscow 2018), school performance is evaluated in Saudi Arabia as a means to improve the overall public education system, as highlighted in the ETEC website (Education & Training Evaluation Commission 2022). Although assessing the effectiveness of schools based on

learners' performance should come under scrutiny (Reynolds et al. 1996; Wilson and Piebalga 2008), the concept of performance is founded on curriculum globalisation, which was problematic enough for school educators in this research to reconcile the two contested standpoints—*concentrating* on learners abilities as a policy from the MoE and pushing demands for inclusive practice (Ainscow 2008; Anderson-Levitt 2008).

Nevertheless, teachers play a central role in hindering curricular assumptions about learners' abilities by responding "*to the learner diversity in ways that avoid the marginalisation of some learners in the community of the classroom*" (Spratt and Florian 2015, p. 90). Responding to all learners requires reflexivity in teachers' planning and offering a selection of learning materials and approaches for learners to choose from (Black-Hawkins and Florian 2012; Black-Hawkins et al. 2022). The findings of my research study showed in (7.1 & 7.3) that it seemed somewhat impossible for teachers to offer a selection of learning materials, as teachers' planning and enactments focused on the module's textbook and engaged less with learners in terms of dialogic pedagogy (Mercer and Howe 2012).

My research findings also illuminated that teachers have struggled to include all learners in lessons, given that they felt individualised support for some learners was necessary, they referred learners to the SEN unit. This urge for individualised support could have increased the chances of many learners being at risk of not participating effectively in the curriculum, as (Ainscow 1999) argued. Despite school educators' scepticism towards the diagnosis mechanisms in the SEN unit, SEN specialists in the LD programme still diagnosed learners with a *non-standardised* tool and were likely to label the learner with an LD because the learner was not participating in the mainstream classroom. In contrast, visual and hearing impairments were medically diagnosed outside the school's jurisdiction, leaving little room for teachers to create a new label, particularly about multiple disabilities. Nonetheless, the findings have shown that visually impaired learners were taught most of the time at the SEN unit, as mainstream teachers thought these learners should be in a designated learning environment – suggesting that exclusion from the mainstream classroom does not have a clear path, but also suggesting that exclusion stems from desperation in the mainstream classroom (Ainscow 2014; Norwich 2014d). This desperation to offer participation through SEN provision was in

conjunction with teachers' reliance on the module's textbook as the central source for learning, which again signalled a deficit in teachers' training and agency to manoeuvre learning beyond the prescribed objectives.

Conversely, instructional approaches in the SEN unit were marginally more inclusive and diverse than those commonly observed in the mainstream. The one-on-one sessions offered more in-depth dialogic pedagogy than in the mainstream classroom, whether in traditional or online learning. Notwithstanding the disparities between teachers' pedagogy, both contexts illuminate the pressing need for robust training to ensure more inclusive approaches. The below flowchart feeds the overall enactment of inclusion in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia:

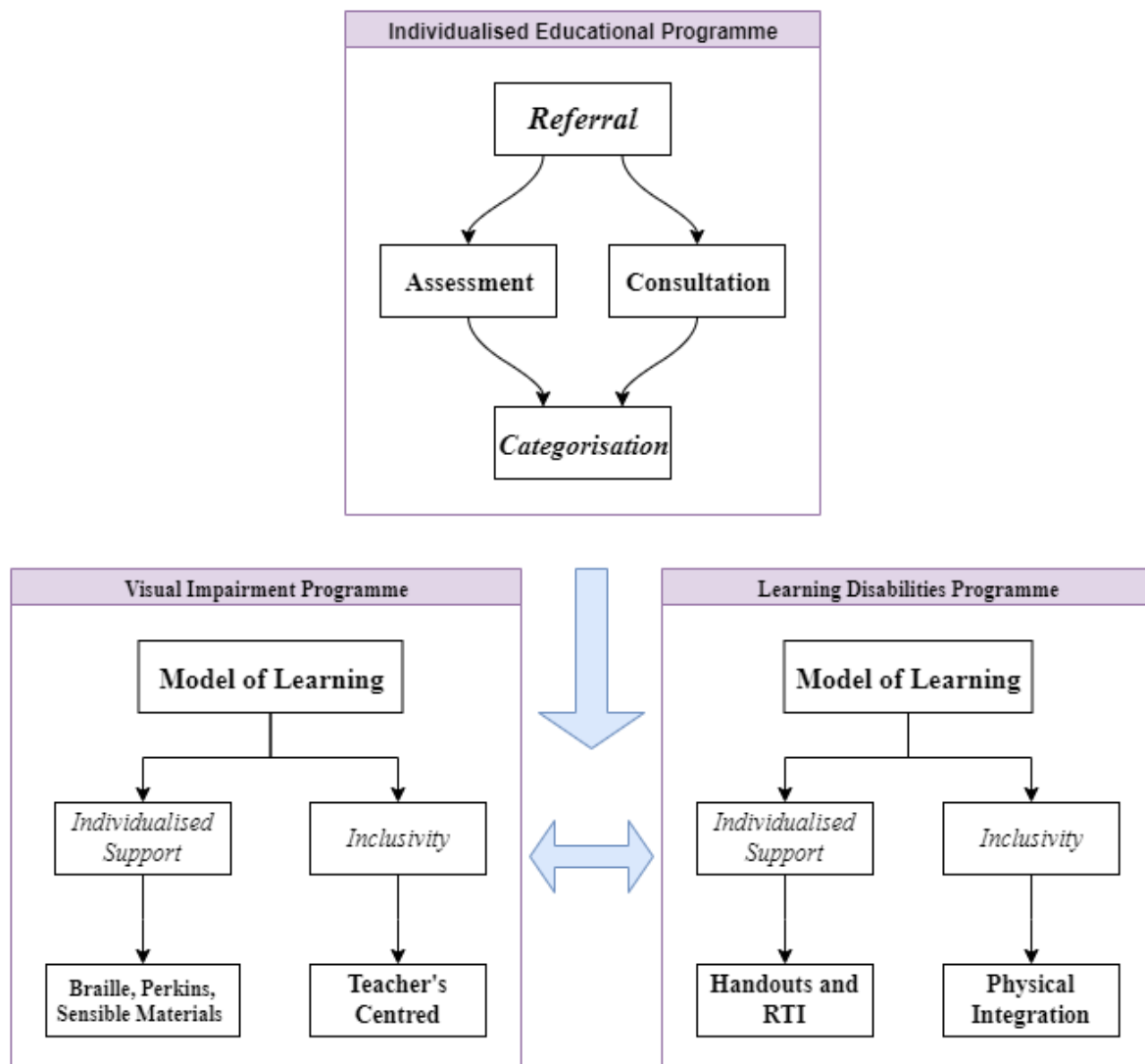


Figure 4: Referral and Model of Learning

In the above flowchart, the categorisation and labelling start with a referral, resulting in a label as a precondition for support. The figure also highlights the similarities between Visual Impairment (VI) and Learning Disability (LD) programmes regarding the nature of learning. However, the VI programme had more learning materials than the LD programme. This could be related to teachers' different experiences of working with disabled learners, as learning approaches for visually impaired learners differ in nature from what is offered for pupils with LD, as visually impaired learners rely on sensing and hearing (Shakespeare 2013; Morris 2014). Morris (2014) argues that lesson plans must accommodate learners' needs and impairments. Other scholars counterargue that offering commonly-used approaches for some impairments may promote *stigma* and potentially retreat disabled learners from participating in the lesson. Conversely, lessons should offer a broader range of approaches and learning materials without inducing a sense of *difference* in teachers' planning, which ultimately helps to respond to all learners in the classroom (Davis et al. 2004; Florian and Rouse 2010; Black-Hawkins et al. 2022).

This section answered the research questions based on chapters five, six, and seven findings. A holistic discussion of the findings corresponded with the view that all learners were significantly at risk of exclusion due to the abilities-based curriculum and the shortcomings in teachers' pedagogy (Runswick-Cole 2011; Hart and Drummond 2014; Goodley et al. 2020). To my knowledge, this was a unique finding and has not been discussed in similar research studies in Saudi Arabia. School educators raised concerns about resources, training, and the inclusion framework. These concerns were not appropriately addressed in these schools. Therefore, school educators aligned more with the SNC regarding referring learners to the SEN unit wherever possible. Although school educators were in contempt of the inclusion mandate in Saudi Arabia, school educators' perceptions of disability within the medical model seemed to align with the policy documents outlined in the RGSE and RPSE regarding disabled learners' inclusion. Significant tensions were observed when teachers had no choice or autonomy in providing for inclusion independently and only had mechanisms to refer learners. Whilst other Saudi researchers (Boqlah 2002; Alquraini 2011; Alanazi 2012; Alhudaithi 2015; Alhammad 2017; Alquraini and Rao 2018; Alshahrani 2018; Alkeraida 2020; Alkhunini 2021) have been vocal about inclusion, this research is unique in demonstrating that inclusion in Saudi schools

has not changed in the last two decades—leaving so many questions on why these concerns have not been addressed in the MoE approach to inclusion particularly when understanding that Saudi Arabia adhered to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD 2006).

## **8.2 Recommendations and Policy Implications**

In this section, I will provide recommendations for policy implications and practice based on the discussion illustrated earlier. Proposals will include policies regarding inclusion, social reform, and considerations for school educators.

As discussed in this thesis, inclusion policy in Saudi Arabia is more centred on the individual model. While the focus on the individual model in Saudi rhetoric has a number of reasons, adopting the IDEA and using this framework without scrutiny raised more significant challenges and contradictions in the Saudi schools' context. Contextualising policies and frameworks relevant to the Saudi school culture is very demanding. For example, there is a gap between what the Saudi ratified in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPD 2022) and the actual interpretations of the CRPD in outlining inclusion policies in the RPSE & RGSE. Benson (2021) conducted a case study in Jordan to understand legislation and policies related to inclusion. Benson (2021) argued that there is a gap between the ratification of international policies and the actual interpretations on the national level. She inferred this constraint to a lack of contextual policies relevant to the Jordanian context (Benson 2021). Lack of contextual policies relevant to the Saudi Education System that is theorised in Saudi Arabia would therefore require the MoE to include school educators, LEAs, school communities, parents, learners, academic researchers, and any other stakeholders in tuning and refining inclusion policies.

The findings also showed significant shortcomings in teachers' pedagogic skills in promoting participation for all learners, which was related to the quality of pre-service training. A re-consideration of training offered for pre-service and in-service teachers is needed. The MoE and relevant bodies of practice should include higher education institutes and teacher education programmes in their curriculum planning. This would ensure coherence in the training offered for pre-service teachers and the reality of schools. In-service training must be sustained over time and be part of a school's rituals. Although this is challenging, developing the concept of professional learning

in teacher education programmes courses would help prospective teachers realise that learning does not stop at an awarded degree (Forlin 2010).

Developing professional learning communities for in-service teachers can be approached in different ways. Inviting school educators to develop the curriculum would give them a sense that they are responsible professionals, which should offer them autonomy to reconcile what they feel is helpful for the curriculum with skills appropriate for learners. *Alternatively*, school educators could be encouraged to learn from one another and visit schools beyond their district to learn and share learning with other teachers. Although the MoE have already sponsored teachers to visit Finland, the UK, and the US for internships, the challenge for the MoE is to provide more sustainable training, which requires mechanisms for improving teachers' pedagogy. This would need to assign a committee of teachers' professionals, researchers, and other education stakeholders to develop a framework that includes principles on working as a community of practice to improve inclusive pedagogy. For example, inclusive pedagogy was theoretically developed based on observations of how two schools in Scotland enacted inclusion (Black-Hawkins and Florian 2012). This development method would help policymakers base their decisions on the field and be relevant to schools' needs in Saudi Arabia.

Regarding resources, the findings showed a significant shortfall of offered resources to schools. This made it problematic for school educators to foster inclusivity in their pedagogy, as they lack the pedagogic resources required to offer more inclusive learning. Therefore, the MoE and LEAs should regularly monitor schools' needs, try their best to address them and provide resources that promote school accessibility for all. While this would burden the government's budget funding, other stakeholders, such as corporations and charities, could support school communities (Power and Taylor 2018), given that Saudi corporations are tax exempted (The Regulatory for Tax Income 2018). However, this requires social awareness of the significance of inclusion (Booth and Ainscow 2011), in which the Ministry of Social Affairs and other ministries could work together to map out a means for social inclusion as outlined in the Saudi Vision 2030 objectives (2016).

Concerning the enactment of inclusion policies, schools should work with other schools to plan how to enact inclusion policies. LEAs should also employ a system of



accountability in schools – mandating that all learners should participate in the curriculum more effectively. Although this may entail that inclusive policies should be arbitrarily coerced on schools, LEAs should firmly explain the importance of inclusion and help schools enact inclusion through professional and financial support. Developing headteachers' leadership skills would also help them manage their professional duties more efficiently (Alanazi 2012). LEAs should also explain to teachers the benefits of inclusive education through financial incentives and the affordances of inclusion. Differences in learners, if there is such thing as differences, should be explicated as an addition to the classroom, not a constraint for learning (Black-Hawkins et al. 2022). Mainstream education teachers should therefore be trained to practice broader and inclusive pedagogic approaches, as proven in the research community. A continuous evaluation of teachers' enactments of pedagogic approaches would also help LEAs better understand the affordances and constraints of each practice, which would ultimately help LEAs to develop a practical framework from teachers' voices (Ainscow 2020). Concerning financial support, mainstream teachers should at least be supported with 30% incentives equivalent to that of SEN teachers. Alternatively, all teachers should be financially supported with a salary that meets their expectations. This financial support would help both teachers feel less pressured by the pay gap and hampered collaboration due to teacher salaries (as outlined in the findings' chapters). However, improvements in teachers' pay should not go unquestioned. In other words, an increase in teachers' pay should be granted based on teachers' enactment of inclusion, their level of engagement in professional training, and how well they collaborate with other teachers. School educators must recognise the essence of collaboration in schools and leave aside assumptions of differences and ableism to develop an inclusive environment where everyone is welcomed in the classroom.

### **8.3 Limitations**

This research has several limitations related to the methodological design, sample, methods, and the generalisability of the findings. As discussed in the methodology chapter, this research adopted a qualitative approach with an interpretivist paradigm. While qualitative data, such as interviews and observations data have enriched my knowledge in learning from teachers and headteachers, which I may not have encountered during my previous work with LEAs and schools, it also lacks statistical

data, which could have reduced the subjectivity of my interpretations of teachers' narrative and enactments. However, the thematic analysis using inductive reasoning helped generate cohesive and credible findings as the data structured itself (Charmaz 2008). Key evidence to illustrate the trustworthiness of this research findings is that similar findings were reported in the Saudi and relevant literature on inclusive education and disability. In addition, adopting an utterly ethnographic research inquiry would have allowed me to gain more insights into the reality of schools without feeling like an outsider (Atkinson 2011). However, I conducted four observations for each teacher and maintained regular contact with them, which helped to lessen the challenges of outsider research.

About the method used in this research, I did not ascribe to a pre-tested instrument, particularly for observations, because the Saudi literature lacks such tools, and applying research-based instruments regarding observations used elsewhere could have limited my focus on specific enactments. I do not argue that pre-existing instruments are unreliable when applied to the Saudi Education context, but rather I wanted to explore and develop new insights and turn raw data into a text reflecting the reality of school in Saudi Arabia based on my interpretations (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011).

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the sample only included male teachers. There are two limitations to the sample. Firstly, it did not include female teachers because schools in Saudi Arabia are gender segregated, except for the recently established and rare gender-integrated schools in Saudi Arabia. I could not access female schools as they are restricted to female school educators and mothers. Secondly, adding pupils could have helped to analyse how teachers' enactments were related to pupils' academic performance in terms of prolonged participation and achievements. It would also have helped to understand the progress made for each pupil in the mainstream classroom compared with the SEN unit. Whilst I was able to gain some sense of learners' interactions and engagement in lessons, observing pupils as sub-cases would have brought an in-depth knowledge of how learners are participating in the curriculum. However this element was beyond the resources and time available for the thesis.

Another limitation of this research is that it focused on the inclusion of disabled learners in mainstream schools, whereas researching inclusion should include all learners (Wilson 2000). However, I am a sponsored student, so my employer – Albaha University – granted me a scholarship to research disability, inclusion, and the Saudi curriculum. Nonetheless, as discussed earlier, many learners were found to be at risk of being marginalised in terms of accessing and participating in the Saudi curriculum.

#### **8.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

Limitations to this research and findings created several suggestions for further investigation. Researching the efficacy of introducing teachers' professional learning on the enactment of inclusion is crucial. This would gather more data on whether professional learning results in inclusive practices in Saudi Arabia and whether data aligns with or contradicts similar studies conducted elsewhere (e.g. Florian and Becirevic 2011; Spratt and Florian 2015). It is also recommended that research examines how policy-makers in the MoE formulate policies regarding inclusion. This recommendation may provide a vivid picture of policy development in Saudi Arabia. Another suggestion for further research is to develop a practical framework for schools in Saudi Arabia which recognises the social and cultural values of Saudi Arabia.

Further research concerning the pedagogic approaches used for promoting learners' participation is also worthwhile. This is because many school educators showed uncertainty in the findings regarding the need for the commonly used approaches to inclusive practice. Investigating how teachers craft knowledge into practice is very important. For example, future research can explore the interpretation of theoretical knowledge regarding instructional approaches introduced in professional development programmes and teachers' strategies and limitations to implementing oriented practices. Likewise, understanding how teachers craft knowledge helps researchers investigate the very training teachers need to enact an inclusive practice. Also, researching assessments used in teachers' pedagogic approaches would help to understand the referral procedure to the SEN unit more in-depth. Additionally, future research can compare the taught subject across all education levels and teachers' inclusive pedagogy.

Researching how parents envisage disabled children's academic future is also essential, as this will help to understand whether parents have a role in shaping teachers' perceptions of disabled learners. Further, researching barriers to collaboration between schools and parents is highly significant and was apparent in my data, though beyond the scope of the research questions. School educators reported constraints on the quality of interactions with disabled learners' parents. Lastly, researching the effects of labels on learners' vocational lives could contribute to the field of inclusion and help to reconcile schooling with independent living.

## **8.5 Final Word and Reflection**

The PhD journey was not a straight line – filled with joy, pain, and many attempts to rebound from feeling uncertain about the progress of my research. The journey towards acumen requires skills of careful and critical reading, analysing text, reflecting and constructing an abstract view of what I have been researching. Researching disability and inclusion enshrined my ethos with the concept that positive changes in practice are never easy – challenges for inclusion remain intact with difficulties in being able to “*identify a coherent theory which puts... feelings and concepts into some rational and defensible shape*” (Wilson 2000, p. 297). The realisation of this difficulty encouraged me to recognise the different theoretical underpinnings of inclusion, but I also cherished the determination to seek new theoretical assumptions for the Saudi context. The excitement to return to the field in Saudi Arabia was indescribable, but equally was somehow problematic if I wanted to make a credible triumph “*In translating hard work 'in the field' into texts of cultural representation and interpretation*” (Atkinson 2011, p. 181). The hardship of interpreting the reality of schools for a wider audience reminded me that inclusion as a value certainly includes multifaceted interpretations. But I remembered that it is imperative for researchers to concede inclusivity in their *own* view of the research by reconciling different views, models, paradigms, and practices thought to be inclusive (Messiou 2017). However, the more I read about inclusion, listened to teachers' stories and discussed findings with supervisors and family members, the more I felt less resilient about the success of inclusion in Saudi Arabia and worldwide. Perhaps I could make this argument since I have lived thirteen years in the US and the UK, pursuing my studies. While studying in the UK and the US shared some similarities, such as using English as the medium for learning and communication, the PhD

journey in the UK was more interesting. I had to learn, however challenging it was, that science, particularly social sciences, cannot be taken for granted. This philosophy has transformed my conceptual stance into an even more inclusive scholar of disability and inclusion.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: REO Approvals

الرقم : .....  
التاريخ : ١٤٤١/١١/٢٩ هـ  
المشروعات : .....

المملكة العربية السعودية  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
إدارة العامة للتربية والتعليم بمنطقة الرياض  
Planning & Development  
إدارة التخطيط والتطوير

وزارة التربية والتعليم  
Ministry of Education

" إفادة "

الموضوع: الموافقة على تطبيق أدوات الدراسة في مدارس تابعة لإدارة التعليم بمنطقة الرياض

الاسم	فهد بن عبدالله محمد الطخيس	
السجل المدني	١٠٦١١٧٦٥٤٩	العام الدراسي ١٤٤٠ - ١٤٤١ هـ
الجامعة	جامعة كارديف	التخصص مناهج وطرق تدريس الاحتياجات الخاصة
الدرجة العلمية	دكتوراه	العينة قادة - معلمين
عنوان الدراسة	معرفة الأبعاد الحالية بما تضمنه ( أساليب التدريس ) المستخدمة لتلك الفصول في مدينة الرياض - المملكة العربية السعودية.	
نوع الإفادة	الموافقة على تطبيق الدراسة في المدارس التابعة للإدارة العامة للتعليم بمنطقة الرياض بدء من تاريخ ١٤٤١/٥/٢٤ هـ خلال العام الدراسي ( ١٤٤٠ هـ إلى ١٤٤١ هـ ) بحسب طلبها	

ويعد، السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

بناء على قرار سعادة مدير عام التعليم بمنطقة الرياض رقم ٣٨٩٢٠٧٩٣ وتاريخ ١٤٣٨/٦/٢٣ هـ بشأن تفويض الصلاحية لإدارة التخطيط والمعلومات لتسهيل مهمة الباحثين والباحثات، وحيث تقدمت إلينا الباحث (الموضحة بياناته أعلاه) بطلب إجراء دراسته بداية من تاريخ ١٤٤١/٥/٢٤ هـ خلال العام الدراسي ١٤٤٠ هـ إلى ١٤٤١ هـ وعليه نقيدهم أنه لا مانع من تطبيق الدراسة خلال مدة زمنية محددة بـ (٩٠) يوم خلال العام الدراسي الحالي ، على نطاق مدارس منطقة الرياض مع ملاحظة أن الباحث يتحمل كامل المسؤولية المتعلقة بمختلف جوانب البحث ، ولا يعني سماح الإدارة العامة للتعليم موافقتها بالضرورة على مشكلة البحث أو على الطرق والأساليب المستخدمة في دراسته ومعالجته وبناء على طلبه تم منح الإفادة ، علماً أنه تم الاطلاع على أداة الدراسة (مقابلة).

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم

إدارة التخطيط والمعلومات  
إدارة العامة للتربية والتعليم بمنطقة الرياض

ص / للملحقية  
ص / قسم الدراسات والبحوث

The English Translation to this letter is as follows:

Number

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> Aug 2019

Ministry of Education

Attachments

General Authority of Education in Riyadh District

Department of Planning and Development

Ministry of Education

Statement

Topic: Approval to implement research methods in schools under the Office of Riyadh Education Authority

Name: Fahad Abdullah Mohammed Altokheas

ID: 1061176549

Studying Term: 2019-2020

University: Cardiff University

Major: Curriculum and Instruction Special Needs

Sample: School leaders and teachers

Degree: PhD

Research Topic: Understanding the Status Quo of Inclusive Education in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from Participants' Views in Primary Schools.

Type of Request: Facilitating access for research in implementing research methods on the research sample: Leaders – teachers working in mainstream classrooms – special education teachers working in primary school Riyadh City.

Peace be Upon You,

Based on the decision of his Excellency, the manager of Riyadh Education Office, Number 38920793, dated 22/03/2017, regarding mandating authority to the Department of Planning and Development to facilitate access for researchers.

Since this researcher (his details mentioned above) applied to conduct his research to commence from the date of 19<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020 in the studying year of 2019-2020, based on this request, we inform you that we do not mind conducting his research method for (90) days in this studying year on Riyadh schools and accepting his research to be carried out does not entail that Riyadh Education Authority agrees with his research problem or to the methods of which his study included. However, we are aware of his research methods which include (interviews).

We thank you for your co-operation.

Planning and Development Department



الرقم : .....  
التاريخ : ١٤٤١/١١/٢٣ هـ  
المشغولات : .....



المملكة العربية السعودية  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
(٥٠١)  
الإدارة العامة للتربية والتعليم بمنطقة الرياض  
إدارة التخطيط والتطوير

## " تسهيل مهمة بحث "

فهد بن عبدالله محمد الطخيس		الاسم
العام الدراسي	١٠٦١١٧٦٥٤٩	السجل المدني
١٤٤١-١٤٤٠ هـ		
مناهج وطرق تدريس الاحتياجات الخاصة	التخصص	جامعة كارديف
الدرجة العلمية	عينة الدراسة	دكتوراه
قادة - معلمين		
معرفة الأبعاد الحالية للدمج بما تضمنه ( أساليب التدريس ) المستخدمة لتلك الفصول في مدينة الرياض - المملكة العربية السعودية.		عنوان الدراسة
تسهيل مهمة الباحث في تطبيق أداة الدراسة ( مقابلة ) على عينة الدراسة : القادة - المعلمين العاملين في الفصول المدمجة - معلمي التربية الخاصة في المرحلة الابتدائية بمدينة الرياض.		نوع التسهيل

حفظه الله

المكرم / قائد الابتدائية.....

وبعد،

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

بناءً على قرار سعادة مدير عام التعليم بمنطقة الرياض رقم ٣٨٩٢٠٧٩٣ وتاريخ ١٤٣٨/٦/٢٣ هـ بشأن تفويض الصلاحية لإدارة التخطيط والتطوير لتسهيل مهمة الباحثين والباحثات. وحيث تقدم لنا الباحث (الموضحة بياناته أعلاه) بطلب إجراء دراسته، ونظراً لاكتمال الأوراق المطلوبة نأمل تسهيل مهمته مع ملاحظة أن الباحث يتحمل كامل المسؤولية المتعلقة بمختلف جوانب البحث، ولا يعني سماح الإدارة العامة للتعليم، موافقتها بالضرورة على مشكلة البحث أو على الطرق والأساليب المستخدمة في دراسته ومعالجتها.

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم

عبد الصاعية  
مدير إدارة التخطيط والتطوير  
١٤٤١/١١/٢٣ هـ  
سعود بن راشد آل عبد اللطيف



٨٠

ق / الجبالي  
٨٠

The English Translation of this letter is as follows:

Number

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> Aug 2019

Ministry of Education

Attachments

General Authority of Education in Riyadh District

Department of Planning and Development

Ministry of Education

Facilitating Access for Researchers

Topic: Approval to implement research methods in schools under the Office of Riyadh Education Authority

Name: Fahad Abdullah Mohammed Altokheas

ID: 1061176549

Studying Term: 2019-2020

University: Cardiff University

Major: Curriculum and Instruction Special Needs

Sample: School leaders and teachers

Degree: PhD

Research Topic: Understanding the Status Quo of Inclusive Education in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from Participants' Views in Primary Schools.

Type of Request: Facilitating access for research in implementing research methods on the research sample: Leaders – teachers working in mainstream classrooms – special education teachers working in primary school Riyadh City.

Dear School Leader ..... May Allah Protect you.

Peace be Upon You

Based on the decision of his Excellency, the manager of Riyadh Education Office, Number 38920793, dated 22/03/2017, regarding mandating authority to the Department of Planning and Development to facilitate access for researchers.

Since this researcher (his details mentioned above) applied to conduct his research, and as he supplemented his request with sufficient documents required, we kindly ask you to facilitate his research undertaking. We assert that the researcher bears complete responsibility regarding all matters relevant to his research, and accepting his research to be carried out does not entail that Riyadh Education Authority agrees with his research problem or with the methods of which his study is included.

We thank you for your co-operation.

Planning and Development Department

الرقم .....  
التاريخ: ١٩ / ١ / ١٤٤٢ هـ  
المشروعات: .....



المملكة العربية السعودية  
وزارة التعليم  
الإدارة العامة للتعليم بمنطقة الرياض  
إدارة التخطيط والتطوير



## " تسهيل مهمة بحث "

فهد بن عبدالله محمد الطخيس			الاسم
١٤٤٢-١٤٤١	العام الدراسي	١٠٦١١٧٦٥٤٩	السجل المدني
مناهج وطرق تدريس - الاحتياجات الخاصة	التخصص	جامعة كارديف	الجامعة
قادة - معلمي الفصول المدججة- التربية الخاصة	عينة الدراسة	دكتوراه	الدرجة العلمية
معرفة الأبعاد الحالية للدمج بما تضمنه (أساليب التدريس) المستخدمة لتلك الفصول في مدينة الرياض- المملكة العربية السعودية			عنوان الدراسة
خلال الفصل الدراسي الأول للعام ١٤٤٢ هـ			فترة التطبيق
تسهيل مهمة الباحث لاستكمال تطبيق إجراءات أداة (مقابلة) مع عينة الدراسة في مدرسة (جريدة) ومدرسة (الابتدائية) وتكثيفه (بحسب مايسمح به النظام) من الدخول لمنصة مدرستي لملاحظة طريقة تعليم معلمي للمدرستين في الفصول الافتراضية. لتواصل مع الباحث -الابميل- AltokheasFA@cardiff.ac.uk: جوال: ٠٥٣٠٩٩٣٤٢١			نوع التسهيل

حفظه الله

المكرم / مدير إدارة الإشراف التربوي

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

وبعد،

فيناءً على قرار سعادة مدير عام التعليم بمنطقة الرياض رقم ٣٨٩٢٠٧٩٣ وتاريخ ٢٣/٦/١٤٣٨هـ بشأن تفويض الصلاحية لإدارة التخطيط والتطوير لتسهيل مهمة الباحثين والباحثات. وحيث تقدم الباحث (الموضحة بياناته أعلاه) بطلب تطبيق أداة الدراسة الميدانية على عينة الدراسة في نطاق إدارة التعليم بمنطقة الرياض، ونظراً لاكمال الأوراق المطلوبة نأمل تسهيل مهمته مع ملاحظة أن الباحث يتحمل كامل المسؤولية المتعلقة بمختلف جوانب البحث، ولا يعني سماح الإدارة العامة للتعليم، موافقتها على مشكلة البحث أو على الطرق والأساليب المستخدمة في دراسته ومعالجتها. والله الموفق

عنه / المساعدة

مدير إدارة التخطيط والتطوير  
بمدينة الرياض  
١٤٤٢ / ١ / ١٩  
محمد بن إبراهيم الريدي



ل. العراك



صاير داخلي - 1442/01/20 / 4500

The English translation of this letter is as follows:

Number

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> Aug 2019

Ministry of Education

Attachments

General Authority of Education in Riyadh District

Department of Planning and Development

Ministry of Education

Facilitating Access for Researchers

Topic: Approval to implement research methods in schools under the Office of Riyadh Education Authority

Name: Fahad Abdullah Mohammed Altokheas

ID: 1061176549

Studying Term: 2019-2020

University: Cardiff University

Major: Curriculum and Instruction Special Needs

Sample: School leaders and teachers

Degree: PhD

Research Topic: Understanding the Status Quo of Inclusive Education in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from Participants' Views in Primary Schools.

Type of Request: Facilitating access for research in implementing research methods on the research sample: mentioned in the letter as mentioned above and enabling him, based on what the law permits him to do, to facilitate access to the Madrast Portal for him to observe general education teachers in virtual classrooms.

Researcher's contact details:

Email: [Altokheasfa@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Altokheasfa@cardiff.ac.uk)

Mobile: 0530993421

Dear Manager of the Education Supervision .....May Allah Protect you.

Peace be Upon You

Based on the decision of his Excellency, the manager of Riyadh Education Office, Number 38920793, dated 22/03/2017, regarding mandating authority to the Department of Planning and Development to facilitate access for researchers.

Since this researcher (his details mentioned above) applied to conduct his research, and as he supplemented his request with sufficient documents required, we kindly ask you to facilitate his research undertaking. We assert that the researcher bears complete responsibility regarding all matters relevant to his research, and accepting his research to be carried out does not entail that Riyadh Education Authority agrees with his research problem or the methods his study included.

We thank you for your co-operation.

Manager of Planning and Development Department

## Appendix 2: Nvivo Screenshot of Annotations

The screenshot displays the Nvivo software interface. On the left, a sidebar shows 'Quick Access' and a list of codes including 'Alignment and T...', 'Attitudes and En...', 'Enactment', 'Enactment 2222...', 'Task', 'Sentiment', 'Relationships', and 'Relationship Types'. Below these are 'Cases', 'Notes', 'Memos', 'Framework Matrices', 'Annotations', and 'See-Also Links'. At the bottom of the sidebar is the 'EXPLORE' section.

The main window features a menu bar with options like 'File', 'Home', 'Import', 'Create', 'Explore', 'Share', 'Modules', and 'Document'. Below the menu is a toolbar with various icons for annotations, including 'Annotations', 'See-Also Links', 'Relationships', 'Coding Stripes', 'Highlight', 'Code In Vivo', 'Autocode', 'Range Code', 'Uncode', 'New Annotation', 'Word Cloud', 'Explore Diagram', and 'Query This Document'.

The central area is titled 'Annotations' and contains a table with columns 'File Name' and 'Number'. The table lists annotations from 21 to 32. The text area on the right shows a document with highlighted text and annotations. The highlighted text includes:
 

breakfast break, it's only the school assembly, as this is the only time that they get together! But during lessons, and other things no! They are independent [isolated he means] as they have special department in the school, this is special for them! There is no, I don't see any hummm inclusion that people imagined! It's like they took the classrooms from the special institutes and placed these classrooms in schools, it's only that!

*Fahad:*

*So there is no obstacles or there is no?!*

... ..

No there is no obstacles, the only obstacle that I am trying to tell you about is that they are isolated! In my opinion, they didn't apply inclusion as what people imagined or what people believed about, as they are taught inside classrooms with non-disabled pupils! No this isn't

NVIVO

ALOKHEAS F...vp (Edited)

Quick Access

- Codes
  - Alignment and T...
  - Attitudes and En...
  - Enactment
  - Enactment 2222...
  - Task
  - Sentiment
  - Relationships
  - Relationship Types
- Cases
- Notes
  - Memos
  - Framework Matrices
  - Annotations
  - See-Also Links
- Sets

File Home Import Create Explore Share Modules Document

Annotations See-Also Links Relationships Coding Highlight Code Code In Vivo Autocode Range Code Uncode New Annotation Word Cloud Chart Compare With Explore Diagram Query This Document

Search Project

Annotations

File Name	Num
	42
	43
	44
	45
	46
	47
	48
	49
	50
	51
	52
	53

Yeah we don't implement everything! I apply things that suits my students, and usually we don't apply what the MoE asks us to do especially for blind students. We usually implement things that we learned from workshops that we voluntarily do! Because these workshops is blind interacting with a blind!

The MoE gives broad guidelines, but in our workshops, it is blind working with blind children. For example, advanced teacher in other school, we ask him what did you do for this or that? Then he would tell us I did this and that, then we implement it on our pupils. We rely on our workshops more that the workshops that are set by the Development Department at the

Annotations

Item	Content
50	But why don't teach Content or doesn't apply the approaches that the MoE asks them to do, especially for visually impaired pupils? Are these approaches nor research based, or peer-reviewed? Or why exactly

In Codes Code to Enter code name (CTRL+Q)

## Appendix 3: Cardiff Ethical Approval



School of  
Social Sciences  
Ysgol y Gwyddorau  
Cymdeithasol

**Cardiff University**  
Glamorgan Building  
King Edwards VII Avenue, Cardiff  
CF10 3WT, Wales, UK  
Tel +44(0)29 2087 5179  
Fax +44(0)29 2087 4175  
[www.cardiff.ac.uk/social-sciences](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/social-sciences)

23 May 2019

Our ref: SREC/3270

Fahad Abdullah M Altokheas  
PhD Programme  
SOCSI

**Prifysgol Caerdydd**  
Adeilad Morgannwg  
Rhodfa'r Brenin Edward VII, Caerdydd  
Ffon +44(0)29 2087 5179  
Ffacs +44(0)29 2087 4175  
[www.cardiff.ac.uk/social-sciences](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/social-sciences)

Dear Fahad,

Your project entitled '*An exploration of general education teachers' perceptions towards disability and their pedagogical practices within integrated classroom in elementary schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.*' has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University and you can now commence the project should all necessary forms of approval been received.

Please note that since your project involves data collection abroad, you may need approval from a competent body in the relevant jurisdiction.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored and you will be obliged periodically to complete and return a SREC monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

  
Professor Alison Bullock  
Chair of School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee



Registered Charity No. 1136855  
Elusen Gofrestredig Rhif. 1136855

## Appendix 4: Letter to Gatekeepers

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**سعادة مدير إدارة التخطيط والتطوير بإدارة تعليم الرياض سلمه الله.**

أتقدم الى سعادتكم بطلبي هذا وفيه افنديكم بأني متبعث بجامعة كارديف، المملكة المتحدة، لنيل درجة الدكتوراه في مناهج وطرق تدريس الاحتياجات الخاصة. وكما لا يخفى على سعادتكم بأن مرحلة جمع البيانات هي جزء من رسالة الدكتوراه. وحرصاً على خدمة وطني، وحاجة التعليم الماسة لأبحاث تربوية تسهم في تعزيز تطوير التعليم، تم اختيار مدارس (الدمج) بالرياض-بنين عينة للبحث.

أدوات البحث المستخدمة هي المقابلات مع المعلمين العاملين في الفصول المنمجة، ومعلمي التربية الخاصة ومدراء تلك المدارس-للمرحلة الابتدائية. ويقترح من الأدبيات السابقة، بالمملكة العربية السعودية، ستشمل أداة البحث بعمل ملاحظة داخل الصف للمعلمين المشمولين بعينة البحث. يهدف البحث الى معرفة الأبعاد الحالية للدمج بما تتضمنه (اساليب التدريس) المستخدمة لتلك الفصول في مدينة الرياض-المملكة العربية السعودية. كما يطمح الباحث بأن تسهم نتائج الدراسة في معرفة جوانب القوة لتعزيزها، وجوانب الضعف لعمل مقترح تابع من بيئة الصف لتطويرها.

أمل من سعادتكم النظر في طلبي هذا ولكم جزيل الشكر والامتنان،  
والله يحفظكم ويرعاكم.



مقدم الطلب: فهد بن عبدالله محمد الطخيس

رقم الهوية الوطنية: ١٠٦١١٧٦٥٤٩

ارقام التواصل: ٠٠٩٦٦٥٣٠٩٩٣٤٢١ - ٠٠٤٧٤٦٧٥٨٣٢٢٧٧

البريد الإلكتروني: Altokheasfa@cardiff.ac.uk

English translation of Letter to Gatekeepers:



In The Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful

Re: Letter to Gatekeepers

To his Excellency, The Manager of the Planning and Development Department in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia,

I hereby submit this application and kindly inform you that I am a sponsored student for Curriculum & Instruction for Special Education, studying PhD at Cardiff University, United Kingdom. As you may know, data collection is an integral part of the PhD process. Because I am keen to serve my country and contribute to the field of education, and given the pressing need for academic research to develop our education system, I chose to study inclusion in mainstream classrooms in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, as a sample for this research.

Research methods include Interviews with mainstream education teachers, special education teachers, and school leaders in primary schools. Also, the Saudi literature indicated a research gap regarding research methods. Therefore, research methods will include observation, which will take place inside the classroom for participants recruited as a sample. The purpose is to investigate the status quo of inclusion, focusing on teachers' pedagogy in mainstream classrooms in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. I also hope this research's findings will help map out the strengths in teachers' pedagogy, mechanisms to improve teachers' pedagogy, and improving the overall inclusion mandate.

I highly appreciate your time for reviewing my application.

May Allah Bless and Protect You

Applicant: Fahad Abdullah M Altokheas

ID: 1061176549

Mobile No. 00966530993421

Email Address: [Altokheasfa@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Altokheasfa@cardiff.ac.uk)

## Re: Emails with Planning and Development Department

من: <AltokheasFA@cardiff.ac.uk> Fahad Altokheas  
تم الإرسال: 29/ذو القعدة/1440 12:36 م  
إلى: قسم البحوث والدراسات-بنات <al.takhteet1@riyadhedu.gov.sa>  
الموضوع: Re: بالنسبة لتسهيل المهمة

وعليكم السلام ورحمة الله وبركاته،  
شكر الله لكم جهودكم وسعيكم.

بما يخص الأداة،  
في الطلب المرفق من الباحث، شرحت بأنه سيكون هناك ملاحظة مباشرة للمعلمين داخل الصف تزامنا مع مقابلات  
للمعلمين وقادة المدارس، هل ذلك يتعارض مع خطاب الموافقة؟ أمل منكم الايضاح وجزاكم الله خيرا.

تحياتي،  
فهد الطخيس

From: [Altokheasfa@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Altokheasfa@cardiff.ac.uk)

To: [al.takhteet1@riyadhedu.gov.sa](mailto:al.takhteet1@riyadhedu.gov.sa)

Subject: Facilitating Access to Schools

Content:

Peace be Upon You too,

Many thanks for the reply and the hard work you do for researchers,

Regarding the research method, in the application I submitted, I explained that there would be direct observation methods inside the classrooms and interviews with teachers and headteachers. Does this contradict the approval letter? Could you please elaborate on this? Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Fahad

**From:** <al.takhteet1@riyadhedu.gov.sa> قسم البحوث والدراسات-بنات

**Sent:** Sunday, August 4, 2019 11:20 AM

**To:** Fahad Altokheas <AltokheasFA@cardiff.ac.uk>

**Subject:** رد: بالنسبة لتسهيل المهمة

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته  
لايتعارض مع خطاب الموافقة  
ولو احتجت فيما بعد راسلنا على الايميل

Reply from: [al.takhteet1@riyadhedu.gov.sa](mailto:al.takhteet1@riyadhedu.gov.sa)

To: [Altokheasfa@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Altokheasfa@cardiff.ac.uk)

Subject: Facilitating Access to Schools

Content:

Peace be Upon You

This does not contradict with the approval letter, but in case you needed it the future, email us.

## Appendix 5: Participants' Consent Forms

(School Headteacher consent form)

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Reference Number:

Title of Project:

Name of Researcher:

---

**Participants to complete this section: Please tick the box (✓) if you agree**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study.

2. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have these answered satisfactorily.

3. I understand that the school's participation in this study is voluntary and that the school is free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

5. I agree that the researcher will be present in the classroom for observation during lessons.

6. I confirm that the researcher has explained that any personal details such as names, school names, and relevant personal information will be anonymised and classified, and data will be kept in a secure place.

7. I confirm that the researcher has given us contact details if we request a withdrawal from the study after participation.



(Teachers consent form)

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Participant Reference Number:

Title of Project:

Name of Researcher:

---

**Participants to complete this section: Please tick the box (✓) if you agree**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study.

2. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have these answered satisfactorily.

3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw without giving any reason.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

5. I agree to partake in audio record interviews

6. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

7. I agree that the researcher will be present in the classroom for observation during one of my lessons.







Pupils Consent form  
**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

Title of Project:

Name of Researcher:

---

**Participants to complete this section: Please tick the box (✓) if you agree**

1. I have read and understand the information sheet for this study.

2. I have had the chance to ask questions to Fahad and have had these answered.

3. I understand that if I do not want to be in this study, I can request to leave

4. I agree that I will take part in this study.

5. I agree that Fahad will be present in the classroom.

6. I confirm that my personal details, such as my name, will not be shared, and my information will be kept secure.

7. I confirm that Fahad has given my parents' contact details if we need to leave the study or have questions.

---

Pupil Signature

---

Date

---

Researcher Signature

---

Date

## **Appendix 6: School Educators' Semi-Structured Interviews and Sample**

### **Headteachers Interview**

- 1. Can you explain how you understand disability and what disability is?**
- 2. Can you tell me more about how you support disabled students? How do you work with disabled students?**
- 3. Has your understanding of supporting SEN students changed or developed since the beginning of your career?**
- 4. How do you see Saudi society's response to disability? Is there a particular case related to one of your students that you would like to share?**
- 5. Do you have any comments on the public response to disabled people's rights in Saudi Arabia?**
- 6. Are you familiar with the current Saudi policies regarding inclusion for SEN? If yes, tell me more about these and how you understand them.**
- 7. Can you tell me about governmental policies relevant to your school's approach to the SEN programme?**
- 8. How do you describe your relationship with your parents? (What about disabled pupils' parents)?**
- 9. Tell me, how do you understand inclusive education? How do you feel about it?**
- 10. Do you think your school is implementing inclusion? Why?**
- 11. How do you take forward inclusion policy in your school? Why?**
- 12. What do you think are the most challenging aspects of doing this?**
- 13. Based on your experience, do you feel inclusion can be problematic? How? And what would you suggest to tackle these challenges?**

- 14. What do you expect from disabled students?**
- 15. Tell me about the school climate. Does it differ from the environment you want to make? If yes, why? And can you tell me please about the environment that you want to make in the school?**
- 16. What kind of interaction do you want to have with teachers, and do you want them to have with each other?**
- 17. What do you expect from general education teachers and SEN teachers?**
- 18. How do you feel about the relationship between SEN teachers and general education teachers?**
- 19. What are your school policies regarding managing teachers' and pupils' conduct?**
- 20. To what extent do teachers' and students' opinions shape your school's policies?**
- 21. If you were the minister of Education, how would you take forward inclusion policy and support school headteachers and teachers to advocate this?**
- 22. Was there anything else that you would like to add?**

**Interview Questions**  
**(Teachers)**  
**Pre-Covid-19 Phase**

Fahad:

*Thank you for accepting the invitation and participating in my research! This participation illustrates your good deeds!*

*Q1. To start, can you please tell me about your teaching career?*

*Q2. How do you understand disability? What is a disability in your perception? (Use probing questions)*

*Q3. Can you tell me how do support disabled learners inside the classroom and how you teach them in the mainstream classroom?*

*Q4. How do you see the connection between disability and SN?*

*Q5. Has your understanding of disabled or pupils with SN changed or developed since the beginning of your career?*

*Q6. How do you feel about Saudi society's response to disability compared with other countries in the world?*

*Q7. How do you feel about society's response towards SE programs? Can you remember a particular case that you would like to share?*

*Q8. How do you understand inclusive education?*

*Q9. What approaches do you adopt to support inclusion in your school or classroom? And what are the challenges you face when adopting these approaches?*

Q10. Are you aware of the current Saudi National Laws regarding the inclusion of disabled learners and learners with SN?

Q11. Based on your experience, do you think inclusion can be problematic?

Q12. What experiences do you have that helped you to teach pupils with SN, particularly in overcoming issues that we just discussed?

Q13. So, what workshops or training do you think you may need to teach them and overcome the issues regarding inclusion that we just discussed?

Q14. Can you tell me about the classroom environment that you try to embrace inside the classroom?

Q15. What is the nature of your relationship with pupils that you want to have, and what do you expect from their relationship with one another? What about their relationship with one another? What do you expect from them?

Q16. How do you manage students' conduct inside the classroom? Why did you adopt this approach?

Q17. Could you tell me more about what you feel attracts your students towards learning?

Q18. How do you make students think independently towards their own learning?

Q19. Can you tell me about any approaches the MoE asks you to work with learners with SN statements or disabled pupils?

Q20. What are the things from your relationship with pupils' parents that could affect or influence your classroom?

Q21. Let's say hypothetically that one of your students has special or additional learning needs. How do you know that? Once you know his needs, how do you support him in the GE and special education classrooms?

*Q22. What is your opinion about the current Saudi National Curriculum, particularly for your teaching level? And what are the things from the curriculum that you think may help or hinder inclusion?*

*Q23. What obstacles or barriers may teachers and pupils face in maintaining curriculum accessibility?*

*Q24. If you were the Minister of Education, what are the decisions you would make towards inclusion? And how do you make teachers and school headteachers support and fight for your decisions?*

*Q25. Was there anything you wanted to add or a message you wanted to deliver?*

**Interview Questions**  
**(Teachers)**  
**Covid-19 Phase**

Fahad:

*Thank you for accepting the invitation and participating in my research! This participation illustrates your good deeds!*

*Q1. To start, can you please tell me about your teaching career?*

*Q2. How do you understand disability? What is disability in your perception? (Use probing questions)*

*Q3. Can you tell me how to support disabled learners inside the classroom, and how do you teach them in the mainstream classroom?*

*Q4. How do you see the connection between disability and SN?*

*Q5. Has your understanding of disabled or pupils with SN changed or developed since the beginning of your career?*

*Q6. Has your understanding of disability changed after the Covid-19 Pandemic?*

*Q7. How do you feel about Saudi society's response to disability compared with other countries in the world?*

*Q8. How do you feel about society's response towards SE programs? Can you remember a particular case that you would like to share?*

*Q9. How do you understand inclusive education?*

*Q10. Has your understanding of inclusion changed after distance learning?*

*Q11. What approaches do you adopt to support inclusion in your school or classroom? And what are the challenges you face when adopting these approaches?*

*Q12. How does training in pedagogical approaches regarding teaching disabled and pupils with SN help you in inclusive education?*

*Q13. Are you aware of the current Saudi National Laws regarding the inclusion of disabled learners and learners with SN?*

*Q14. Based on your experience, do you think inclusion can be problematic?*

*Q15. What experiences do you have that helped you to teach pupils with SN, particularly in overcoming issues that we just discussed?*

*Q16. So what workshops or training that you think you may need so you can teach them and overcome issues related to inclusion that we just discussed?*

*Q17. Can you tell me about the classroom environment that you try to embrace inside the classroom?*

*Q18. What is the nature of your relationship with pupils that you want to have, and what do you expect from their relationship with one another? What about their relationship with one another? What do you expect from them?*

*Q19. Can you tell me about students' responses to distant learning? How do you see it?*

*Q20. So, what are school headteachers' and teachers' roles in distance learning? Where do they position and what is expected from them?*

*Q21. How do you manage students' conduct inside the classroom? Why did you adopt this approach? Do you think managing students' behaviour from a distance is possible, and how?*



Q22. *Could you tell me more about what you feel attracts your students towards learning?*

Q23. *How do you make students think independently towards their own learning?*

Q24. *Can you tell me about any approaches the MoE asks you to work with learners with SN statements or disabled pupils?*

Q25. *What are the things from your relationship with pupils' parents that could affect or influence your classroom?*

Q26. *Let's say hypothetically that one of your students has special or additional learning needs. How do you know that? Once you know that he has needs, how do you support him in the GE and special education classrooms?*

Q27. *What is your opinion about the current Saudi National Curriculum, particularly for the levels you teach? So, what things from the curriculum do you think may help or hinder inclusion?*

Q28. *What obstacles or barriers may teachers and pupils face in maintaining curriculum accessibility?*

Q29. *How do you see curriculum accessibility in distance learning? And how do pupils with SN participate in distance learning? What are the barriers to distance learning concerning curriculum accessibility?*

Q30. *What is your opinion about distant learning? And have you been invited to make this decision, or precisely, as teachers, have you been invited to make or participate in the decision of distance learning?*

Q31. *If you were the Minister of Education, what are the decisions you would make towards inclusion? And how do you make teachers and school headteachers support and fight for your decisions?*

Q32. *Was there anything you wanted to add or a message you wanted to deliver?*

## **Sample Text of Interview with HT Suliman:**

*Fahad:*

*As a school leader, how do you see your role in distant learning decisions, and how do you see the teacher's role too in such decisions?*

**Suliman:**

Well, we are nothing compared with the MoE efforts! Therefore, we don't talk but try our best to achieve the MoE vision! So there is no time to say we and they, it's not happening! We have to hum, and our role cannot be compared to what the MoE did! Therefore, we will try to help our teachers and students achieve what the MoE wants!

*Fahad:*

*How?*

**Suliman:**

Since the MoE made all these efforts and spent a lot of money, they want effects for their children's students! However, if the management fails in this process, there will not be any effects! Consequently, the MoE will not achieve the goal that they set to perform! This is due to us as school management and teachers. So, the school HT will try his best to ensure the MoE objective is met, although I am not saying that I will meet the same MoE vision they set! However, I will follow it, make some progress for some time, and then improve later, which means I am on track for their VISION!

*Fahad:*

*What about roles?*

**Suliman:**

In relation to roles, we will get the handbook next week, in which the MoE will guide us on what is expected from us and what is expected from students' parents. Then we can kick off!

*Fahad:*

*How do you manage students' behaviour inside the school? And do you follow the same protocols with SEN pupils?*

**Suliman:**

No, no, no, I don't apply the same method with SE because those have a technique, and those have another way! Those [GE] have VHT, which follows up with them, and those [SEN] have a specialist, VHT and supervisor to follow up with them because it is a huge difference! So you can't!

*Fahad:*

*Why?*

**Suliman:**

Such a difference is related to the fact that intelligence for GE students is mature! Whereas for mental disability, his intelligence is imperfect! Therefore, I base my interaction on his intelligence! I've never seen a teacher who raised his voice or punished his child student either in GE or SE! Especially SE, it should be a priority [to go easy on them]. As [SEN] teaches, kindness and love are one of their temperament! They follow this approach!

*Fahad:*

*Do you think managing students' behaviour from a distance is possible?*

**Suliman:**

No, no, no! It isn't easy because I can't work on their behaviour as an external party! I barely do the teaching process, which is number 1 for me! In relation to conduct, no, it's difficult because I would have to correlate with the family and so on! Don't you expect I only have one child? I mean, a person would have five boys and girls, so how can you, hmm, it's quite difficult! Therefore, we try to make it simple so that they can love it! [simplify E-learning]. However, they wouldn't like it when you make it difficult for them! I mean, he is at home Allah bless him, and his father and mother are more responsible for him! However, for us as a school, and based on the school range, laws etc., we try to ensure a healthy behaviour environment without impacting him or his peers!

*Fahad:*

*What are the things that you feel it attracts your students towards learning?*

**Suliman:**

Reinforcement, reinforcement, reinforcement! Again, reinforcement, reinforcement, reinforcement! The teacher, too, needs reinforcement reinforcement reinforcement in which this requires financial support! All of these are affected by financial support! The MoE provide us, The MoE provide us etc., but we barely manage to buy the most necessary things! But reinforcement is an essential approach in [attracting towards learning]

## Appendix 7: Pre-observation interview

### Pre-Observation-Interview: Sample

Q. What is the lesson today?

A. The metric ruler, and measuring to cm, mm!

Q. What are the lesson objectives?

A. To measure the length to the nearest cm!

Q. So, what are the instructional approaches for this lesson?

A. Humm.. cooperative learning, because each two students share one ruler!

Q. How do you ensure SN pupils' participation in the lesson?

A. Through direct questions to him, but we have had some issues between Nasser and me as he once threw a paper punch at me!

Q. How would you know that students maintained the lesson objective?

A. Through their answers for the activity, participation in the lesson, and checking their correct answers!

### Post-Observation-Interview 1 Abdelwahab

Q. Why is Nasser sitting in the very back of the classroom?

A. Because his peers are afraid of him, and because I observed that he screams at his classmates, so his peers are scared of him!

Q. Haven't you tried working on his behaviour?

A. For the time being, he doesn't hear his peers! But his peers have an impression of him, so it is tough for them to accept him! This happened to me in the first term! [Referring to the paper punch incidence].

Q. What if you changed his classroom to another classroom? Would this help?

A. What classroom?

Q. I mean another mainstream classroom for his level!

A. Possible! Students would get to know him better because he is quieter now!

Q. What about Nasser? Do you think he would accept this idea?

A. I think it would be ok for him!

Q. I saw you were working with him on the activity. Was he responsive?

A. He is, but he fears making mistakes! This is because, in the first term, he had a situation where his peers laughed at him, so he feared making the same problem happen to him again or something like that!

Q. As I asked before, why are there no other sensible instructional approaches?

A. It is not available at the school. Besides, today's lesson is on the ruler; either way, we don't have instructional aids! Nevertheless, the instructional aids are available at the MoE because I visited their warehouse and saw it!

Q. So, why didn't you request it from the MoE?

A. Supposedly, they should offer it to us without asking for it because each school should have resources and specific instructional aids. Why it wasn't delivered to us, I never know!

Q. Last question: I should leave you in peace, honestly, though. Do you want Nasser to stay with you in the class or not?

A. No! I want him to learn in a better environment!

Q. Can you explain more?

A. He needs a specialist who knows how to interact with him!

Q. Why, though?

A. Because we are not specialists in Nasser's needs, we try to do what we are obligated to do. However, I have to admit that we are not doing what we are supposed to do because we don't know how to work with him, even if we undertake workshops it won't be enough, as we are not specialised in this!

## Appendix 8: Observation Sheet

### Observation Sheet

Participant's name:

Date:

**Researcher Reflection:**

Subject taught:

Lesson:

Lesson time:

Available resources:

Number of students:

Number of special needs students:

Notes:

## Appendix 9: Further Example on Themes in Coding

The image displays two screenshots of the NVIVO software interface, showing the 'Attitudes and Enactment' section. The interface includes a menu bar (File, Home, Import, Create, Explore, Share, Modules) and a sidebar with 'Quick Access' and 'ORGANIZE' options. The main area shows a table of coding themes with columns for Name, Files, References, Created on, Created by, Modified on, and Modified by.

**Top Screenshot Data:**

Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
Awareness of ALN inclusion laws	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	08/03/2021 03	FA
Barriers to inclusion	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	12/06/2021 05	FA
Institutional	0	0	09/06/2021	FA	09/06/2021 05	FA
Interactive	0	0	09/06/2021	FA	12/06/2021 05	FA
Pedagogic	0	0	09/06/2021	FA	09/06/2021 05	FA
Professional	0	0	09/06/2021	FA	09/06/2021 05	FA
Condtions to inclusion	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	18/06/2021 07	FA
Exclusion	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	14/06/2021 04	FA
Forms of inclusion	0	0	14/06/2021	FA	14/06/2021 08	FA
Integration	12	36	26/05/2021	FA	06/08/2021 23	FA
Social inclusion	5	8	26/05/2021	FA	18/06/2021 06	FA
History of inclusion in SA	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	15/06/2021 05	FA
Inclusive Education's Understanding	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	10/07/2021 08	FA
Parental Involvement	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	20/06/2021 07	FA

**Bottom Screenshot Data:**

Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
Inclusion	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	26/05/2021 08	FA
Attitude towrds Inclusion	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	15/06/2021 08	FA
Awareness of ALN inclusion laws	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	08/03/2021 03	FA
Barriers to inclusion	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	12/06/2021 05	FA
Condtions to inclusion	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	18/06/2021 07	FA
Exclusion	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	14/06/2021 04	FA
Forms of inclusion	0	0	14/06/2021	FA	14/06/2021 08	FA
History of inclusion in SA	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	15/06/2021 05	FA
Inclusive Education's Understanding	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	10/07/2021 08	FA
Parental Involvement	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	20/06/2021 07	FA
Problems from inclusion	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	20/06/2021 06	FA
Purpose of inclusion	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	30/12/2020 07	FA
Pedagogy	1	5	26/05/2021	FA	14/06/2021 06	FA
Professional Learning	4	13	26/05/2021	FA	06/08/2021 23	FA
School Management	0	0	26/05/2021	FA	28/05/2021 04	FA