

Educator Experiences in the Inclusive Education System in Qatar

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Abstract

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As Qatar is working to advance inclusive education for all its students, there are several challenges that impact the full implementation of the push-in model of inclusion. Inclusive education in this study refers to the integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms. The push-in model means that support services are provided within the general classroom, allowing students with disabilities to remain in the same learning environment as their peers without disabilities. In this phenomenological qualitative research study, I explored the experiences of early childhood teachers in Qatar. In my research, I used constructivist and critical theory to frame the study, exploring how early educational teachers interpret and reflect on their experiences due to systemic constraints and cultural environments. The research was conducted using a semi-structured interview process via Zoom call with 4 teachers from outstanding schools that have integrated inclusive education in their K–3 curriculum. The results were analyzed using thematic analysis, exploring the key points and transitioning between systemic and personal opportunities and difficulties that the teachers experience on a regular basis. Key findings revealed that teachers experienced a profound theory-practice gap, systemic resource shortages (including loss of therapy services

and teaching assistants), and top-down policy constraints; yet they exercised agency to support students, prioritized social integration over academic inclusion, and offered concrete recommendations for improving teacher preparation, professional development, and systemic support. The results will be added to the existing library of knowledge about inclusive education in Qatar to create a practice-to-theory connection for the future.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Early Childhood, Phenomenology, Teacher Preparedness, Qatar

Educator Experiences in the Inclusive Education System in Qatar

Inclusive education aims to ensure that every student, regardless of their abilities, is given the opportunity to participate and learn in school (Al-Hendawi & Alodat, 2023; Hamid & Mohamed, 2021). In early childhood and primary education, inclusive practices play a crucial role because the early years are the foundation upon which other academic areas are built (OECD, 2014). Inclusive education not only focuses on access but puts emphasis on ensuring students with disabilities are given the support to be part of the general classroom and not be separated from other students.

To best include young learners, the push-in model is employed whereby special education services are provided in a general education room to ensure that learners with disabilities are included in a regular classroom with their non-disabled peers (Al-Hendawi & Alodat, 2023; Hamid & Mohamed, 2021). While the push-in model is the focus of this paper, it is important to acknowledge that other service delivery options exist globally, such as pull-out services (where students receive instruction outside the general classroom), self-contained classrooms, or resource rooms (Barton, 2016). However, it is important for instructional approaches to be achieved through flexible, collaborative behaviors that cater to the diverse needs of learners (Hassanein et al. 2021).

The landscape of inclusive education in Qatar is shaped by a unique national context. The country's education system includes a mix of public and private schools, with most schools being private. The country has 68 inclusive schools for boys and girls at all levels of education, catering to students with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, as well as students without disabilities (World Bank, 2021). These schools include resource

classes, special programs and services, and have specialized staff responsible for setting specific learning objectives for their individual education plans (World Bank, 2021).

Specialized staff in these schools work on setting individualized education plan (IEP) goals while maintaining students' participation in the general education environment. In addition, 124 schools offer support services to boys and girls with disabilities (only students with disabilities) at all levels of education (World Bank, 2021). There are also two middle and high schools for the visually impaired and blind which operate in cooperation and coordination with the Light Centre for the Blind (World Bank, 2021). Specialized staff in these schools work on setting individualized education plan (IEP) objectives while maintaining students' participation in the general education environment. Finally, specialized schools provide guidance for students with disabilities, including learners with intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorder with more extensive support needs (World Bank, 2021). Qatar has actively encouraged inclusive education through national policies and strategic reforms aligned with the CRPD. Despite the known benefits of inclusive education, there are numerous challenges, especially when it comes to systemic, cultural, and resource issues preventing teachers from providing quality inclusive education (Al-Kubaisi, 2024).

Educators' perceptions and lived experiences play a major role in the development of inclusive education. It is noted that attitudes, self-efficacy, and cultural competence of teachers determine the success of inclusive education (Hamid & Mohamed, 2021; Al-Hendawi & Alodat, 2023). In Qatar, the development of education is strategically linked to inclusive education. This focus is evident in the country's National Vision 2030, which emphasizes a comprehensive and equitable education system; the CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) ratification and subsequent policy reforms; the establishment of the Department of Additional Educational Support; and the expansion of inclusive schools and support services across the country. However, little is known regarding

educators' perceptions and experiences of implementing new policies, especially at the level of early childhood and primary education (Hassanein et al. 2021).

There is an ever-increasing number of resources guiding inclusive education policy and strategies across the world. However, there is still a gap in understanding of how early childhood and primary school teachers in Qatar experience inclusive education on the ground, particularly with the push-in model. This study will help bridge the gap by exploring the lived experiences of K-3 teachers implementing inclusive education in their Qatari classrooms. Drawing from constructivist and critical theory frameworks, I examined how individual, cultural, and institutional factors relate to the implementation of inclusive education. The overarching research question guiding this study was: How do early childhood and primary educators in Qatar experience and navigate the implementation of the push-in inclusive education model?

Literature Review

This study examines the progress and ongoing development of inclusive education in Qatar. The following literature review will outline the policy and strategic context that has shaped inclusive education in the nation. It will also highlight the characteristics of the educator landscape, the perspectives on early childhood provision and inclusive education, the crucial role of teacher preparation and professional development, and the documented benefits of inclusive education. Finally, it will address the persistent challenges encountered in the effective implementation of inclusive practices within Qatar's educational system.

Inclusive Education in Qatar: Policy and Strategic Context

Inclusive education in Qatar has changed in the last 20 years due to multiple policy shifts in the nation. The changes have been shaped by ongoing efforts by the Middle East

country to transform its economy and the welfare of its people. For example, the government is seeking to construct a knowledge-based economy through the establishment of learning institutions (Al-Kubaisi, 2024). This transformation is evident not only in landmark policy commitments—such as Qatar’s adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD; United Nations, 2006)—but also in ongoing reforms that seek to reshape teacher preparation, support services, and school environments (Hassanein et al. 2021). Central to these efforts is an understanding of the demographic profile of educators and the frameworks that support the integration of diverse learners.

Background to inclusive education in Qatar. Qatar’s commitment to inclusive education is anchored in its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on May 13, 2008. The country had previously signed the Convention on March 30, 2007. The CRPD mandates equal access to education for all learners and the protection of the dignity and rights of individuals with disabilities (Hassanein et al. 2021). In line with these global standards, the education sector in Qatar has undergone substantial changes, which were augmented in 2007 with the formation of the Department of Additional Educational Support under the Supreme Education Council (SEC). This body has been responsible for ensuring that children with various types of disabilities receive an appropriate education without any kind of discrimination. It has also been assisting schools in ensuring that all children with various disabilities access the school curriculum without any form of discrimination. (Al Attiyah & Lazarus, 2012; SEC, 2009).

Two main entities govern teacher education in the State of Qatar. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and the College of Education (CED) at Qatar University. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education develops the strategic and regulatory frameworks of the country’s educational system, while the CED, which was established in 1973, is the main institution for teacher education and is accredited by bodies

such as NCATE and CAEP (Nasser, 2017). Despite substantial progress in teacher education, studies indicate persistent issues common to many global contexts, including a notable theory–practice gap, heavy workloads, and frequently changing curricula, which all hinder the effective implementation of inclusive practices (Al-Naimi et al., 2020; Al-Thani et al., 2021; Romanowski & Du, 2020).

Qatar’s teaching sector is highly diverse in culture, language, and nationality owing to its heavy reliance on imported faculty. The country’s Ministry of Education and Higher Education (2018) revealed that teachers have been drawn from different regions globally, thereby enabling diverse teaching methods to be employed. In addition, there appears to be an imbalance in the number of male and female teachers and women dominate the profession in elementary schools as well as secondary schools (Amin & Cochrane, 2023). This positive trend was further supported by education programs like Education City and initiatives with global universities that have significantly advanced the levels of education and provided international teaching opportunities (Brewer et al., 2007). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that despite the encouraging diversity trends, disparities continue to be noted in the educational system due to limited support from the school’s leadership, increased workloads, and decreased freedom (Al-Kubaisi, 2024).

The reliance on expatriate teachers. Since there is a relatively small proportion of Qatari nationals, the state is heavily reliant on expatriate educators (Romanowski et al. 2022). Data from the Planning and Statistics Authority (2019) show that the primary, preparatory, and secondary schools are predominantly staffed by non-Qatari teachers (Romanowski et al. 2022). While it allows expanding the circle of potential educators available to children, it also introduces challenges in delivering context-specific, consistent professional development necessary for effective inclusive practices. Teachers working under this model must

frequently contend with substantial workloads and rigid standardized curricula, which further complicate their instructional efforts (Al-Naimi et al., 2020; Al-Thani et al., 2021).

To counteract teacher shortages and enhance the quality of instruction, initiatives such as “Teach for Qatar” (TFQ) have emerged since 2014. TFQ recruits and trains graduates and professionals to serve in government schools. While some critics argue that such alternative pathways might indicate a broader lack of confidence in traditional teacher education programs (Keller, 2013; Zeichner, 2017), proponents claim these initiatives foster competition and innovation and are designed to develop educators equipped to understand and address student diversity needs, which is crucial for advancing inclusive education.

Overall, Qatar’s inclusive education policy and strategic framework demonstrate considerable progress but also highlight persistent challenges. Despite proactive reforms by bodies like the SEC and MEHE—and despite sustained efforts at the CED—the reliance on a predominantly expatriate workforce and systemic constraints such as heavy workloads and the enduring theory–practice gap requires ongoing policy refinement and targeted professional support. Teachers experience significant burdens through administrative duties and paperwork requirements, numerous meetings and demanding class preparation time, and extended work hours which become more difficult with larger class populations (Amalu, 2014; Day, 2008). Multiple research studies conducted in Qatar support these concerns about teacher workload. For example, Al Said et al. (2019) showed that extra tasks prevented teachers from using new teaching methods and Romanowski et al. (2013) demonstrated that continuous education changes created additional work for teachers which reduced their effectiveness. Strengthening these areas is critical to ensuring that every student receives high-quality, meaningful educational opportunities.

Benefits of Inclusive Education

The drive for inclusive education is encouraged by both moral imperatives and the tangible gains that it brings to institutions and societies. Inclusive education describes the fair provision of learning opportunities and resources to all learners, especially those with disabilities (OECD, 2021), and has been proven to have several benefits in multiple studies. Inclusive education ensures that all learners can access the general curriculum to support a sense of belonging and prevent the segregation that leads to inequalities. Al-Hendawi and Alodat (2023) examined the barriers faced by refugee students with disabilities. They showed that inclusive education can serve as a powerful intervention to improve their access to quality learning, foster social integration, and mitigate the marginalization they often experience.

Research has shown that training of teachers on inclusivity impacts on teachers' attitude and skills. For instance, Hamid and Mohamed (2021) found that pre-service teachers in Qatar held a positive view on inclusive education. However, they preferred to teach students with mild disabilities. In addition, Hassanein et al. (2021) revealed that inclusivity training transforms the mindset of pre-service teachers and positively changes their attitude, emotion, and behaviors in teaching students with disabilities. Studies prove that inclusive education encourages the uptake of collaborative teaching techniques and continuous professional learning. According to Olson and Roberts (2020), it is necessary to teach future teachers to build relationships and foster advocacy and cooperation in a diverse classroom. In the same vein, Leko and Roberts (2014) and Leko et al. (2021) demonstrated that effective professional development enables teaching innovation and collaborative practices in educators while creating a supportive school climate.

Beyond education, inclusive education has the potential of creating a societal overhaul by enabling diversity and equity since it can disrupt exclusion. By resisting exclusion, it works towards reframing stigmatized perceptions of disability thus contributing to the society that is fair to all. This can transform a community into a united front of equals. Even though several advantages have been identified regarding inclusive education practice, researchers have also identified some gaps in the policy, training and practices especially in preparation of teacher for learners with disabilities which necessitate more research and intervention. This synthesis of benefits underscores the dual rationale for institutions to pursue inclusive education: it is both a moral imperative and a strategy for enhancing educational outcomes on multiple levels.

Perspectives on Early Childhood Provision and Inclusive Education

According to international research on early childhood, early childhood provision is crucial in setting a foundation for lifelong learning (Schofield et al., 2022). Early childhood is defined as a phase of life from birth to eight years of age (NAEYC, 2009; OECD, 2014). This phase is categorized into Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), which takes care of children from birth to four years, and Early Childhood Education (ECE) which caters to children for the four years until the start of compulsory education. The *educaring* concept is also influential in early childhood literature (Schofield et al., 2022). Around the world, there are various terminologies and policy considerations – for example, in the UAE and the USA early childhood is 0-8 years, while in the UK and Australia, it is birth to 5/6 years, with the earlier years often more about care than education (Ring & O’Sullivan, 2018). This distinction between care and education is where the concept of *educaring* becomes relevant. The *educaring* concept emphasizes the love and holistic development of young children, rather than merely addressing their basic needs of feeding and keeping warm. Thus, regardless of whether a country defines early childhood as ending at age 5, 6, or 8, the

underlying principle is that early year's provision should integrate care with education to support the whole child.

These international views are a rationale for focusing on K-3 education in Qatar. This is a country in the process of transforming its economy and educational landscape in a significant way, as evidenced by major policy changes and efforts to create a knowledge-based society. In Qatar, a focus on inclusive education is particularly important. Early inclusion can make quality learning more accessible to all, as well as help develop attitudes and practices that value diversity right from the start, in turn shaping how educators interact with students as they grow. Additionally, as alluded to earlier in this response, research has shown that students experience essential learning and growth during their initial three years of formal education. This period affects their future performance throughout the school system by determining special education needs, grade retention statistics, and high school graduation rates (McCoy et al., 2016).

While Qatar has exhibited a great deal of improvement in the policy of inclusive education, it should be noted that there is limited research on the actual application of these inclusive policies in the early years when interventions can be most impactful. Given the findings that reveal the relatively low level of knowledge and skills among teachers and students in Qatar, the need for teacher training programs designed for early years is thus reinforced (Alkhateeb et al., 2020)

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

The preparation of teachers and their development are essential in building the inclusive practices that are beneficial to both students and educators. According to Darling-Hammond (2000), teacher education programs are where teachers develop their teaching philosophies and methodologies, thus determining their ability to provide equal access to the

general curriculum. Teacher preparation programs are designed to instill future educators with an inclusion philosophy.

Several researchers have explored key aspects of teacher education programs that prepare teachers for inclusivity. Delano et al. (2008) identified the importance of shaping inclusive philosophies; preparing teachers for integrating IEP goals with the general curriculum and comprehensive student assessment; fostering collaborative practices; blending general and special education strategies. Ryndak et al. (2001) emphasized the relevance of a collaborative and inclusive education.

Several aspects of teachers' education programs can support teachers in building their inclusive repertoires. Zagona et al. (2017) showed that trainees who took part in inclusion training had better skills in pedagogy, were able to differentiate instruction, work with their colleagues, and accommodate their students. Dual teaching preparation systems where trainees are trained in both special and general education so that they may be accorded dual certification for this combination of programs (Blanton & Pugach, 2007, 2011) also help in connecting general and special education institutions which promotes the commonality of inclusion and equity.

Ongoing professional development (PD) plays a critical role in ensuring that inclusive practices persist beyond initial teacher preparation. Defined as coordinated and intensive "on-the-job" learning (Learning Forward, 2012), PD helps teachers stay updated with innovations and adapt to evolving educational demands (Guskey, 2000; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002a). Leko and Roberts (2014) outline several essential characteristics of effective PD for inclusive education: coherent and content-focused, active and situated in classroom settings, collaborative, data-driven and extended, and multifaceted. This comprehensive professional development strategy is beneficial to teachers who enter the field through alternative

certification paths so that they can better integrate inclusive practices (Rosenberg et al., 2007).

Despite clear guidelines and frameworks for teacher preparation and professional development for inclusive education, numerous challenges remain. One of the key problems is the difference between theoretical and practical aspects of the preparation for teachers' work. This issue is called "the theory–practice gap" (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Kinyaduka, 2017; le Velle, 2019; McGarr et al., 2017). Additional complications such as heavy workloads, extensive administrative responsibilities, and diminished professional autonomy further compromise the efficacy of teacher education, ultimately affecting job satisfaction and teacher retention (Allen et al., 2020; Hester et al., 2020). The literature suggests that comprehensive teacher training along with strong, continuous professional development is critical for successful inclusive education. Bridging the theory-practice gap through reflective, integrative, and context-specific practices improves teachers' ability to support all students (Olson & Roberts, 2020).

The implementation of inclusive education becomes more complex because of wider institutional and socio-cultural factors which exist. Teachers experience reduced motivation and commitment to inclusive education when they are not involved in decision-making processes that help establish ownership of the work according to Cheng (2008) and Stosch (2021) and Nasser and Romanowski (2011) as well as Abu-Shawish (2016) and Karkouti et al. (2022).

Synthesis and Implications

Taken together, these challenges reveal that successful implementation of inclusive education requires a holistic strategy that addresses systemic, classroom, and instructional

issues. While teacher preparation and professional development (PD) initiatives remain necessary, their impact is limited by the gaps between theoretical knowledge and practical abilities. Overcoming these challenges will require teacher educators, policymakers, and practitioners to collaborate on ways to transform the practices of teachers and the systems in which they work.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framing

I framed this study using Constructivist Theory and Critical Theory to explore the lived experiences of K-3 educators who do inclusive education in Qatar.

Constructivist theory states that individuals construct their knowledge and meaning based on their experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). This study focuses on the way teachers construct ideas, definitions, and practices about inclusion, their learning about inclusion, and their negotiations of the push-in demands. Teachers are not just passive recipients of policies; they have to be involved in the policy process if it is to be effective and adaptable. Teachers filter policies, as well as practices, through their beliefs, practices, and life experiences. The central focus of the proposed study is to discover how inclusion is constructed (i.e., interpreted) at the classroom level.

Critical Theory extends this study by investigating a wider array of power dynamics and disparities inherent within the education system (Freire, 1970). It also encourages a closer examination of systemic forces such as ableism, lack of institutional support, policy loopholes, and disability perceptions and how they affect the teachers and their interpretation and implementation of inclusion. Critical theory and the critical lens it offers, can provide individuals with opportunities to move past surface-level challenges to identify the structural obstacles to successful implementation of inclusive education in Qatar.

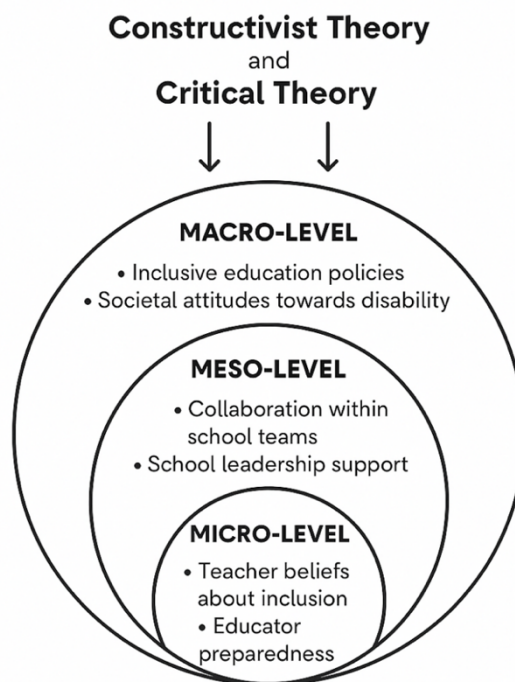
By combining these two theoretical perspectives, this study explored how educators' experiences are deeply personal and constructed within their immediate environments

(Constructivism), but are also shaped by larger systems of power and policy (Critical Theory). The conceptual framework centers on three levels of analysis (see Figure 1):

- **Micro-level:** Teachers' individual beliefs, preparedness, and meaning-making processes regarding inclusive practices.
- **Meso-level:** Interactions among school teams (e.g., collaboration with support teachers, school leadership support).
- **Macro-level:** National inclusive education policies, societal attitudes towards disability, and systemic structures that influence school environments.

Figure 1

The Conceptual Framework of the study (adapted from Kont et al. 2023)



Within this study, inclusive education is described as a universal approach which provides equal opportunities, attainment, and engagement for all learners including those with disabilities. This takes place within general education through appropriate supports and systemic change.

The conceptual framework influenced how I formulated the data generation tools. The interview questions were designed in a way that was seeking to identify how teachers make sense of inclusion (Constructivist assumption) and systemic barriers in the practice (Critical assumption). In this way, I aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the daily realities and diverse experiences faced by teachers, and to underline the crucial systemic factors that contribute to or impede the full development of inclusive education in Qatar.

The primary research questions for the study is: How do early childhood and primary educators in Qatar experience and navigate the implementation of the push-in inclusive education model? To address this overarching question, the study was guided by the following sub-questions: (1) What primary challenges do K–3 educators in Qatar encounter when implementing inclusive education within the push-in model? And (2) What teacher preparation and professional development initiatives do K-3 educators in push-in schools believe could be enhanced to better support them in overcoming systemic, instructional, and practical barriers to inclusive education?

Method

The experiences of K-3 educators in Qatar who were using a push-in model for inclusive education were explored using qualitative methodology, specifically, phenomenology. Phenomenology, as explained by Ayton et al. (2023), is a method and a philosophy based on the idea of understanding a person's lifeworld – the world of everyday life as experienced by the individual. Using phenomenology provided an avenue for me to explore how K-3 educators constructed their experiences, dealt with the challenges of implementing inclusive education models, and navigated the obstacles they encountered. Because I focused on the experiences of the educators, I was able to provide unfiltered reflections on the challenges and perspectives related to inclusive education that are often missed when only quantitative measures are the focus.

Researcher Positionality

Being a novice researcher, with a background in education and being a Muslim international educator, a culturally aware and equity focused lens and perspective into this study. I have interpreted the data based on my personal experiences in education systems such as having attended my own schooling in Qatar, my teacher training experience and my understanding of MoE (Ministry of Education) policies. I had the opportunity to get to know some of the individuals behind this project up close and personally in similar positions and therefore gained an “insider's” perspective on the Qatari inclusive education system. This privileged information helped me to understand the unwritten rules, hidden messages, and institutional terms that participants (whether in “Level 2” or “Level 3” classes, for instance, or using the “push-in model” or the “resource room” approach) used. At the same time my ideas of good inclusive practice may be affected by what I saw as ‘push in’ which may bias my analysis. I maintained an audit trail of my analytical decisions. The audit trail included a dated record of all coding sessions, which transcripts were coded, and any difficulties encountered; version controlled codebooks (ranging from 325 to 46 codes) with the reason for keeping, merging, or discarding codes; a table of the theme development process, which indicated how initial codes were grouped into eight preliminary themes and how these themes were consolidated into the four final themes consistent with the theory; notes on cross participant comparison decisions (e.g., the loss of therapy services was present in three participants, but not four); and memos that explained why some simply descriptive codes (e.g., detailed classroom demographics, specific instructional techniques) were not included. Together, these reflexive practices supported a more robust, transparent, and trustworthy interpretation of the data.

Setting and Participant Selection

The research was conducted in government integration schools (مدارس دمج) in Qatar- public schools that have a special education department in a mainstream school environment. It focused on early elementary education (K-3 grades), which is in line with the literature emphasizing the significance of early intervention on inclusion in the early years of schooling because of the long-term consequences on children in terms of academic and social achievements (NAEYC, 2009; OECD, 2014; Al-Hendawi and Alodat, 2023). Nevertheless, in the recruitment and interview process, it was clear that the schools involved did not have a real push-in inclusive model implemented. Rather, the current trend of academic isolation but social integration was in place: students with disabilities were provided with core academic instruction in separate, self-contained classrooms (sometimes referred to as resource rooms or attached classes) but were included in general education activities like morning assembly, meals, athletics, art, computer lab, and school parties. This is discussed in more detail in the findings. These integration schools were chosen deliberately for the recruitment of participants, as they are the official context for inclusive education to take place in Qatar's public school system. Although the teachers chosen were not actually in a push-in model, I did select teachers in these schools knowing they were directly involved in implementing (or trying to implement) inclusive practices. This selection was based on the research objective of capturing educators' experiences in the current inclusive education system in Qatar. At the outset, the research was to enlist 4 to 6 teachers who were already engaged in a push-in model- known as ongoing engagement in push-in practices, teamwork of general and special educators, and provision of differentiated support in regular classroom situations. An educator screening survey (see Appendix C) was briefly administered to assess educators according to these criteria. Nevertheless, since the real model was not push-in, the ultimate sample comprises teachers who taught in self-contained special education classes in

integration schools, and who habitually engaged in social inclusion (mixing students in non-academic activities) and modified teaching to students with various disabilities.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Role	Class Type	Years of Experience	Age (approx.)	Education
Mariam	Teacher	Self-contained (resource room)	< 1 year	22–24	Bachelor's in Special Education (Inclusion)
Anwar	Teacher	Self-contained (resource room)	20 years	40–45	Bachelor's in Special Education
Amal	Teacher	Self-contained (resource room)	6 years	28–32	Dual Bachelor's in Special Education (King Faisal University & Qatar University)
Hadel	Coordinator / Teacher	Self-contained (resource room)	13 years	35–40	Dual Bachelor's in Special Education (King Faisal University & Qatar University) + 60-70 professional development courses

A purposive sampling method was used, as it is the most appropriate method for exploring the in-depth experiences of a specialized group (Hamid & Mohamed, 2021). Four female teachers were able to meet the inclusion criteria and consented to participate (see Table 1). They were all certified teachers; none were paraeducators. They had a range of experience of less than one year up to 20 years with their highest level of education being bachelor's degrees in special education (two had dual degrees) and they had completed extensive professional development coursework – one participant had taken more than 60 courses. They were all in self-contained classes in government integration schools. The learners that these teachers worked with were between about 6 and 12 years old and with diagnoses such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), intellectual disability, Down syndrome, learning disabilities, and ADHD. Most students were identified as Level 3 (need separate, adapted curriculum), a smaller portion as Level 2 (theoretically justified in general education, but was not commonly applied). In Qatar's special education system, students are classified into levels based on their support needs. Level 3 students require a separate, adapted

curriculum and receive most of their instruction in self-contained classrooms (as was the case for most of the students in this study). Level 2 students are theoretically entitled to receive support within general education classrooms while following the standard curriculum; however, in practice, this was rarely implemented, and most Level 2 students remained in segregated settings. Most of the participants' students were identified as Level 3, with a smaller portion as Level 2.

Data Generation and Collection

This section outlines the main method of data collection, semi structured interviews via Zoom, the interview procedures, the recording and transcribing of interviews, participant communication and the adaptation of questions due to the discovery that the actual model was social only rather than push in.

Semi-structured interviews on Zoom were used as the major source of data. Considering the richness of phenomenological investigation (Ayton et al., 2023), semi-structured interviews of about 60 to 90 minutes were performed with each participant. This methodology gave the participants time to engage and share their feelings in a very detailed manner that took into consideration issues that a shorter encounter would not adequately capture the richness of lived experiences.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The interviews were held using Zoom after obtaining informed consent from every participant. All the participants participated in two semi-structured interview sessions, each of about 60-90 minutes (mean 75 minutes). All interviews were taped with the help of Rev (a professional cloud-based support software of recording and transcription) to guarantee high quality sound and provide an opportunity to have correct Arabic transcription. A backup was also done by using Zoom native recording. Recordings were stored on a password protected

drive only accessible by the researcher. Respondents were sent their transcripts to ensure accuracy, but none of the participants sent any corrections.

The theoretical framework informed the interview protocols (see Appendix B), which included open-ended questions that aimed to capture personal definitions and perceptions of inclusive education by educators, to explore challenges surrounding the (intended) push-in model, to explore how systemic, cultural, and institutional forces influence their practices and to identify ways of overcoming barriers and improving professional development. Nevertheless, in the process of gathering data, it was clear that the schools that participated in the study did not use a real push-in model. Rather, academic segregation with social integration alone (students with disabilities obtained core academic instruction in separate classrooms and engaged in general education activities with their peers only on a non-academic basis) was the current practice. Thus, the interview questions were reformulated to accommodate this fact, emphasizing the experience of teachers in the current social-inclusion model. Some examples of questions included: What is inclusive education to you in your class, and what do you think inclusive education means as an individual? Give an example of a time when you faced a significant obstacle to implementing inclusive practices. What did you do about it? And, How do school policies and cultural perceptions affect your teaching practices? Rich, detailed narratives were elicited by asking additional probing questions, including: Walk me through a typical day. How do you adapt instruction to meet the needs of students with diverse needs? And, What are the most important factors to successful inclusion?

Participants received pre-interview information about the interview protocols and consent forms via email. Verbal consent was documented at the beginning of each Zoom

session, before any data collection began. No incentives or rewards were provided; participation was entirely voluntary.

Data Analysis Methods

Thematic analysis, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was the appropriate method to analyze the data based on the requirement of the phenomenological research aiming to comprehend the lived experiences of the educators. After finalizing the transcriptions, I first reread all the transcripts to make sure they are accurate, corrected any typing mistakes (especially the Gulf Arabic dialect), and redacted any identifying information. Since the interviews were conducted in Arabic with a Gulf accent, I did the transcription and first round coding in Arabic and later translated all the coded passages to English to analyze and report.

Coding Process

To structure and handle the data, I employed manual coding (with the help of Microsoft Excel and Word), which provided more flexibility and closer interaction with the Arabic text. I made a systematic coding table, which traced codes, definitions, illustrative quotes (both in Arabic and English), and source participants.

Both inductive and deductive coding were used (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I began with general deductive codes initially guided by the literature and the conceptual framework (e.g., micro, meso, macro levels). These codes included: (a) professional background and training, (b) beliefs and definitions of inclusion, (c) instructional challenges and adaptations, (d) systemic constraints (policies, resources), (e) collaboration and support systems and (f) change recommendations.

I did line-by-line open coding to the individual transcripts. I developed a code (a brief phrase or idea) that represented the gist of that segment of text in every significant part of the text. A table was used to record the codes with the original Arabic quote and an English

translation. For example, the code I developed was "Systemic Barrier: Slow Procurement of Specialized Equipment" when a participant mentioned that she was compelled to buy adaptive equipment herself. This inductive method enabled codes to directly come out of the data and not be forced by existing frameworks. Multiple inductive codes were created that were unanticipated, including the codes of "loss of therapy services", "university-ministry contradiction", and "behavior contagion by non-SPED students".

Theme Development and Code Reduction

The initial round of coding resulted in 325 codes. During the next round of analysis, I used the theoretical framework (Constructivist and Critical Theory) and the research questions (push-in model challenges, teacher preparation, professional development) to narrow down and shorten the codes. In this round I excluded purely descriptive codes (e.g., detailed classroom demographics, specific instructional techniques, procedural IEP tracking), but included codes that directly dealt with systemic barriers, teacher meaning-making, preparedness gaps, and (e.g., "loss of therapy services," "theory-practice gap," "ethic of care," "flexible lesson timing"). This resulted in 46 narrowed codes that were grouped into three systems (micro, meso, macro) and an "Other" category of unexpected findings (see Appendix D: Codebook Abridged).

The Six-step Model of Thematic Analysis

I engaged in six distinct analytic phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Phase 1 involved an introduction to the data. In this phase, I listened to the interviews and read the transcripts after every interview to keep the interviews accurate. I then read through and re-read all transcripts several times, taking initial notes and recording pre-read impressions. This experience helped me to gain a comprehensive view of the story of each participant. In Phase 2 I developed the first code. As outlined in the above section, I conducted line-by-line open coding which resulted in 325 original codes. In Phase 3, I began searching for themes. Once I

had coded all participants individually, I combined similar codes into the preliminary themes. For example, the codes concerning the loss of therapy services, shortage of materials, and top-down policy control were included in a larger theme of systemic constraints. I identified eight preliminary themes identified at this stage. In Phase 4 I reviewed the themes. This involved reviewing and revising all themes to make sure that internal consistency (the codes in a theme make sense) and external differentiation (themes were distinctly differentiated) were achieved. This entailed cross-checking of each theme on the coded information and the original transcripts. I then carried out cross-participant comparison to determine convergent themes (where participants concurred), divergent themes (where opinions diverged), and unique ones (where one participant alone raised an issue). This comparison revealed, for example, that the theory-practice gap was reported by three of four participants, while the loss of therapy services was reported by three participants. In Phase 5, I defined and named the final themes. The eight preliminary themes were narrowed down and summarized into four main themes:

1. Building Inclusion – Teachers' Beliefs, Definitions, and Meaning-Making (micro-level)
2. Collaboration and school-level interaction (meso-level)
3. External policies -Theory-Practice Gap and Teacher Preparedness. (macro)
4. Professional Development and Systemic Recommendations (macro)

In this phase, I composed every theme as a narrative, including sub-themes. Finally, in Phase 6, I began writing the findings. This included writing the findings in a detailed narrative, categorized under the four themes, providing evidence of each theme with detailed illustrative quotes (in both Arabic and English). I constructed the findings in a way that would respond to the initial research questions, as well as point to surprising discoveries (e.g.,

the fact that the actual model was social-only inclusion, not a full implementation of the push-in model.

Findings

This study involved four female teachers who are employed in Qatari government integration schools (see Table 1). Their pseudonyms include Mariam (recent graduate, less than 1 year experience), Anwar (20 years' experience), Amal (6 years' experience), and Hadel (13 years' experience, and a coordinator). (As the coordinator, her responsibilities include organizing SPED Educator schedule and semester load, as well as providing leadership and mentoring for the department). All the educators taught in self-contained special education classrooms in mainstream schools. Their students were aged around 6 to 12 years old, and their diagnoses comprised autism spectrum disorder (ASD), intellectual disability, Down syndrome, learning disabilities, and ADHD.

One of the key insights that surfaced very early in the analysis was that none of the schools the teachers worked at practiced a real push-in model of inclusive schools. Rather, academic segregation and social integration only prevailed: students with disabilities obtained core academic instruction in different classrooms and only participated in general education in non-academic activities (meals, art, PE, assemblies). This discovery is illustrated throughout the findings.

I identified four themes in the findings, mapping each on to the conceptual levels of the conceptual framework (micro, meso, macro): (1) the microsystem related to teachers' beliefs, meaning making and agency; (2) the mesosystem related to collaboration and school-level interactions; (3) the macrosystem related to external policies, resources, training, and systemic constraints; and (4) the macrosystem related to societal attitudes, cultural norms, and recommendations.

Theme 1: Microsystem- Teacher Beliefs, Meaning Making and Agency

The first theme reflects how individual teachers developed their sense of inclusion, professional judgment, and balance between personal values and institutional requirements.

Defining Inclusion

The participants had a mixed understanding of inclusion. For example, Anwar valued social inclusion over academic inclusion: "أفضل ان الطالب يكون دمج اجتماعي مع الطلاب في المهارات (I would rather have a social inclusion with students in some skills, i.e., during free time to play with students)." Amal also acknowledged the inherent worth of inclusion, even though it is imperfectly applied: "فكرة الدمج يعني فكرة وايد (The concept of inclusion is a very right notion)." Mariam however was very cynical of what she termed "name only" inclusion: "الدمج الحالي يعني تشوفوا احنا طلابنا مظلومين... هي مش مدرسة الدمج (Take a glimpse at our present inclusion in Qatari schools- you see how our students are wronged... this is not an inclusion school)." On the same note, Hadel reminisces that she would have been happier with the previous in-class support model (during the 2014-2015 academic year) instead of the current separation: "أحس الطريقة القديمة كانت أفضل (I think it was better the old way)." Combined, the above quotes show that there was a range of levels of push-in for inclusion. Some participants supported its use in theory; others were very skeptical about its utility with their students. The educators' view of inclusion in Qatar's integration schools ranges from affirmation to nostalgia to cynicism.

Teacher Agency and Professional Judgment.

Teachers exercised their agency to address the needs of students despite having strict policies. Hadel did not hesitate to challenge policy, one of which demanded the use of formal Arabic only, and instead she employed the colloquial language to make sure the student do understand: "أنا قاعدة أتكلم صراحة مصري عادي ما عندي مشكل قاعدين نأخذ عليه ونقولها أنا هذا اللي تعلمت عليه (I don't have a problem with talking Egyptian dialect. They will deduct marks on my yearly evaluation, and I will say to them, 'This is what I was taught in university')." Amal

explained her adaptation of lesson timing depending on student indicators and refusing the required 45-minute framework: " أنا أشوف من وجهة نظري ما في شيء إلزامي لأن المعلم هو اللي يقدر يحدد (Personally, I find nothing compulsory since the teacher is the one to decide the extent in which the students are able to assimilate)." Each of the participants expressed an ethic of care, indicating that they valued student well-being over policy adherence. Hadel stated: " أنا همي أوصل المعلومة للطفل يعني عادي يصير شيء ضدي بس أهم شيء اللي (I am only worried about conveying information to the child. It is all right when something opposes me, but what matters is that the person in front of me understands)." There were also strategic practices of inclusion. To minimize stigma, Mariam and Anwar purposely combined students in short intervals: "أدخلها حصتين باليوم... الوصمة بتنتشال (and I take her in two times a day to regular class... the stigma is eliminated)." These quotes illustrate the ways in which teachers deliberately used their professional judgment and agency in a highly constrained setting to adapt language, modify time, focus on student understanding rather than the consequences of missing assignments, and strategically integrate students to minimize stigma. They illustrate how teacher agency was not a one-off event or an isolated process of tackling a policy but a dynamic, creative process of dealing with students' actual and changing demands.

Theme 2: Mesosystem - Collaboration and School Level Interactions.

The second theme encompasses interactions among the teachers with the support staff, families, and school leadership, or the direct relations that define their everyday practice.

Cooperation with Support Staff.

Effective collaboration was characterized by team problem-solving. Teachers described how all team members helped to find solutions. Amal explained it: " الكل يتناقش إلى أن (Everyone talks until we come up with solutions... فالكمل يقول وجهة نظره

everybody gives us their point of view).” Informal mentorship was beneficial to new teachers. Mariam noted: "مسكتني من الصفر" (Hadel took me from zero).” Amal described how her team had democratic leadership and the opinion of the coordinator did not always have the final word: "مو في شرط أنها منسقة لازم يكون رأيها هو الصح" (And it is not a requirement that the opinion of the coordinator is always the right one).” This shows how collaboration among support staff was not merely about sharing tasks but involved active problem-solving, nurturing guidance for novice teachers, and a distributed leadership style that valued collective expertise over hierarchical authority – all of which contributed to a more responsive and supportive working environment.

Collaboration with Families

Collaboration with families was also an important part of the participating teachers’ strategies for supporting their learners with disabilities. Amal adopted a strength-based strategy of communicating with parents and made calls to congratulate small achievements before addressing challenges, "أنا عني شخصيا دايما أحب أركز على نقاط القوة... أحب أني أنا أتصل أقول لها " (I prefer to concentrate on the strong points... I prefer to make a phone call, not a message).” She also recognized and supported parents through the emotional stages of grief – including shock, denial, and rejection – rather than simply “maneuvering” around them: "لازم أنا لما بيني ولي الأمر أستشفه في أي مرحلة... مرحلة صدمة مرحلة إنكار" (When a parent approaches me, I have to be noticeable to what level I am dealing with: shock, denial, rejection).” But the lack of parental acceptance of their child’s disability was pervasive. According to Amal, 70 percent of the parents found it hard to accept the fact that their child was disabled: "الأغلب خنقول سبعين بالمية مش متقبلين" (Most of them, seventy percent or so, are not accepting the fact of disability).”

Teachers' engagement with families extended beyond the usual forms of collaboration (e.g, sharing information, coordinating services) and extended to providing deep emotional

support (e.g, aiding and abetting in grief work, celebrating small successes), as is evidenced in these quotes. This was a crucial position that could not be overlooked, but it was also another responsibility that was added to teachers' already heavy workloads.

School Leadership Support and Tensions

Teachers also described the way they partnered with school leadership. Hadel mentioned positive leadership practices. Her administration involved special education students in all the activities and organized monthly listening sessions: "الأشياء الحلو أنهم مشاركتنا" (The good things: they involve us in everything they do at school, e.g., the activity)." On the other hand, Anwar cited administrative interference in behavior management: "السلبات انه في اشياء المفروض الادارة ما تدخل فيها بيني وبين الطالب خصوصا في حالات تعديل السلوك" (The disadvantages are that there are areas where the administration should not interfere, particularly in matters of behavior modification)." There was also a feeling that there was an intrinsic tension between teachers' need to address students' wider needs such as behavior management, emotional support and social wellbeing, and administration's drive to achieve curriculum outcomes. Amal explained: "أحين شنو الأهم الشرح ولا الطالب لازم أنا أضبط الطالب أول" (So now, is the explanation of a subject content more important than the student? I must deal with the student first)."

Theme 3: Macrosystem- External Policies, Resources, Training, and Systemic Constraints

Theme three included teachers' discussion of the broader influences that shaped teachers' work including ministry policies, resource shortages, and gaps in teacher preparation.

Policy Constraints

Throughout the interviews, teachers discussed the ways their roles were shaped by ministry policies. Both Mariam and Anwar described how there was always a high level of

top-down policy control by the Ministry of Education and minimal level of school level autonomy: "السياسات مو من الإدارة... من الوزارة" (It is not an administration policy; it's a ministry policy...).” Amal described the policy gap between arrangements and facilities: "سياسة الترتيبات" (The policy of ‘arrangements and facilities’... this is not applied on the ground).” Strict teaching expectations, like one objective per lesson, were perceived as an important limitation. Mariam and Anwar both stated: "ما بصير تتعدي الهدف" (It is impossible to have more than one goal... the most significant limitation I had).” One of the notable contradictions was the open enrollment policy of the ministry in the face of gross resource inadequacies as Amal stated: "تجيبون تسجيل جديد وإحنا ما" (They start new enrollments, and we lack space, instructors, and professionals).” Hadel had direct conflict between what she learned in university (e.g., using any language dialect to reach the student) and ministry policy (e.g., formal Arabic only): "أول يوم حضرت في المدرسة... قالوا لي لا تخيلي أشرح بلغة عربية فصحة ممنوع تتكلمين" (On my First day... they said to me, 'Speak formal Arabic. You are not allowed to speak a informal Arabic language').” These quotes reflect a range of tensions that teachers felt with ministry policies: policies were imposed on schools without their involvement or input; official policies were not always put into practice; fixed rules of instruction did not consider student needs; inadequate resources did not prevent enrollment despite the policy; and university training was often in opposition to ministry policy, leading. This led to conflicts over the inclusive practices that were the very purpose of the policies.

Resource Shortages

Teachers’ ability to support their learners with disabilities was also impacted by resource shortages. The loss of therapy services (speech, occupational, and physical) and teaching assistants was reported by all three experienced teachers (Amal, Anwar, Hadel): Hadel stated, "قبل كان عندنا علاج طبيعي وعلاج وظيفي وعندنا كل شي... الحين ما عندنا شي" (We used to

have physical therapy and occupational therapy... and now we have nothing in our schools)."

Hadel noted, "المساعدة اللي كانت تساعدنا كلهما شالوها ما عندنا" (We don't have any assistants anymore)." Because of the resource shortages, teachers purchased supplies using their own funds "قاعدين نشترى الأشياء من مالنا الخاص" (We are spending our personal money to buy something)" (Anwar). Special equipment was very slow to procure, so teachers had to buy things themselves. Amal described: "الطلبات تاخذ وقت طويل... اضطرينا احنا نشترى هذي القطعة اللي من إيكيا" (Ordering things is slow... we had to purchase this item at IKEA by ourselves)." This contributed to a feeling of despair and fatigue. Anwar described this feeling: "جهد جهاد... طول الأسبوع أنا أشتغل حتى في البيت" (So much work... throughout the week, I do it even at home)." These quotes illustrate how resource shortages undermined teachers' ability to support their learners and contributed to low morale.

Teacher Preparation and Training.

In addition to feeling frustrated with ministry policies and being impacted by resource shortages, teachers described challenges that were related to their teacher preparation and training (or lack thereof). Three out of four participants reported a profound theory-practice gap. Mariam and Anwar noted challenges between the theoretical knowledge they learned in their preparation programs and the practical knowledge needed to do their job: "العملي والنظري" (Practical and theoretical are two sides of a coin)." Amal explained that she graduated without any training to teach certain academic disciplines: "أنا تخرجت ما تخرجت أني أنا أدرس مادة معينة... أنا حين معلمة لغة عربية ولكن اجتهد شخصي" (I did not get a job as a teacher of a certain subject... now I am an Arabic teacher, but it is a personal work)." The design of the curriculum was self-directed, but teachers were forced to develop materials on their own, which was challenging depending on their preparation experiences. Amal shared: "إحنا كل معلمة هي اللي تكيف منهج... في الجامعة ما تعلمنا إن إحنا نسوي كتاب" (Every teacher modifies the

curriculum... at university they did not teach us to make a book).” Teachers also noted gaps in their training related to behavior management. Mariam and Anwar both noted that some things were not addressed in their training: "مش متعلميتها في الجامعة" (I wasn't covered on this at university).” Hadel did her practicum in specialized schools, rather than inclusion schools, which provided her with a comparative viewpoint: "أنا للأسف تدرّبت بمدارس متخصصة يعني ما تدرّبت" (Unfortunately! I did not train in inclusion schools; I trained in specialized schools).” Collectively, these quotes suggest that teacher preparation programs in Qatar were not equipping teachers for inclusive classrooms by failing to provide them with any subject-specific training, no training in real-world behavior management, no training in designing adapted curricula, and little connection between theory and practice in the classroom. In addition, teachers' practicum in specialized schools were not prepared for the challenges they faced in integration schools, and this gap between preparation and reality became even wider.

Theme 4: Macrosystem- Societal Attitudes, Cultural Norms and Change

Recommendations

Throughout our discussions, teachers also shared how broader societal attitudes toward disability influence inclusive education in Qatar, as well as their practical suggestions for improving the system.

Disability in Society

One concept that teachers brought up in discussions about inclusion was the way perceptions of disability shaped practice. Amal highlighted that special educators should be very familiar with the terminology of disability and oppose labeling: "لازم تكون عنده ثقافة في" (They should possess a rich culture in terms of terminologies... in case a special education teacher continues using people of determination instead of people with disabilities, it is not acceptable). The term “people of determination” (ذوي الهمم) is an official term promoted in Qatar and the UAE as a more

positive alternative to “disabled.” While well-intentioned, the teacher (Amal) argued that it is still a euphemism that avoids directly acknowledging disability as a natural part of human diversity, and that special educators should use clear, internationally accepted terms such as “people with disabilities.”

Amal went on to describe how neither stigmatizing term, such as support girl of students, was acceptable to her: " ما يصير هي ترضى أن يقال عن طالبة هذا " (At school, they say 'support girl'... they should not accept that this label is used for a student).” “Support girl” is a colloquial label used in some Qatari schools to refer to a student who receives special education services. Amal rejected it because it reduces the student’s identity to their support needs and creates a separate, often stigmatized category. She insisted that every student should be addressed by their name, not by their label.

As a positive sign, Hadel described how they noted a historical shift toward a more accepting society. They discussed the example of parents who used to conceal their children with disabilities now mention that you should post their pictures and videos: " الحين لا بالعكس " (Now, however, they tell us, on the contrary, to post their pictures. It is they who insist that we post their videos) (Hadel).

Systemic Change Recommendations.

During the interviews, teachers provided an elaborate list of suggestions for ways to further support inclusive education in Qatar. The first priority, shared by Hadel, was specialized curricula: " أول شي انه تخصيص مناهج " (Practice: Curriculum specialization).” Hadel went on to say that new teachers required pre-service training and pre-employment testing in practical areas such as classroom management, curriculum adaptation, and understanding Qatar’s specific inclusive education policies: " المعلمة لازم تخضعينها لدورات قبل التوظيف " (Teachers need to take courses prior to employment). Hadel also described how special education teachers should be evaluated using different means of assessment than general education

teachers, who are assessed using students' grades. Currently, special education teachers in Qatar are evaluated using the same criteria as general education teachers: "المفروض ما تحسبيني" (They should not judge me by students' grades; this is what they are capable of)."

Teachers also discussed the need for better resourced systems to support inclusion. This included reinstating on-site specialists (e.g., speech, OT, PT): "زيدون مثلا الأخصائي النطق" (Add a speech specialist, physical therapy, a speech therapist). Anwar also described the need for strong leadership: "المدير عنده خبرة... لأن أساس المدرسة هو المدير" (An experienced principal... since school life is built on the shoulders of the principal)."

Additionally, she described how classrooms should be ready and provided with resources before students start attending the school, which would save the teachers the expense of purchasing their own supplies: "لازم يكون الصف مجهز مش بعد ما يتسجلون الطالبات" (It must be equipped in the classroom not afterward, once the students are enrolled)."

In addition to tangible resources, Anwar also suggested that peers in the class be provided with training about disability to minimize bullying and stigma: "أي طالب يسجل في المستوى الثاني... لازم كل الصف يعرفون بحالته لازم كل الصف ياخذ دورة" (Any Level 2 student... the entire class should be made aware of their condition and take a course on how to handle them)."

These tangible resources and trainings could better support teachers in supporting their learners with disabilities.

Teachers also provided recommendations related to instructional control and agency. For example, Anwar shared how a more flexible lesson schedule would enable teachers to change the length of the lesson according to the needs of the students: "يخلون المعلم التربية" (They are required to provide the special education teacher with the option to decide when to initiate the lesson)."

They also suggested reducing the number of daily lessons, particularly the number of lessons for students with disabilities, and prioritizing the basics: "يقللون حصص الدراسية... طالب تربية خاصة جاي المدرسة شنو يتعلم؟ يتعلم"

الأساسيات (They ought to cut down the number of lessons... What ought a special education student go to school to learn? The basics first).”

Finally, teachers provided recommendations on ways educator and staff training could support inclusion. Hadel described how training of aides/support staff was essential, since aides usually came without knowledge: "أنا حابة تصير فيه ورش وتصير زي التدريب حق المرافق" (I would like aides to get workshops and training).” She suggested that an obligatory course on disability to all education graduates would help all teachers have basic knowledge in special needs: "أتمنى أن يكون فيه مادة عند كل معلمة... على الاحتياجات الخاصة شلون تتعامل معها" (I recommend a course on special needs, on how to handle them, for all teachers).” Anwar noted that it would be beneficial if all professional development was based on the most recent studies, provided more insight into disability labels, and other sensory input, so they can create more comfortable and accessible learning environments: "الدورات اللي تعطينا الوزارة حسب الدراسات" (What the ministry provides to us should be informed by recent studies... what the teacher must have is an understanding of the student).” These recommendations related to training show how that teachers want a complete restructuring of how inclusive education is supported – starting with pre-service training and pre-employment testing that is practical and context-specific, moving to a fair evaluation system that recognizes the unique nature of special education, and extending to well-resourced classrooms

Model Mismatch

An important, unexpected finding was that despite targeted recruitment efforts to educators working in schools labeled as inclusive, none of the schools that the participants attended had a push-in model in place. Rather, the schools participants worked at socially integrated students but segregated them academically. As Anwar and others explained: "احنا فاصلينهم لكن حق الأكل مع بعض حصص الفنية مع بعض... من ناحية المواد العلمية لا يكون صف خاص فيهم" (We

segregate them in studies, but we eat together, classes in art, together. in study, they are segregated, they have their own separate classes).” This finding redefined the whole study: instead of studying the application of a push-in model, the findings also provide insight into the experiences of teachers in a system that isolates students during academic portions of the day while bringing them together for more social, informal aspects of the day.

Discussion

This phenomenological research was aimed at investigating the experiences of early childhood and primary educators in Qatar with the implementation of inclusive education, specifically the planned push-in model. Through in-depth interviews with four female teachers who worked in the government integration schools, the findings revealed that instead of a push-in model, the dominant pattern was that their students with disabilities were socially integrated, but not academically integrated. Students with disabilities were provided with the basic academic education in separate, self-contained classrooms and participated in general education only in the process of non-academic activities. Nevertheless, despite this model mismatch, the results provide abundant insights into ways teachers develop their concept of inclusion, agency in a rigid system, how they work with their colleagues and families, how they address systemic obstacles, and how they imagine a meaningful change. This discussion interprets these findings through the two theoretical lenses: Constructivist Theory (how teachers constitute meaning of inclusion) and Critical Theory (how power, policy and structures of the system influence their practice). It also interprets findings related to the two research questions, comparisons with existing literature, implications on practice and policy, and outlines limitations and future research directions.

Limited Implementation of the Push-In Model

The most notable finding is that all the participants did not operate in a real push-in model. Instead, they steered through a mixed system in which students were socially integrated but academically segregated. Their experiences, thus, are a type of inclusion that is nowhere near the international benchmark of complete academic inclusion. However, the teachers' stories shed more light on how they managed this limited setting. They used their agency to adapt lesson time (Anwar), speak informally (Hadel), and thoughtfully group students to spend brief intervals together to minimize stigma (Mariam, Anwar). These forms of resistance can be interpreted in accordance with the constructivist assumption that a teacher is not a passive recipient of the policies but an active meaning-maker who refracts mandates through his/her professional beliefs and lived experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). The fact that the teachers were able to create small areas of flexibility within the inflexible system proves their resilience and their strong desire to take care of students. Meanwhile, the fact that their navigation was heavily controlled by the top-down policy (Mariam, Anwar), loss of key resources (Amal, Anwar, Hadel), and conflicting messages between the expectations of university training and the ministry severely limited their navigation (Hadel). This aligns with tenets of critical theory (Freire, 1970), which uncovers how the power structures within a system, such as ableist assumptions, bureaucratic inflexibility, and resource allocation choices made by those with more structural power than classroom teachers, influence the daily lives of teachers.

Systematic Challenges Influencing Teachers' Implementation of the Push-In Model

Even though the push-in model was not implemented as originally conceptualized, the challenges that teachers had with the current model are severe and complex and include challenges at the systemic and policy levels. Participating teachers complained that there was no flexibility in school-level policies, as they were imposed by the ministry. The most

mentioned limitation was the rule of one objective per lesson, which restricted teachers to a single academic goal per 45-minute period. In practice, this meant that teachers could not break a complex skill into smaller, sequential objectives or respond flexibly when students needed more time on a particular concept; instead, they had to rush through content or leave it unfinished, even when students were ready to move forward. This rigid requirement directly conflicts with the flexible, individualized pacing that inclusive education research recommends (Leko & Roberts, 2014; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002a). Teachers also faced challenges related to the policy-practice gap. This created situations where policies such as arrangements and facilities were outlined on paper, but they were not put into action because of the lack of resources, which created a futile feeling. This gap between official policy and classroom reality mirrors findings from earlier studies in Qatar, where teachers reported that mandated accommodations were rarely provided in practice (Al-Kubaisi, 2024; Abu-Shawish, 2016). The most significant one is that Hadel felt the direct contradiction between her university training (use any language to get to the student) and ministry policy (only use formal Arabic) and had to decide between conformity and student understanding. This contradiction echoes the theory-practice gap widely documented in teacher education literature (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Kinyaduka, 2017) and is a known challenge in Qatar's teacher preparation system (Nasser, 2017). Participants also described systemic challenges related to resource shortages. Three out of four participants reported systematic withdrawal of therapy services (e.g., speech, OT, PT) and teaching assistants. This undermining of support, which was intertwined with the establishment of specialized schools, essentially limited the ability of the inclusion schools to cater to the needs of students with different needs. As a result, educators paid with their own money to purchase materials and waited months before they could get the necessary adaptive equipment. This resulted in widespread feelings of overwhelm and exhaustion.

The findings also revealed a theory to practice gap, which limited participating teachers' ability to implement inclusion. A strong sense of disillusionment with the gap between what is taught at university and classroom reality was shared by all three experienced teachers (Amal, Mariam, and Anwar). Amal reported that she graduated untrained to teach particular academic topics, that curriculum design was a self-taught process, and that the university-reality gap was 100 percent – meaning that she found nothing from her university coursework directly applicable to her daily teaching responsibilities. Mariam and Anwar also referred to the distance between their training (theory) and their job (practice) as “heaven and earth”. These findings resonate with decades of studies on the theory-practice gap in the international community (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Kinyaduka, 2017) and indicate that the theory-practice gap continues to be a problem in Qatar, even with recent curriculum reforms, which do not equip teachers to work in the (still) messy and unpredictable environment of inclusive classrooms. The significant theory-practice gap as identified by participants is reflective of other studies done in Qatar (Al-Naimi et al., 2020; Romanowski et al., 2022) and globally (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Kinyaduka, 2017). But the size of the gap, as articulated by Amal as not even one percent alignment, is impressive. This indicates that the teacher education programs in Qatar, even with the accreditation of the agencies like NCATE/CAEP (Nasser, 2017), might be too theoretical and may lack deep roots in the realities of the local inclusive classrooms.

Challenges related to collaboration with administration and leadership also shaped teachers' practice. Even though positive leadership practices were observed and shared by teachers, there were also administrative interferences in behavior management practices, and there was a general clash of priorities, with the administration believing it was better to finish instruction than attend to behavior management. This misalignment is consistent with research from Qatar showing that teachers often experience reduced motivation and

commitment when they are not supported in decision-making and when administrative demands conflict with student needs (Abu-Shawish, 2016; Karkouti et al., 2022; Romanowski et al., 2013) This misalignment is indicative of a greater systemic problem, namely, the incomprehension of school leaders with respect to the work of special education. Hadel specifically requested administrators to be trained about special education to address this.

Teachers' Recommendations to Address Systematic Barriers

The set of recommendations provided by the participating teachers was quite extensive and can be divided it into three categories: (1) pre-services and in-service training reforms, (2) reforms in curriculum and teacher evaluation, and (3) resource and structural reforms.

Pre-service and in-service training reforms. Hadel emphasized that all education graduates should take a disability course, not just those in special education. She said all future teachers should be knowledgeable about special needs or the general education teacher shouldn't say that they are not qualified. Support for this is found in the research which has recommended that all teachers receive basic instruction about disability (Blanton & Pugach, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Hadel also recommended pre-service education and pre-employment testing for any new teacher, especially those coming from other countries. She said teachers should be well versed with Qatar's system and other skills such as basic computer usage before they begin their teaching sessions. Studies on alternative certification and internationally trained teachers agree that hands-on, context-specific preparation is essential (Rosenberg et al., 2007; Zeichner, 2018). Lastly, Amal emphasized the need for professional development on sensory perspective-taking – teachers need to know about the way students with autism experience sound, light, and touch, and not simply disability labels.

A sensory awareness focus is reflected in effective models for professional development that include the concepts of empathy and environmental accommodation (Leko & Roberts, 2014).

Reforms of the curriculum and of the evaluation system. Teachers also called for changes to curricula and evaluation. Hadel called for specialized courses in special education. She said that teachers should "not have to reinvent the wheel for general education materials, it is the ministry's responsibility to establish committees of experienced teachers to create a leveled curricula for students with disabilities". Literature from around the world confirms the importance of co-created, flexible curricula developed by practitioners, which is also referred to in the literature as curriculum tailoring (Ryndak et al., 2001; Zagona et al., 2017). Hadel also advocated for a special assessment process for special ed teachers. It is not right to evaluate special teachers based on their student's grades," she said. A new system could take into account teacher effort, adaptation, and student growth in comparison to what each student was capable of. Research in inclusive school leadership has highlighted that traditional assessment instruments fail to adequately capture the intricacies of special education (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002a; Olson & Roberts, 2020).

Resource and structural reforms. Several resource related recommendations were given by the participants. Amal called for the reintroduction of On-Site Specialists (Speech Therapists, OT, PT) to the Inclusion Schools. These services were stripped away when specialized schools were established, she added. This discovery contradicts the existing policy of clustering therapy in segregated space, which is counter to the CRPD's principles of inclusive, community-based supports (United Nations, 2006). Teachers also suggested pre-equipping classrooms with sensory materials and having aides trained, as they are usually not knowledgeable. The importance of providing appropriate materials and the proper training of the paraeducator is highlighted in the literature on effective inclusive schools (Leko & Roberts, 2014). Amal and Mariam also recommended flexible timing of lessons and reduced

number of lessons per day. They stated that teachers should adjust the duration and number of periods of a particular lesson to comply with students' attention span and energy level. This is consistent with literature on instructional pacing for students with significant needs, which states that students with significant needs benefit from extended time and reduced cognitive load (Delano et al., 2008). Finally, Amal suggested peer education – educating the entire class prior to the entry of a student with a disability on how to interact and support a student who has a disability, thereby lowering the risk of bullying and stigma. This practice has been found to be supported by research on peer mediated interventions and inclusive school climates (Leko et al., 2021; Olson & Roberts, 2020;). Such recommendations are in line with global best practices of inclusive education (Leko & Roberts, 2014; McLeskey and Waldron, 2002a) and respond to the identified gaps in the context of Qatar.

Theoretical Implications

The research confirms the constructivist assumption that it is through experience that teachers build their own conceptualization of inclusion. This finding aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theory, which posits that individuals actively construct knowledge through their lived experiences rather than passively receiving it. The participants not only accepted the official definitions; they also developed their own definitions according to their experiences. Anwar placed emphasis on social inclusion rather than academic inclusion, and Hadel missed the 2014-2015 model, which included additional educators providing in-class support to students with disabilities studying in general education classrooms. This highlights the importance of meaning making as an active process rather than a passive one, as well as the role of teachers' agency in this process (such as adjusting the time of the lesson, communicating with students in a colloquial way despite the policy, and moving students around to minimize stigma). In summary, teachers interpret policies and practices repeatedly, depending on their own experiences and beliefs, and not just on the top-down directives.

The critical lens used to conceptualize and frame this inquiry helped me explore how power shapes the inclusive education system in Qatar. This aligns with Freire's (1970) assertion that oppressive systems maintain control through top-down decision-making and limited input from those directly affected. The top-down policy control, the decision of allocating resources outside the school, and the incongruity between university and ministry messages are all manifestations of the systemic inequities. Similar patterns of centralized control and resource mismanagement have been documented in Qatar's education system (Al-Kubaisi, 2024; Romanowski et al., 2022). The fact that Hadel had to resolve between her university training (use any language) and ministry policy (formal Arabic only) demonstrates that teachers are in a structural trap a system which trains them in one way and assesses them in another. This contradiction echoes critical education scholarship on how institutional power creates double binds for practitioners (Freire, 1970; Olson & Roberts, 2020). Critical theory can also be used to understand why the voice of teachers is usually not represented in the policy making process and this results to unrealistic and detrimental policies. Research from Qatar has shown that when teachers are excluded from decision-making, policies often fail to address classroom realities, leading to reduced teacher motivation and commitment (Abu-Shawish, 2016; Karkouti et al., 2022; Nasser & Romanowski, 2011).

Practice and Policy Implications

The findings from this inquiry provide insight into practice and policy implications for teacher education, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and for school leaders.

Implications for Teacher Education Programs

Teacher education programs need to be field based during all four years of the program and not only in the last semester. The idea suggested by Anwar that students should be in schools starting with the first year is congruent with international best practices in

teacher education (Blanton & Pugach, 2007, 2011). Special education courses should also contain sensory perspective-taking units. Teachers should be able to understand the diagnostic criteria and how students with autism experience the classroom. Finally, all students in education, not only those learning about special education, should be required to take a course on disabilities. This would allow the general education teacher(s) to have the ability to welcome and support students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Implications for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE)

The ministry needs to reconsider the removal of therapy from schools of the "inclusion" category. Students with moderate disabilities need to be served by on-site speech, occupational and physical therapy in order to be successful in general education. The ministry should also create an adapted and leveled general education curriculum for students with more significant support needs (Level 3), not having teachers come up with materials on their own. The teachers from this study said that they do not have any adapted materials and that they have to make all things themselves, despite the fact that literature on inclusive education highlights the Universal Design for Learning approach, which aims for designing the general curriculum to be accessible from the beginning of its development. In the short term, a solution would be to have a leveled curriculum package that is developed by teachers with experience, which would decrease this burden until such a universally designed approach is more completely in place. This type of levelled materials may be beneficial to Level 2 and Level 3 students as temporary support. The policy of one objective per lesson needs to be more flexible. The current policy does not take into account how individual differences shape learning and is contrary to the principles of inclusion. Additionally, the ministry should explore the development of an additional teacher assessment system. This new assessment should evaluate teacher performance according to the goals of special education students.

Finally, the ministry should allocate sufficient funds for pre-service training and pre-employment testing of all new teachers, especially those from abroad, to make sure they fully understand inclusive education policies and practices in Qatar.

Implications for School Administrators

All teachers should be able to raise issues at school without fear of retaliation (as Hadel's school does), and administrators should hold monthly listening sessions at school. When decisions are made about behavior, administrators should not be involved unless there is a safety concern. Special Education teachers have been trained to address challenging behavior and support positive behavior and administrators should respect their professional judgment. At the beginning of the year teachers should be provided with the sensory materials, adaptive tools, and visual supports, they need to support students instead of having to purchase them on their own. Finally, all administrators should have a general awareness of disability and communication skills of all staff (including support staff, bus drivers, and administration).

Limitations

There are several limitations to consider when considering the findings of this study. First, I recognize that my positionality has likely influenced my interpretation of the data. Being a Qatari researcher, having a history of working in inclusive education, and interviewing former workmates and friends in the same professional environment, has likely shaped my interpretations. Despite bracketing, engaging in reflexive journaling, and member checking with participants to reduce this influence, my own experiences and assumptions about what is considered a good practice towards inclusiveness likely influenced my listening to the participants and the priorities assigned to certain themes. For example, I was surprised to learn that the participating educators only engaged in social-only inclusion as opposed to

academic inclusion. This may have been avoided if I had not assumed, based on my own experiences, that an inclusive push-in model existed.

Second, this research was an initial step of studying the factors that affect the experiences of educators in Qatari inclusive education system. Given the fact that there are numerous factors that influence the successful implementation of inclusion such as policy, resources, training, cultural attitudes and school leadership, there is no single solution that is applicable to address all the challenges established. The goal of qualitative inquiry is not generalization to broader populations, so the findings may not be applicable to other Qatari schools (private or special schools), and future studies should explore educators' experiences with inclusion across varying Qatari educational contexts.

Third, this study also did not include classroom observations, and only one semi-structured interview per participant. The interviews provided rich and detailed descriptions of the teachers' experience and perceptions of inclusion, however, an observation of teachers in practice would shed further light on what inclusion looks like in their classrooms, rather than how they describe it. The interviews may not have picked up on non-verbal aspects of the interaction, context, or other aspects that might have led to discrepancies between the reported interactions and what was actually happening in the classroom. Future studies should therefore explore the integration of an interview with classroom observation to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of inclusive practices in the integration schools in Qatar.

Conclusion

The phenomenological research paper discussed the experiences of four early childhood and primary educators in government integration schools in Qatar. Even though initially it was expected that the study would examine the push-in inclusive model, the narratives of the participants demonstrated a different truth: their students with disabilities experienced academic segregation with social integration only. In this limited setting, educators used a significant degree of agency - to modify teaching, speak to students in informal language despite the policy, and to bring students together to minimize stigma. But they also faced structural obstacles: control of policy on a top-down basis, loss of therapy services and teaching assistants, a sharp theory-practice gap in how they were trained in universities, and administrative interference in behavior management.

Despite the challenges and limited opportunities for implementation of a full push-in model, teachers demonstrated a strong dedication to their students (ethic of care), and one educator, Hadel, recorded a real change of attitude in the society towards disability in Qatar. Parents who used to conceal their children are now proud to post their photos. Furthermore, they noted that disabled children can be seen in open places. Such developments did not occur spontaneously, but the media campaigns, university projects, and the daily advocacy of educators helped contribute to them.

The recommendations of the teachers are evident and practical and include special programs, in-school specialists, pre-stocked classrooms, flexible lesson time, special disability courses to all graduates of the education system, and a special evaluation system of special educators. These changes would not only help lessen teacher burnout but also help increase educational outcomes among students with disabilities - and, ultimately, bring Qatar a step further toward the inclusive system of education its policies promise.

Reflecting on her journey, Amal said:

أنا دائماً أقول التربية الخاصة اجتهاد شخصي اللي يبي يدخل لازم يتعلم ما يسير يدخله بدون ما يتعلم أي شي

(I have always said that special education was an individual undertaking. Whoever wanted to venture into this field had to learn; nobody could get into the field without learning anything).

Her statements help remind us that inclusive education is not merely a policy or a blueprint, but a very human process that needs zeal, tenacity, and the boldness to take on the systems that have failed the learners with the most complex needs. The educators in this study are the representatives of such bravery. Policymakers, teacher educators, and school leaders now have the duty to hear their words and take action.

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Appendix A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Educator experiences in the inclusive education system in Qatar



INFORMATION ABOUT A UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON RESEARCH

STUDY

Educator experiences in the inclusive education system in Qatar

Principal Investigator: Muneera Ali Al-Banna

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Advisor: Carly Roberts

What is this study about?

The purpose of this study is to deeply explore and document the personal and professional lived experiences of early childhood and primary educators (Kindergarten through Grade 3) in Qatar who are actively involved in the push-in inclusive education model. This study aims to understand your perceptions of inclusion, the daily challenges you face, and your recommendations for improving teacher preparation and systemic support for this model

What will you be asked to do?

If you decide to be in this study, I am asking you to be in a research study that I am completing as part of my Master's program at the University of Washington. The purpose of this consent form is to give you all the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study. Please read the form carefully.

You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called **"informed consent."** I will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PROCEDURES	Timing	Estimated Time Commitment
Interview Session 1 (Audio Recorded)	Baseline (21-12 2025)	60 – 90 minutes
Optional Document/Artifact Sharing	After Interview 1 (Voluntary)	15 – 30 minutes (Preparation time for participant)
Interview Session 2 (Audio Recorded)	1–2 Weeks after Session 1	60 – 90 minutes
Future Contact (Member Checking)	Up to 1 year after the final interview	15 – 30 minutes (If clarification is needed)

Why might you want, or not want, to participate?

You might consider participating in the study since your involvement can be useful in my quest to learn what teachers are going through and enhance their training and system-wide assistance towards the push-in education model. Although you will not benefit directly, your involvement will help me better understand the day-to-day struggles educators face and formulate suggestions to enhance the inclusive education process in Qatar. In the process of participating in this study, I do not urge you to change your usual teaching and practice, and any other professional development that you are already applying.

You might not be comfortable to participate in the study when you will feel uncomfortable talking to me about some sensitive problems, especially those that might be critical of the policies, administration or even systemic problems in the inclusive education system. Some of the questions may be personal or sensitive. I will ask you questions such as, "How satisfied are you with the leadership support for inclusion in your school?" What do you consider to be the largest cultural obstacles to introducing inclusive practices? Question: What are the systemic issues in your day to day teaching? You are free to decline any questions that you do not wish to respond to and are free to discontinue any study procedures.

Some participants may feel that discussing sensitive issues, especially those critical to policies, administration, or systemic issues within the inclusive education system, is an invasion of privacy or even a professional risk. Even though pseudonyms and high levels of secrecy are used, as the sample of participants is low, and the participants are specialists, the probability of re-identification because of some peculiarities of your role or school setting is not high. Two lengthy interviews may be too much to request. There are others who become self-conscious during the interview when on tape. In case of any concerns with any of these issues, then please inform me .

The interviews are not supposed to have any negative side effects on you, however in case this occurs, you may discuss the matter with me (Muneera Ali Al-Banna who is the Principal Investigator). I will be able to provide you with referral information or otherwise. At the top of this form, the contact information is shown.

How will we protect the information you provide?

Your confidentiality will be kept. No information regarding yourself is disclosed. Your name and other identifiable information will be kept separately of the study data. Only some members of the study team will be able to access your identifying information, and individuals in the UW or other agencies who might need to audit study records. The results of this study will not be published using your name, school name, or any other recognizable information. Nevertheless, since the risk of subtle re-identification in such a small and specialized population of Qatar exists in reality, there will not be any potentially identifiable data ever used. In order to avoid re-identification, we will issue you with a pseudonym (a fake name or alias) and encrypt the original study data in an independent, password-sensitive electronic file. To remove highly distinguishing contextual information that would aid in identification, such as specific names of schools, unique job titles, specific dates, or unique institutional projects, the transcripts will be carefully read and redacted. Findings will be presented in general or debriefed in aggregate, in composite vignettes which do not identify particular respondents, and only provide generic names of Qatar or a school in the capital without specific reference to the neighborhood or municipality.

The data that we receive in this research on your side may be utilized in lawsuits research in the future. We might take away anything that could identify you out of the information and then use it in the future research studies or distribute it to other investigators without seeking further consent of you. Five years following initial sound recording or the institutional policy, the Master Code Key and original sound recordings will be destroyed.

This study lacks a Certificate of Confidentiality of the U.S. Federal National Institutes of Health. Nevertheless, we will continue to safeguard identifiable research information of yours using the policies and procedures of UW.

This protection is limited to some extent such as forced reporting, surveillance by the institution among others as enumerated later in this consent form. In case we know that you are going to hurt yourself or anyone, we have to inform the necessary authorities.

The information obtained during Zoom interviews can be associated with the increased risks of confidentiality due to the storage of information on the internet-based platforms. We recommend that you make sure to be in a secure place when you are being interviewed and to inform us in case you have any questions or concerns regarding the same.

What if you want to stop being in this study, or if the researcher decides you should no longer participate?

You may stop being in this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. Your involvement in this research is completely voluntary. You may decline to participate, decline to answer any question, or withdraw from this research at any point.

If you decide to withdraw, you can choose what happens to your data:

- If you withdraw before the final submission and publication of the thesis, you may withdraw your data from the study archive completely
- If you withdraw after your data has been incorporated into the final report or publication, it cannot be retrieved

If you decide to stop participating, please inform me (Muneera Ali Al-Banna) i will cease data collection immediately and ask whether you agree to the use and storage of information gathered before withdrawal. If you wish that all your data be destroyed, i will destroy all transcripts, field notes, and audio recordings assigned to your participant code.

The researcher may decide you should no longer participate without your consent only if the IRB or the Principal Investigator makes a finding that continuation of your participation poses a serious and unknown safety risk to you. This is not expected in this low-risk research study.

How will we test, store, and share your information and samples?

There are no biological samples collected in this research. All data collected consists of interview recordings, transcripts, and optional documents you may choose to share.

Data Storage and Protection:

- We will protect your confidentiality. All information about you is confidential
- We will store your name and other identifiable information separately from the study data
- Access to your identifying information will be limited to certain members of the study team and any individuals from the UW or other agencies that may need to audit study records

- The Master Code Key and the original sound recordings will be destroyed after five years or by institutional policy
- The information that we obtain from you for this study might be used for future studies. We may remove anything that might identify you from the information and then use it for future research studies or give it to other investigators without getting additional permission from you

Data Security Levels:

- **Original audio recordings** are Level 2 data. They will be stored temporarily on an encrypted external hard drive (or an encrypted UW OneDrive folder) until transcribed
- **De-identified transcripts, Master Code Key, and field notes** are Level 3 data since information is sensitive. Data will be stored on UW-approved, password-protected and encrypted systems (UW OneDrive or secure institutional storage). The Master Code Key will be stored separately, as a single, password-protected file from the transcripts

Data Sharing and Future Use:

- **No direct identifiers will ever be shared** with other researchers or public archives
- Because of the small, specialized Qatar population, and because of the sensitive, frank professional feedback included in the data (which may cause re-identification), raw interview transcripts and audio recordings will not be made available externally
- **Only de-identified, summarized, and aggregate results** will be disseminated through academic journal articles and conference presentations
- The banked data may be used for future academic research related to comparative education policies, teacher professional development, and the implementation of inclusive models in the MENA region

Commercial Profit and Genetic Testing:

- The data we collect as part of this research **will not be used for commercial profit**
- This study **does not involve** any genetic testing, DNA analysis, or whole genome sequencing

Will you get to know your research results?

This study does not produce clinically actionable results that would affect your health or medical care. However, as part of our commitment to participant engagement and research transparency:

- **Member Checking:** After initial data analysis is complete (approximately six months after your participation), the Principal Investigator will contact you to provide a written summary of the overall findings and main themes emerging from the educator interviews. This allows you to verify the accuracy of how your experiences were interpreted
- **No individual test results** will be provided because this is not a clinical or medical study
- You will not receive any detailed transcripts or raw data, as these contain information that could risk re-identification

Other information about this study.

Being in this study is voluntary. This means that you can refuse to sign up. It also means that if you do sign up, you can decide to stop being in the study at any time without penalty.

We are not receiving external financial support for this research. This study is being conducted as part of the Principal Investigator's Master's program at the University of Washington.

If you have concerns or feel you have been harmed by participating in this study, please contact Muneera Ali Al-Banna at the telephone number or email address listed at the beginning of this form.

Number of participants: We plan to enroll a maximum of 7 participants in this study.

Electronic documentation of consent: A copy of the consent form will be emailed to you at an email address that you provide. It will be a "PDF" document. Most computers already have PDF viewer software installed, which will allow you to open, read, or print the consent form. The email we send you will include a link to PDF viewer software (such as Adobe Acrobat Reader) in case your computer doesn't already have it. If you would prefer to receive a paper copy of the consent form at no cost to you, please contact the researcher(s) listed in this consent form.

What can you do if you want more information?

Talk to the study team. I am here to help you understand the study. Please ask any questions you may have, even about things that are not in this document. It is my responsibility to give you the

information you need to make a decision and to give you time to think about whether or not you want to sign up.

Talk to someone else. If you want to talk about the study with someone who is not part of the study team, talk about your rights as a research participant, or to report problems or complaints about the study, contact the UW Human Subjects Division.

Study Team	Muneera Ali Al-Banna, Principal Investigator Email: munera90@uw.edu Phone: 206-679-4144 Advisor: Carly Roberts
UW Human Subjects Division	206.543.0098 hsdinfo@uw.edu

Consent presenter statement

I am asking you to be in a research study that I am completing as part of my Master's program at the University of Washington. The purpose of this consent form is to give you all the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study. Please read the form carefully.

You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called **"informed consent."** I will give you a copy of this form for your records.

Printed name of study staff obtaining consent

Date

Participant's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later on about the research, I can ask the investigator listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can contact one of the course instructors. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____ I give permission for this researcher to audiotape my interview.

_____ I do NOT give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my interview.

_____ I give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

_____ I do NOT give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

Printed name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Date: _____

Time: _____

Interviewer: Muneera Ali Al-Banna

Materials and Supplies

- ☐ Pen/pencil for note-taking
- ☐ Reviewed consent form
- ☐ Consent to audio record via Zoom
- ☐ Secondary recording device (Rev + smartphone)
- ☐ Interview guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Session 1

Introduction

Welcome. I am **Muneera Ali Al-Banna**, a researcher who is investigating inclusive education for K–3 students in Qatar. I appreciate your participation during this session. You have been selected because you implement the push-in model in your inclusive classrooms. The interview will last between 60 and 90 minutes. Please ask questions whenever you need to. Please provide a phone number so we can reconnect if our Zoom connection fails.

Phone number: _____

I. Consent to Record (5 minutes)

Thank you for being part of this research project. At this moment, I need to verify that you signed the consent form, which I sent through email. Please let me know if you need help signing the form by providing your phone number so I can send you the link through Zoom chat. Our discussion will be documented through a recording to achieve precise results. The recorded material remains confidential within the research team and will not be disclosed to the public. Can I proceed with recording this interview?"

- ☐ **No**
- ☐ **Yes**

If YES:

"I am starting the recording now. This is Participant ID [Add ID], and verbal consent to record has been confirmed."

II. PHONE NUMBER FOR RECONNECTION

If our Zoom call is interrupted, may I have a phone number to reconnect and continue the interview?

Number: (-----)

III. POST-INTERVIEW CONFIRMATION

I appreciate you sharing your experiences with me today. After a few months, I will provide you with an analysis of our discussion and confirm that my understanding reflects what you shared during our discussion. Would you like to ask any final questions before we end our conversation?

I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF ROLE/CLASSROOM

I intend to question you about your current role as an inclusive education educator.

IA. Teaching Background

Please share your teaching journey from the beginning.

- *Probe:* What inspired you to pursue a career in education?
- *Probe:* How many years of experience do you have?
- *Probe:* What training or experiences have you had in supporting students with disabilities or diverse learning needs?"

IB. Classroom Environment

Describe the learning atmosphere of your teaching environment.

- *Probe:* Is it a mainstream (general education), self-contained, or specialized classroom/school?
- *Probe:* How would you describe the population of students you serve (e.g., number of students with disabilities, types of needs)?

- *Probe:* What is the student-to-teacher ratio in your classroom?
- *Probe :* What cultural backgrounds do the children in your classroom come from?
- *Probe:* how does this diversity manifest in your classroom, particularly concerning students with disabilities?
- *Probe:* What resources or supports (e.g., teaching assistants, therapy services, materials) are available for inclusive practices?

IC. Role in Inclusive Education

"What is your role in supporting students with disabilities in your classroom?"

- *Probe:* What daily tasks or responsibilities do you have in implementing inclusive practices?
- *Probe:* Walk me through a typical day. How do you balance push-in support demands (e.g., co-teaching, individualized instruction) with other classroom responsibilities?

II. MICRO-LEVEL: BELIEFS & PRACTICES (CONSTRUCTIVIST LENS)

The focus of this segment will examine your approach to inclusive education implementation within your teaching environment. How you define inclusion and handle practical difficulties will be our primary exploration.

IIA. Defining Inclusion Through Experience

How do you define inclusive education for your teaching environment?

- IIA1. "Can you describe an experience that shaped your understanding of inclusion?"
 - *Probe:* How did this experience influence your teaching practices?
- IIA2. "How do your personal beliefs about inclusion align or conflict with institutional policies?"
 - IIA2a. "Describe a situation where your beliefs clashed with policy or practice."
 - *Probe:* How did you resolve this conflict? What systemic factors influenced it (e.g., resources, training, cultural norms)?

IIB. Push-In Model Challenges

"What barriers do you face when using the push-in model to support students with disabilities?"

- IIB1. "How do you adapt instruction for students' diverse needs within the push-in model?"
 - Probe: Can you walk me through a specific example of adapting a lesson?
- IIB2. "What systemic limitations or affordances (e.g., time, training, resources) affect your use of this model?"
 - Probe: How do these limitations or affordances impact student outcomes?

IIC. Teacher Preparedness

"How did your training prepare you to work in inclusive classrooms?"

- IIC1. "Describe any formal training or professional development you've received on inclusion."
 - Probe: What strategies or theories were emphasized?
- IIC2. "What gaps in your preparation have you noticed while working in inclusive settings?"
 - Probe: Now that you have some experience teaching in inclusive settings, what do you think the top priorities should be in teacher education to prepare teachers for inclusive education?

IID. Critical Factors for Success

"What are the three most important factors for successfully implementing inclusion in K–3 classrooms?"

1. _____
2. _____

3.**End of Session 1**

Wrap-Up: "I want to express my profound gratitude for the valuable information you shared with me during our session. The first part of our interview has now reached its conclusion.

We have explored your professional background together with classroom environment and .initial perspectives regarding inclusive educational practices and associated obstacles

Our next session will focus on examining your experiences related to collaboration and wider school systems along with national policies and your proposals for enhancing inclusive education.

Introduction

Our second session marks a return to this discussion. Thank you for being here with me today. This session will focus on further discussion about inclusive education. I want to verify your permission for me to record this session through audio before we proceed." If YES: The recording process will begin now. This is Participant ID [Add ID] for Session 2, and you have given your verbal permission to record.

I want to start by following up from our previous discussion before we begin today's questions. The documents, along with meeting schedules and resources you use in your daily work, can play a valuable role in guiding inclusive practices for classrooms and schools. Please tell me about any artifacts that you feel comfortable sharing by providing a short description or sending a digital copy after our call.

Interviewer: Keep track of any artifacts that have been described or shared and request digital copies through email if possible.

III. COLLABORATION & SCHOOL SYSTEMS (MESO-LEVEL)

Can you talk about the experiences you have had when working with school teams and leadership to promote inclusive education

IIIA. Collaboration with Support Staff

Please explain the methods through which you work together with support staff including special educators, therapists and teaching assistants in your school.

- IIIA1. "How frequently do you meet with these team members, and what is typically discussed?"
 - Probe: How much of this collaboration focuses on inclusive practices or student-specific needs?

- IIIA2. "Can you share an example of a time when collaboration improved inclusion for a student?"
 - Probe: What roles did different team members play in this situation?

IIIB. Collaboration with Families

Please explain your strategies for communicating with families who have students with disabilities and how you collaborate with these families.

- IIIB1. "How often do you interact with families, and what topics are typically addressed?"
 - Probe: How much of this communication focuses on inclusive practices or classroom adaptations?
- IIIB2. "What challenges, if any, do you face in collaborating with families?"
 - Probe: How do cultural norms or language barriers influence these interactions?

IIIC. Leadership & Policy Influence

"What school-level policies or leadership practices impact inclusive education in your classroom?"

- IIIC1. "Which policies or leadership decisions do you find most supportive of inclusion?"
 - Probe: How do these policies translate into daily practice?
- IIIC2. "Which policies or leadership decisions create barriers to inclusion?"
 - Probe: Can you describe a specific instance where a policy hindered your work?
 - Probe: What do you wish your leadership knew about inclusive education

IIID. Problem-Solving Systemic Challenges

"How do you and your team address complex challenges related to inclusion?"

- IIID1. "Describe a recent challenge where collaboration was necessary to solve a problem."

- Probe: How were responsibilities delegated among team members?
- IIID2. "What systemic factors (e.g., resources, training, time) influenced this process?"
 - Probe: How did leadership or institutional norms shape the outcome?

IV. MACRO-LEVEL: SYSTEMIC BARRIERS (CRITICAL LENS)

The part of the discussion will address the main factors which determine the implementation of inclusive education in Qatar.

IVA. National Policies & Institutional Support

How do the national policies of Qatar including MOEHE guidelines influence your capacity to put inclusive practices into effect?

- IVA1. "Do these policies translate effectively into classroom realities?"
 - Probe: Would you please provide a specific instance when policies helped or created problems in your everyday work?
- IVA2. "How adaptable are these policies to the diverse needs of your students?"
 - Probe: Have you identified specific discrepancies between policy content and its application within education settings?

IVB. Sociocultural Attitudes & Classroom Impact

"How do societal attitudes toward disability in Qatar influence your classroom environment?"

- IVB1. "How do cultural norms shape parental involvement in inclusive education?"
 - Probe: How have cultural beliefs about disability situations impacted your ability to work with families?
- IVB2. "What societal changes could better support inclusion in schools?"
 - Probe: How can the combination of community awareness campaigns and media initiatives help change these attitudes?

IVC. Expatriate Context & Personal Background

"How does your cultural or educational background influence your approach to inclusion?"

- IVC1. "Have your prior experiences (e.g., training abroad, teaching in other contexts) shaped your practices?"
 - Probe: How do you manage the educational differences between Qatar and your background from past experiences?
- IVC2. "What challenges or advantages arise from being an expatriate educator in Qatar's inclusive education system?"
 - Probe: How does language or cultural familiarity impact your work?

IVD. Vision for Systemic Change

"What three systemic changes do you think would most improve inclusive education in Qatar?"

1. -
2. -
3. -

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & SYSTEMIC RECOMMENDATIONS

"This final section focuses on improving teacher preparation and systemic support for inclusive education."

VA. Professional Development (PD) Needs

"What professional development topics would better prepare educators to implement inclusive practices in K–3 classrooms?"

- VA1. "How could PD programs address gaps between theoretical training and classroom realities?"
 - Probe: Can you share an example of a theory-practice disconnect you've experienced?
- VA2. "What formats or methods (e.g., workshops, mentoring, hands-on training) would make PD more effective?"

- Probe: How might PD account for the unique challenges of Qatar's push-in model?

VB. Systemic Changes for Inclusion

"What systemic changes (e.g., policies, resources, cultural shifts) would most improve inclusive education in Qatar?"

- VB1. "How could national policies better align with classroom realities?"
 - Probe: What specific policy adjustments would help educators?
- VB2. "What institutional resources (e.g., staffing, materials, time) are critically needed?"
 - Probe: How do current resource gaps affect your daily work?
- VB3. "How might societal attitudes toward disability need to evolve to support inclusion?"
 - Probe: What role could schools play in driving this change?

VC. Prioritized Recommendations

"What three changes would you prioritize to enhance inclusive education in Qatar?"

1. -
2. -
3. -

VII. WRAP-UP

"I truly appreciate your time and insights today. Before we conclude, I have a few final items."

VIIA. Final Reflections

"Is there anything I didn't ask about that you feel is important for understanding your experiences with inclusive education in Qatar?"

VIIB. Follow-Up & Member Checking

I will follow up in a few months to share a summary of findings and share my interpretations from our discussion.

Do you have any final questions?

END RECORDING

INTERVIEWER COMMENTS (For internal use only; to be completed by interviewer)

1. Respondent's level of interest and involvement in answering questions.

Very High	High	Neither High nor Low	Low	Very Low
5	4	3	2	1

Comments:

2. Please estimate the respondent's understanding of study tools (i.e., demographic survey and interview questions).

Complete Understanding	Understood	Partial Understanding	Limited Understanding
4	3	2	1

Comments on specify tools/section(s), if applicable:

3. Describe any discrepancies, gaps, or other problems with the tools.

4. Describe any circumstances that occurred while the interview was in progress that may have affected the quality of the interview (i.e. interruptions).

5. Other Thoughts:

6. Have you recorded materials that do not need to be transcribed? If so, please note whether at the beginning or end of the recording.

Start Time	End Time	Description

Appendix C

Copy of Demographic Survey

This study explores the challenges faced by K–3 educators in Qatar’s inclusive education system, focusing on classroom practices, systemic barriers, and professional development needs. Your responses will remain confidential.

Consent:

- ☐ Yes, I want to participate in this research (1)
- ☐ No, I do not want to participate in this research (2)

Professional Background

1. What is your current role?

- ☐ General Education Teacher (K–3)
- ☐ Special Education Teacher (K–3)
- ☐ Teaching Assistant/Paraprofessional
- ☐ Inclusion Specialist
- ☐ School Administrator
- ☐ Other: _____

2. What type of classroom environment do you currently teach/support??

- ☐ General Education
- ☐ Inclusive General Education
- ☐ Partial Inclusion
- ☐ Specialized School
- ☐ Other: _____

3. How many years of experience do you have teaching/supporting a classroom?

- ☐ 0–1 year
- ☐ 1–5 years

☐ 5–10 years

☐ 10+ years

4. How many years of experience do you have teaching/supporting in Inclusive Education?

☐ 0–1 year

☐ 1–5 years

☐ 5–10 years

☐ 10+ years

5. What type of training in inclusive education you have received?

☐ Formal university training

☐ Ministry of Education workshops

☐ On-the-job mentoring

☐ None

☐ Other: _____

Inclusive Education Practices

6. What are the primary challenges in the Push-In Model (*Check all that apply*):

☐ Time constraints

☐ Lack of resources (e.g., materials, staff)

☐ Inadequate training

☐ Policy-practice misalignment

☐ Cultural attitudes toward disability

☐ Collaboration gaps with support staff

☐ Other: _____

7. What are the professional development Needs (*Check top 3*):

☐ Adaptive teaching strategies

☐ Behavior management

☐ Cultural competency training

☐ Policy implementation guidance

☐ Parent engagement strategies

☐ Technology/AAC tools

☐ Other: _____

Demographics

8. What is your age?

☐ 20–24

☐ 25–34

☐ 35–44

☐ 45–54

☐ 55–64

☐ 64+

☐ Prefer not to say

9. Gender: How do you identify?

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Non-binary

☐ Other: _____

☐ Prefer not to say

10. Which race/ethnicity best describes you?

☐ Qatari

☐ Expatriate

☐ Other: _____

☐ Prefer not to say

11. What is your highest level of education?

☐ High School Diploma or Equivalent

☐ Associate's Degree

☐ Bachelor's Degree

☐ Master's Degree

☐ Doctoral Degree

☐ Other: _____

Optional Contact Information

Q12 What is your first and last name?

Q13 What is your email?

Appendix D

Codebook Abridged
Educator experiences in the inclusive education system in Qatar:
1.0 Microsystem: Teacher Beliefs, meaning-Making, and Agency
1.1 Defining Inclusion
1.1a Inclusion as social belonging vs. academic integration
1.1b Positive view of inclusion (affirming)
1.1c Cynicism towards “name-only” inclusion
1.1d Symbolic inclusion
1.1e Preference for older (in-class support) model
1.2 Teacher Agency & Professional Judgment
1.2a Conflict between personal beliefs and policy
1.2b Adapting time based on student cues
1.2c Using colloquial language despite policy
1.2d Ethic of care / student-centered decisions
1.2e Strategic inclusion practices
2.0 Mesosystem: Collaboration and School-Level Interactions
2.1 Collaboration with Support Staff
2.1a Team problem-solving
2.1b Informal mentorship

2.1c Democratic leadership in team
2.2 Collaboration with Families
2.2a Strength-based communication
2.2b Navigating parental grief stages
2.2c Parental lack of acceptance
2.3 School Leadership
2.3a Positive leadership practices
2.3b Administrative interference in behavior management
2.3c Teacher-administration conflict (behavior vs. instruction)
3.0 Macrosystem (External Policies, Resources, Training, and Societal Attitudes)
3.1 Policy Constraints
3.1a Top-down policy control
3.1b Policy-practice gap (e.g., “arrangements and facilities”)
3.1c Rigid instructional requirements (e.g., “one objective per lesson”)
3.1d Policy contradiction: open enrollment vs. lack of resources
3.1e University-ministry contradiction
3.2 Resource Shortages
3.2a Loss of therapy services (speech, OT, PT)
3.2b Loss of teaching assistants
3.2c Material & environmental neglect
3.2d Slow procurement of specialized equipment

3.2e Overwhelm and exhaustion
3.3 Teacher Preparation and Training
3.3a Theory-practice gap
3.3b Lack of subject matter training
3.3c Curriculum design is self-taught
3.3d Behavior management skill gap
3.3e Inadequate pre-service practicum
3.3f Practicum in specialized schools (not inclusion schools)
4.0 Macrosystem: Societal Attitudes, Cultural Norms, and Systemic Change
4.1 Societal Perceptions of Disability
4.1a Teacher must have deep terminology culture
4.1b Teacher as advocate against labeling
4.1c Increased societal acceptance (historical shift)
4.2 Recommendations for Systemic Change
4.2a Specialized curricula for special education
4.2b Pre-service training and pre-employment testing
4.2c Special evaluation system for SPED teachers
4.2d On-site specialists (speech, OT, PT)
4.2e Knowledgeable principal
4.2f Pre-equipped classrooms
4.2g Peer education and preparation

4.2h Flexible lesson timing
4.2i Reduce daily lessons
4.2j Training for aides/support staff
4.2k Mandatory disability course for all education graduates
4.2l Professional development needs (latest research, deeper understanding, sensory perspective)
9.0 Other
9.1 Model mismatch (social-only inclusion, not push-in)

Full codebook		
Educator experiences in the inclusive education system in Qatar		
Code	Definition	Illustrative Quote
1.0 Microsystem	Teacher beliefs, meaning-making, and agency	
1.1 Defining Inclusion		
1.1a Inclusion as social belonging vs. academic integration	Teacher defines inclusion primarily as social participation (e.g., play, meals) rather than academic inclusion	أفضل ان الطالب يكون دمج اجتماعي مع الطلاب في المهارات يعني يكون في وقت " – "I prefer the student to have social inclusion with students in skills, meaning during free time to play with students" (Anwar)
1.1b Positive view of inclusion (affirming)	Teacher believes inclusion is fundamentally correct and beneficial	"The idea of inclusion is a very correct idea" (Amal) – "فكرة الدمج يعني فكرة وايد صحيحة"
1.1c Cynicism towards "name-only" inclusion	Teacher perceives current model as segregation mislabeled as inclusion	"اشتركواي الدمج الحالي يعني تشوفوا احنا طلابنا مظلومين... هي مش مدرسة الدمج" – "Look at current inclusion—you see our students are wronged... this is not an inclusion school" (Anwar)
1.1d Symbolic inclusion	Students are enrolled but not meaningfully participating in school life	"مدمجة بس مش فعلياً بالمدرسة" – "Included but not actually in the school" (Maraim - Anwar)
1.1e Preference for older (in-class support) model	Teacher believes previous model (2014-2015) was more authentic than current separation	"I feel the old way was better" (Hadel) – "أحس الطريقة القديمة كانت أفضل"

1.2 Teacher Agency & Professional Judgment		
1.2a Conflict between personal beliefs and policy	Teacher experiences tension between own philosophy and mandated rules (e.g., full-day attendance, life skills integration)	"I see that student attends a full day like the regular student... I see this as wrong" (Hadel) أنا أشوف من وجهة نظري ما في شيء إلزامي لأن المعلم هو اللي يقدر يحدد كم يقدر يكون الطالب يداوم دوام كامل نفس الطالب العادي أنا أشوفه أنه خطأ"
1.2b Adapting time based on student cues	Teacher exercises professional judgment to deviate from rigid 45-minute lesson structure	أنا أشوف من وجهة نظري ما في شيء إلزامي لأن المعلم هو اللي يقدر يحدد كم يقدر يكون الطالب يداوم دوام كامل نفس الطالب العادي أنا أشوفه أنه خطأ" "From my point of view, nothing is mandatory because the teacher is the one who can determine how much the students can absorb" (Amal)
1.2c Using colloquial language despite policy	Teacher prioritizes student comprehension over compliance, accepts evaluation penalties	أنا قاعدة أتكلم صراحة مصري عادي ما عندي مشكل قاعدين نأخذ عليه ونقولها أنا هذا " "I speak Egyptian openly, no problem. They deduct points, and I tell them, 'This is what I learned at university'" (Hadel)
1.2d Ethic of care / student-centered decisions	Teacher prioritizes student well-being over policy adherence	أنا همي أوصل المعلومة للطفل يعني عادي بصير شيء ضدي بس أهم شيء اللي قدامي " "My concern is delivering information to the child. It's okay if something goes against me. The most important thing is that the one in front of me understands" (Hadel)
1.2e Strategic inclusion practices	Teacher intentionally integrates students for limited periods to reduce stigma	"I bring her in for two periods a day... the stigma is removed" (Mariam, Anwar) "أدخلها حصتين باليوم... الوصمة بتنشال"
2.0 Mesosystem	Collaboration and school-level interactions	

2.1 Collaboration with Support Staff		
2.1a Team problem-solving	Team works together to address student challenges	"Everyone" – "الكل يتناقش إلى أن نصل إلى حلول... فالكل يقول وجهة نظره" discusses until we reach solutions... everyone gives their point of view" (Amal)
2.1b Informal mentorship	Experienced colleagues guide new teachers	"She took me from zero" (Maraim, Anwar) – "مسكنتني من الصفر"
2.1c Democratic leadership in team	Coordinator's opinion not automatically final; best idea wins	"It's not a mandatory" – "مو في شرط أنها منسقة لازم يكون رأيها هو الصح" that the coordinator's opinion is the correct one" (Amal)
2.2 Collaboration with Families		
2.2a Strength-based communication	Teacher calls parents to celebrate small successes before addressing concerns	أنا عني شخصيا دائما أحب أركز على نقاط القوة... أحب أني أنا أتصل أقول لها مش ما "I always like to focus on strengths... I like to call her, not a message, a phone call" (Amal) – "يكون مسج لا يكون اتصال هاتفي"
2.2b Navigating parental grief stages	Teacher identifies parent's emotional stage (denial, anger) to communicate effectively	لازم أنا لما بييني ولي الأمر أستشفه في أي مرحلة... مرحلة صدمة مرحلة إنكار مرحلة "When a parent comes to me, I must be able to discern which stage they are in... shock, denial, rejection" (Amal) – "رفض"
2.2c Parental lack of acceptance	Majority of parents struggle to accept their child's disability	"The majority, let's say seventy percent, are not accepting" (Amal) – "الأغلب خنقول سبعين بالمية مش متقبلين"
2.3 School Leadership		
2.3a Positive leadership practices	Administration includes SPED students in all activities, provides	"The good things: they include us in all activities" (Hadel) – "الأشياء الحلوة أنهم مشاركيننا معهم بكل الفعاليات"

	monthly listening sessions	
2.3b Administrative interference in behavior management	Administration overrides teacher's behavioral decisions, placing non-SPED students in SPED classes	السلبيات انه في اشياء المفروض الادارة ما تدخل فيها بيني وبين الطالب خصوصا في "The negatives are that there are things the administration shouldn't interfere in, especially in behavior modification" (Anwar)
2.3c Teacher-administration conflict (behavior vs. instruction)	Admin prioritizes completing instruction over managing student behavior	"Now, what is more important, the explanation of a subject or the student? I must manage the student first" (Amal)
3.0 Macrosystem (External Policies, Resources, Training, and Societal Attitudes)	External resources, training, and institutional policies	
3.1 Policy Constraints		
3.1a Top-down policy control	Ministry drives decisions with limited school-level autonomy	"Policies are not from the administration... its from the ministry" (Mariam, Anwar)
3.1b Policy-practice gap (e.g., "arrangements and facilities")	Policies exist on paper but are not implemented due to resource shortages	"The policy of 'arrangements and facilities'... this is not applied on the ground" (Amal)
3.1c Rigid instructional requirements (e.g., "one objective per lesson")	Policy limits lessons to one academic objective, conflicting with student needs	"You can't exceed one objective... the biggest constraint I faced" (Mariam, Anwar)

3.1d Policy contradiction: open enrollment vs. lack of resources	Ministry enrolls new students despite insufficient staff and space	"تجيبون تسجيل جديد وإحنا ما عندنا مكان وما عندنا مدرسين وما عندنا أخصائيين" – "You bring new enrollments, and we don't have space, teachers, or specialists" (Amal)
3.1e University-ministry contradiction	University taught one approach (e.g., use any language to reach student) but ministry prohibits it	أول يوم حضرت في المدرسة... قالوا لي لا تخيلي أشرح بلغة عربية فصحة ممنوع " "The first day... they told me, 'Explain in formal Arabic. You're forbidden from speaking another language'" (Hadel)
3.2 Resource Shortages		
3.2a Loss of therapy services (speech, OT, PT)	Services removed when specialized schools opened	"قبل كان عندنا علاج طبيعى وعلاج وظيفي وعندنا كل شي... الحين ما عندنا شي" – "Before, we had physical therapy, occupational therapy... now we have nothing" (Hadel)
3.2b Loss of teaching assistants	Assistants withdrawn, leaving teachers without support	"And the" – "وصافلة المساعدة اللي كانت تساعدنا كلهما مشالوف ما عندنا" assistants who used to help us, all of them are gone" (Hadel)
3.2c Material & environmental neglect	Inadequate physical environments; teachers buy materials personally	"We're buying things with our" – "قاعدين نشترى الأشياء من مالنا الخاص" own money" (Anwar)
3.2d Slow procurement of specialized equipment	Requests take months; teachers purchase items themselves	"الطلبات تاخذ وقت طويل... اضطررنا احنا نشترى هذي القطعة اللي من إيكيا" – "Requesting orders take a long time... we were forced to buy this piece from IKEA ourselves" (Amal)
3.2e Overwhelm and exhaustion	Teachers feel overwhelmed by non-teaching tasks and paperwork	"So much effort... all" – "جهد جهاد... طول الأسبوع أنا اشتغل حتى في البيت" week I work even at home" (Anwar)
3.3 Teacher Preparation and Training		

3.3a Theory-practice gap	Stark disconnect between academic learning and classroom reality	"The practical and theoretical are heaven and earth apart two coin face " (Mriam, Anwar) – "العملي والنظري فرق السماء والأرض"
3.3b Lack of subject matter training	Teacher graduated without preparation to teach specific academic subjects	أنا تخرجت ما تخرجت أني أنا أدرس مادة معينة... أنا حين معلمة لغة عربية ولكن اجتهد " – "I didn't graduate to teach a specific subject... I am now an Arabic teacher, but it's a personal effort" (Amal)
3.3c Curriculum design is self-taught	Teacher must design curricula without formal training	"إحنا كل معلمة هي اللي تكيف منهج... في الجامعة ما تعلمنا إن إحنا نسوي كتاب" – "Each teacher adapts the curriculum... at university, they didn't teach us to make a book" (Amal)
3.3d Behavior management skill gap	Lack of preparation for real-life behavior challenges	"I didn't learn it at university" (Mariam , Anwar) – "مش متعلميتها في الجامعة"
3.3e Inadequate pre-service practicum	Insufficient hands-on training due to COVID-19 or specialized placements	"تدربت أسبوعين أو يمكن أسبوع وصار كورونا... صار كل شيء أونلاين افتراضي" – "I trained for two weeks or maybe a week, and then Corona happened... everything became online" (Amal)
3.3f Practicum in specialized schools (not inclusion schools)	Teacher trained in specialized settings, not integration schools	"أنا للأسف تدربت بمدارس متخصصة يعني ما تدربت بمدارس دمج" – "Unfortunately, I trained in specialized schools. I didn't train in inclusion schools" (Hadel)
4.0 Macrosystem	Societal attitudes, cultural norms, and systemic change	
4.1 Societal Perceptions of Disability		
4.1a Teacher must have deep terminology culture	Essential to know correct disability terminology and	لازم تكون عنده ثقافة في المصطلحات... إذا معلمة تربية خاصة ما زالت تقول ذوي الهمم " – "They must have a deep culture regarding terminology... if a special education teacher still says 'people of

	advocate against labeling	determination instead of people with disability,' it's not acceptable" (Amal)
4.1b Teacher as advocate against labeling	Refusing to accept stigmatizing labels like "support girl" for students	"في المدرسة يقولون بنت الدعم... ما يصير هي ترضى أن يقال عن طالبة هذا المسمى" – "At school, they say 'support girl'... they should not accept that this label is used for a student (HE3.1e)" (Amal)
4.1c Increased societal acceptance (historical shift)	Parents now proud to share photos of their children with disabilities	الحين لا بالعكس نقولي حطي صورهم... صاروا هم يطلبون مننا ان احنا ننزل " – "Now, on the contrary, they say, 'Post their pictures.' They're the ones asking us to post their videos" (Hadel)
4.2 Recommendations for Systemic Change		
4.2a Specialized curricula for special education	Need for curricula designed specifically for SWD, not adapted from general ed	"First: specialization of curricula" (Hadel) – "أول شي انه تخصيص مناهج"
4.2b Pre-service training and pre-employment testing	New teachers need training and testing before starting work	"Teachers must undergo courses before employment" (Hadel) – "المعلمة لازم تخضعينها لدورات قبل التوظيف"
4.2c Special evaluation system for SPED teachers	SPED teachers should not be evaluated based on student grades	"They shouldn't evaluate me based on student grades. This is their ability" (Hadel) – "المفروض ما تحسبيني على درجات الطالبات هذا امكانياتهم"
4.2d On-site specialists (speech, OT, PT)	Bring back therapy services to inclusion schools	"Add a speech specialist, a speech therapist, physical therapy" (Amal) – "زيدون مثلا الأخصائي النطق الأخصائي التخاطب العلاج الطبيعي"
4.2e Knowledgeable principal	Principal with special education experience is foundational	"A principal with experience... because the foundation of the school is the principal" (Amal) – "المدير عنده خبرة... لأن أساس المدرسة هو المدير"

4.2f Pre-equipped classrooms	Classrooms should be ready before students enroll	"The classroom must be equipped, not after the students enroll" (Amal) – "لازم يكون الصف مجهز مش بعد ما يتسجلون الطالبات"
4.2g Peer education and preparation	Whole class should be trained on how to interact with incoming SWD	أي طالب يسجل في المستوى الثاني... لازم كل الصف يعرفون بحالته لازم كل الصف "Any Level 2 student... the whole class must know about her condition, take a course on how to deal with her" (Amal) – "ياخذ دورة"
4.2h Flexible lesson timing	Teachers need flexibility to adjust lesson length	"They should give the special education teacher flexibility to choose when to start the lesson" (Amal) – "يخلون المعلم التربية الخاصة في مرونة أنه يختار متى بيتبدأ دي الحصة"
4.2i Reduce daily lessons	Fewer lessons for SWD; focus on basics	يقللون حصص الدراسية... طالب تربية خاصة جاي المدرسة شنو يتعلم؟ يتعلم "They should reduce the number of lessons... What does a special education student come to school to learn? The basics" (Amal) – "الأساسيات"
4.2j Training for aides/support staff	Aides need training to work with SWD	"I'd like workshops and training for aides" (Hadel) – "أنا حابة تصوير فيه ورش وتصير زي التدريب حق المرافق"
4.2k Mandatory disability course for all education graduates	Every teacher should take a course on special needs	"I hope there's a course for every teacher on special needs—to deal with them" (Hadel) – "أتمنى أن يكون فيه مادة عند كل معلمة... على الاحتياجات الخاصة شلون نتعامل معها"
4.2l Professional development needs (latest research, deeper understanding, sensory perspective)	Training should reflect recent developments and help teachers understand how students experience sensory input	الدورات اللي تعطينا الوزارة حسب الدراسات الأخيرة... اللي يحتاج المعلم لازم يحس في "The courses the ministry gives us should be based on recent studies... what the teacher needs is to feel the student" (Amal) – "الطالب"
9.0 Other	Unexpected findings	
9.1 Model mismatch (social-only inclusion, not push-in)	The actual implemented model is academic segregation	احنا فاصلينهم لكن حق الأكل مع بعض حصص الفنية مع بعض... من ناحية المواد "We separate them academically, but for meals together, art classes together... regarding academic subjects, they have their own separate class" (Amal) – "العلمية لا يكون صف خاص فيهم"

	with social integration only	
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