



# An Investigation of Progress Made by Tertiary Institutions in Implementing Inclusive Education in Eswatini

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## Abstract

The study investigated progress made by tertiary institutions in Eswatini in implementing inclusive education. A qualitative research approach was adopted to conduct the study. Data was collected using observations and interviews with four lecturers and four Registrars purposively selected from four tertiary institutions. Data presentation and analysis revealed that despite Eswatini having the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) 2018 inclusive education policy, most tertiary institutions had made less progress in implementing inclusive education. Buildings, surroundings, sports fields, and learning material in tertiary institutions did not cater for learners with special needs. The government did not support institutions with resources and did not monitor the implementation of inclusive education. Tertiary institutions had low numbers of learners with special needs. Those numbers ranged from 0 - 5 per institution. The study concluded that tertiary institutions in Eswatini had made insignificant progress in implementing inclusive education due to lack of resources and government support. It was recommended that MOET should develop an inclusive education implementation and monitoring plan and use it to assess the implementation of inclusive education in institutions, and support institutions with resources needed for effective implementation of inclusive education. Tertiary institutions should upgrade their buildings, surroundings, and sports fields so that they accommodate learners with special needs, procure inclusive learning materials and train staff members on inclusive education.

## Subject Areas

Educational Technology

## Keywords

Progress, Institutions, Inclusive Education, Eswatini

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

Shifts towards inclusive education have been inspired by international protocols on human rights and universal recognition that all children have a right to equal access and quality education. This is in response to the exclusion of children from a range of communities, particularly those who live in poverty and have the least access to education. There is consensus that it is a fundamental right of all children to be given access to quality education to ensure they reach their full potential as individuals. This right is reflected in international law in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and supported by the Education for All Agenda 1990 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol of 2006.

In terms of inclusive education, the main focus has been on children with disabilities and special needs. The 1994 Salamanca Statement [1], signed by 92 countries, was a turning point for a global agenda on the inclusion of children with special needs and disabilities. It affirmed the right of every child to be educated in regular schools, with additional support where needed. This commitment was reaffirmed by the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000 in Senegal. Since then the notion of inclusive education has evolved into a notion of inclusion of all learners, particularly those who are poor and most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, ethnic and linguistic minorities as well as children, young people, and adults affected by conflict, HIV and AIDS, hunger and poor health, and those with special learning needs [2].

There is increased recognition that exclusion is a result of barriers within contexts, which need to be removed to ensure inclusion and the full participation of individuals. Inclusive education is therefore about addressing barriers that hinder learning and participation. It is a process of valuing, accepting, and supporting diversity in schools and ensuring that every child and young person has an equal opportunity to learn. The primary focus in terms of inclusive education in the context of this study was on the education of children with special needs and disabilities. Historically in Eswatini, many people with disabilities were exempted from participating in society due to discrimination [3].

The Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training—MOET 2018 policy as amended calls for the promotion of inclusive education throughout the education and training sector. The policy sets out a road map to ensure that all children, youth, and adults get access to quality education. Inclusive education requires the development of a flexible system that includes different learning environments and support structures that enable individuals to learn effectively according to their intellectual ability, skills, talents, and interests. In line with the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for ALL of 2000, the Eswatini constitution of 2005 spells out that everyone has a right to education. MOET 2018 policy strictly prohibits any exclusion or restriction which has the purpose of impairing

or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by any person of the educational rights and fundamental freedoms of a person or persons. The main goal is to develop an inclusive education and training system that will uncover and address barriers to learning and recognise a diverse range of learning needs. In addition, the system should ensure that all children, youth, and adults are eligible to enrol in primary, secondary, vocational, and tertiary education [4].

Some of the main objectives of the inclusive education policy enshrined in the MOET policy of 2018 are to ensure that all learners including Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) access and complete basic education and progress to senior secondary education and post-secondary education levels irrespective of gender, race, culture, life circumstances, health status, disability, impairment, capacity to learn, level of achievement, financial status or any other circumstance. Another objective is to ensure that everyone involved in the education and training sector, including learners, positively embraces diversity and does not engage in discriminatory behaviour of any kind at any time. These objectives are supported by Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action 1994 Article 3 which calls for education institutions to accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social or other conditions. According to [5] the government of Eswatini had merely legislated inclusive education in the country but little had been done to help educators understand in practice how to include all learners. In light of this background, the study investigated progress made by tertiary institutions in Eswatini in implementing inclusive education in compliance with MOET 2018 inclusive education policy and international conventions like the United Nations convention 2006 in force in 2008 [6]. The investigation made it possible to come up with recommendations on how tertiary institutions in Eswatini could effectively implement inclusive education. After outlining the questions of the study literature was reviewed to discuss the information that already existed about inclusive education. The research methodology section follows after literature review, and it is followed by the findings, conclusions and the study's recommendations.

## 1.2. Questions of the Study

The study answered the following questions:

- 1) What is inclusive education?
- 2) What progress has been made by tertiary institutions in implementing inclusive education in Eswatini?
- 3) Which facilities and resources do tertiary institutions have to support inclusive education?
- 4) What benefits and challenges are associated with the implementation of inclusive education?
- 5) Which strategies can be used to effectively implement inclusive education?

## 2. Literature Review

This section reviewed literature on what other researchers and scholars have

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written about inclusive education. Literature was reviewed under the following themes, inclusive education, Inclusive education and legal framework, facilities and resources necessary for inclusive education, benefits and challenges associated with inclusion and Strategies for effective implementation of inclusive education.

### **2.1. Inclusive Education**

According to [7] inclusive education is an education system that includes all students, welcomes and supports them to learn, whoever they are and whatever their abilities or requirements are. This means making sure that teaching, school buildings, classrooms, the curriculum, play areas, transport and toilets are appropriate for all children at all levels. Inclusive education means that all children learn together in the same schools. No one should be excluded. Every child has a right to inclusive education, including children with disabilities [7]. The South African Department of Basic Education [8] asserts that inclusive education is about recognising and respecting the differences among all learners and building on their similarities. Inclusion is about supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Salamanca Statement & Framework for Action 1994 Article 3 posits that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions. Paragraph 3 states that this should include disabled, gifted and less gifted children, street and working children, children from remote and nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups. [9] views inclusive education as involving reducing exclusion, discrimination, barriers to learning and participation, restructuring cultures, policies and practices to respond to diversity in ways that value everyone equally. It should also be noted that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society. Based on these assertions it can be argued that inclusive education is about how learning institutions develop and design programmes, classrooms, facilities and activities so that all students with or without special needs participate and learn together.

### **2.2. Inclusive Education and Legal Framework**

Inclusive education in Eswatini is supported by international, regional and national legal frameworks. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognises the right to inclusive education for all persons with disabilities. The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All, World Education Forum held in Dakar Senegal in 2000 re-affirmed the vision set out in the World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien a decade ago. It expresses the international community's collective commitment to pursue a broad-based strategy for ensuring that the basic learning needs of every child, youth and adult are met within a generation and sustained thereafter [10] [11].

The Salamanca World Conference on Special needs education held in Spain

on 7-10 June 1994 attended by representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organisations agreed on a dynamic new statement on the education for all disabled children, which called for inclusion to be the norm. In addition, the conference adopted a new framework for action, the guiding principle that all education institutions should accommodate all children regardless of their physical or any other conditions. The conference called upon all governments to:

- Give the highest policy and budgetary priority to improve education services so that all children could be included, regardless of differences and difficulties.
- Ensure that organisations of disabled people along with parents and community are involved in planning and decision making.
- Ensure that both initial and in-service teacher training address the provision of inclusive education.

The United Nations (UN) convention 2006 in force in 2008 covers the rights of disabled people. Article 5 recognises the right to equality and non-discrimination. Article 24 emphasises the right to inclusive education. According to the convention's Article 24:1, states that agree to be bound by the convention should recognise the right of people with disabilities to education at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity without discrimination [6]. As a signatory to the international law and conventions the government of Eswatini through the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) enacted an inclusive education policy in 2018. This policy states that MOET shall facilitate access to education for all learners with disabilities by improving the infrastructure to make it user-friendly from basic to tertiary level, and support integration and inclusion of children with special learning needs in the education system. It further states that educational programmes shall be designed and offered to children with special needs such as physical disabilities, visual, and auditory impairment, mental disabilities, social and behavioural problems as well as gifted children.

Inclusive education is also emphasised in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are supposed to be achieved in 2030. Goal 4 calls for the promotion of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. The right to inclusive education enshrined in the MOET inclusive education policy of 2018, MOET 2019 standards for inclusive education, and the United Nations convention 2006 in force in 2008 imposes an obligation to Eswatini to ensure that all citizens are given equal opportunities to quality education regardless of their backgrounds and difficulties.

### **2.3. Facilities and Resources Necessary for Inclusive Education**

According to [12] physical facilities of learning institutions should be accessible to all learners. [12] calls for usability of environments, amenities and resources by persons with disabilities. Environments include spaces around the school, school grounds and hygiene facilities. Amenities for example include school furniture within a classroom while resources include books and other learning materials,

computers and computer software. [12] calls for universal design which recognises the diversity of functional ability across the entire population, and encourages architects and other designers to design buildings and products that can be used by persons with a wide range of abilities and different body sizes. The concepts of universal design can be applied to anything that is designed, like a building, website, playground, furniture, computer programme or school curriculum.

According to [13] site planning, walkways and toilet compartments should be designed in an inclusive way that suit the needs of all children at school including those with disabilities. In order to accommodate disabled students with special needs the following resources should be made available: tape recorders for taking notes and recording lectures, talking textbooks and novels which are in both text and audio formats, televisions and video tapes, computer-based learning as an instructional alternative, computers equipped to enlarge screen characters and images, reading and maths software as well as screen reading software with speech synthesisers to provide verbalisation of everything on the screen including text and punctuation for blind users [14] [15] [16]. Students with special needs are heterogeneous. Some of them need highly specialised educational needs such as sign language, the braille system, speech therapy, psychological services, social work services, school health services, as well as parent counselling and training [17].

#### **2.4. Benefits of Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education brings benefits to the students, the school and communities. The study by [18] showed that inclusive schools played a crucial role in fostering inclusion in communities and reduction of stigma and discrimination of disabled children. Inclusive education removes the boundaries and obstacles and universalises education, as all children can assimilate themselves in their community and develop a sense of belongingness. It can be argued that educating children with disabilities with non-disabled children creates an atmosphere of understanding and tolerance that prepares students of all abilities to function in a world beyond the school. When students of different abilities attend school together they develop a positive understanding of each other, and learn to appreciate and accommodate diversity [19]. Inclusive education is viewed as having a potential to create a nicely built nation as it teaches students their responsibilities of caring for one another and working together at school and in communities. If students work together respectfully, they gain self-confidence and all kinds of prejudices and discrimination are removed resulting in sustainable social balance and provision of equal opportunities for all.

#### **2.5. Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education**

Though inclusive education gives an opportunity for learners with and without disabilities to mingle, share ideas and socialise, it has its challenges that constrain its implementation especially in Africa's developing countries. Children

with disabilities face many barriers in accessing the education they need to become healthy, happy and productive citizens of the world. These barriers deny children their right to education, as recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Most African countries adopted these conventions and by doing so they committed to providing access to education to every child, including children with disabilities [12].

Children with disabilities are not valued within some societies. This is often reinforced by institutional policies and practices that exclude and segregate. Stereotypes linked to disability lead to negative attitudes towards children with disabilities. Parents, teachers and school managers often ignore the rights and needs of children with disabilities. This results in discrimination that discourages children with disabilities from attending school [12]. UNICEF further notes that in most schools, educational materials and teaching methods remain inaccessible for children with sensory impairments, learning and other developmental disabilities. Inclusive teaching methods and learning materials should be provided to children with disabilities in inclusive settings. Some schools' physical infrastructure is inaccessible due to faulty designs that create physical and architectural barriers for children with disabilities and their families. This hampers accessibility to education services and facilities [12].

The study by [5] revealed that one of the major challenges of implementing inclusive education in Eswatini is that the government had merely legislated inclusive education in the country but little had been done to help teachers understand in practice how to include all learners. They continue to argue that the government supplied poor reading material that is shallow and unhelpful to dyslexic learners. Reading material was inadequate such that learners were forced to share in class and alternate taking books home if given homework. Most teachers in Eswatini were not trained in inclusive education [5]. The issue of teacher training is also raised by [20] and [21] who argue that most educators do not have adequate training to handle learners with and without special needs. Continued poor performance among the disabled learners due to poor teaching skills of educators triggers their poor enrolment in regular learning institutions. This negatively affects the success of inclusive education. Lack of required training and qualifications necessary to handle students with learning disabilities creates an environment that lacks basic necessities to make it conducive for learning to take place [22].

According to [20] and [23] most developing countries inclusive education suffers setbacks due to lack of robust support from concerned stakeholders particularly the government and the donor community. Many governments in developing countries have not been able to effectively implement inclusive education policy frame work [23]. Inclusive education still remains theory far from practice. The environment in most developing countries is un-conducive for the practical implementation of inclusive education [20]. The environment that learners with special needs are exposed to lacks basic necessities and physical facilities such as washing rooms and play grounds that accommodate learners with phys-

ical disabilities [22]. In line with these assertions the study conducted by [24] in Kembara Tembaro zone, Southern Ethiopia revealed that there was inadequate infrastructure and education facilities to cater for diversified learners.

## 2.6. Strategies for Effective Implementation of Inclusive Education

Countries and education systems need to develop strategies that would facilitate successful implementation of inclusive education. To move from the current stage of improving the quality of inclusive education to the next one, which is associated with the large-scale spread of inclusive practices, it is necessary to standardise inclusive education [25]. In Australia [26] calls for collaboration between stake holders and Ministries of Education, Health, Social Welfare and civil society organisations. This can guide and enforce school level referral processes which enable students with disabilities to access health services like screening and assessment, early intervention, therapy and assistive devices. Collaborations can also include communities and community leaders to promote positive attitudes and an inclusive culture. It is essential for countries to establish resource centres to support inclusive education. The centres should provide specialist services to mainstream schools, including Braille learning and assessment materials, specialist assessments and services, facilitate the development of parents' groups and support schools to overcome barriers [26].

Obstacles to inclusive education can be overcome by creating awareness on what inclusion is and the need to restructure the curriculum to cater for all types of students [27]. To be able to realise inclusive education, teachers' competencies in this particular form of education should be systematically developed and empirically documented. Challenges involved in inclusive education should be revealed and solutions developed [28]. In addition, [29] asserts that in order for inclusive education to be implemented in a sustainable way more emphasis should be put on inclusive pedagogy in pre-service teacher training for all teacher trainees, as well as sustained and continuous in-service development. Teacher training is essential as it changes teachers' negative attitudes on children with special needs. [30] notes that for inclusive education to be successful, particular areas that need attention is training of teachers and community awareness to break down the negative attitudes and beliefs that inclusive education will come at the expense of children without disabilities. Education policies need to undergo inclusive education reform and clearer direction should be provided from the respective Ministries of Education. Locally driven research should be conducted to inform policy decisions that benefit children with and without disabilities [30].

According to [12] [29] and [31] implementing inclusive education is not only about increasing the education budget; but also about continuous, systemic, and sustained transformation of educational design, cultures, and values. A flexible curriculum should be encouraged, because a rigid and centralised curriculum without opportunity of modification does not support inclusive education in schools. Taking this assertion into account it can be argued that a flexible curri-



culum with diverse and breadth of learning outcomes and a variety of means that a student can achieve learning outcomes stands a chance of facilitating successful inclusive education implementation.

### 3. Research Methodology

The study used a qualitative research approach to collect first-hand information directly from participants in the field in Eswatini tertiary institutions. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to use a case study research design and collect detailed information from participants using interviews and observations [32]. The case study design made it possible for the researcher to focus on the four purposively selected tertiary institutions and studied them in-depth. Observations and interviews were used to gather data from participants in selected tertiary institutions. Observations allow the researcher to see the phenomenon practically and generate specific questions based on what was practically observed [5]. The researcher made observations in tertiary institutions, and saw and evaluated the types of infrastructure, equipment, buildings and surroundings that tertiary institutions had to support inclusive education. Information obtained through observations was triangulated with data gathered from interviews to validate the study's findings.

Per institution, one lecturer and a registrar were purposively selected because they were deemed to have detailed information about the implementation of inclusive education. This gave a total of four registrars and four lecturers, and a total number of eight participants. In qualitative research [32] supports the use of purposive sampling, as it enables researchers to select information-rich participants capable of providing detailed and comprehensive information about the phenomenon. Unlike in probability sampling, quantities or large numbers of participants do not matter in a qualitative sampling, what matters is to identify information rich participants who possess meaningful knowledge about the phenomenon being studied [32]. Registrars were the custodians of enrolment records that indicated patterns of admitting special needs learners in institutions. Lecturers were included because they were the ones who dealt with diverse student populations in their line of duty in institutions.

Data was analysed and presented narratively following themes that developed from data interpretation. Qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for, explaining data, and making sense of it in terms of participants' definitions of the situation, noting the patterns, themes and categories [33]. In the study, data was grouped according to themes that emerged during data presentation and analysis.

The study observed ethical guidelines. Participants should be protected from psychological or emotional effects [34]. To abide by research ethics, all participants signed consent forms with ethical guidelines. Participation in the study was through consent, and participants were given an option to withdraw at any time they wanted to without any victimisation.

## 4. Research Findings

Four tertiary institutions in Eswatini participated in the study. One lecturer and a registrar were purposively selected from each institution. Data was collected using observations and interviews. Research ethics were observed. Names of participants and their institutions were not disclosed for confidentiality purpose and to protect participant identity. Participants signed a consent form with ethical guidelines before taking part in the study. Data was analysed in a narrative manner under the following themes that developed from data presentation and analysis. Before findings are presented under respective themes **Table 1** with institutions and participants' code names was inserted.

- **Table 1.** Institutions and participants' code names
- Inclusive education
- Progress made by tertiary institutions in implementing inclusive education
- Available facilities and resources that support learners with special needs in tertiary institutions
- Benefits of inclusive education
- Challenges encountered in implementing inclusive education
- Strategies for effective implementation of inclusive education

### 4.1. Inclusive Education

Participants demonstrated understanding of inclusive education during interviews. They stated that inclusive education covers learners with hearing difficulties, visual impairment, physical disabilities, speech challenges as well as slow learners and fast learners. Participants argued that all these categories of learners must learn together and be given similar quality education since inclusive education was introduced to cater for all learners without any discrimination. Participant 5 from institution C said:

*Inclusive education is the learning of students with special needs in main stream educational institutions that have been adapted to suit their peculiar needs. It is the learning institution that needs to fit the child not the child fitting into it. The philosophy is to realise the idea of normalisation.*

**Table 1.** Institutions and participants' code names.

Name of institution	Participant designation	Participant's code name
Institution A	- Lecturer	- Participant 1
	- Registrar	- Participant 2
Institution B	- Lecturer	- Participant 3
	- Registrar	- Participant 4
Institution C	- Lecturer	- Participant 5
	- Registrar	- Participant 6
Institution D	- Lecturer	- Participant 7
	- Registrar	- Participant 8

Participant 4 from institution B said:

*Inclusive education denotes merging learners with special needs together with learners without special needs so that they learn together and have access to the same information. In inclusive education learners with high intelligence quotient learn together with slow learners as well as with those learners who have different special needs.*

Participant's assertions are in line with [7] and [8] which states that inclusive education is a system of education that caters for all learners in its schools despite their abilities and requirements.

#### **4.2. Progress Made by Tertiary Institutions in Implementing Inclusive Education**

Participants said that their institutions had not yet made meaningful progress in implementing inclusive education despite the education policy of 2018 calling for its implementation. Participant 2 from institution A said:

*Institution of higher learning in Eswatini have made little or no progress at all in the implementation of inclusive education, because the facilities are not yet inclusive to accommodate students with special needs. Another challenge that affect progress in implementing inclusive education is that most lecturers and administrators still struggle to understand and appreciate inclusive education.*

Participant 4 in institution B said:

*Though the Ministry of Education and Training always emphasises that institutions should also give priority to prospective students with special needs, but institutions do not usually enrol these learners even if they apply. If you check our enrolment figures we have less than 5 learners with special needs yet a lot of them applied and were turned down, because the institution does not have resources and facilities to support them.*

Participants concurred that tertiary institutions in Eswatini had made insignificant progress in implementing inclusive education due to lack of resources and government support as well as lack of understanding of inclusive education by lecturers and education administrators. They said that the enrolment of learners with special needs in institutions ranged from 0 - 5. Such a scenario contradicts MOET 2018 inclusive education policy as amended which states that institutions of learning should give students with special needs equal opportunities as children without special needs during admission process. Inclusive education in Eswatini is only stipulated in the legislature, but it has not yet translated into successful implementation [5].

#### **4.3. Available Facilities and Resources That Support Learners with Special Needs in Tertiary Institutions**

The researcher made observations of building facilities, sports fields and surroundings of tertiary institutions that participated in the study. The observations revealed that most tertiary institutions in Eswatini do not have proper facilities and infrastructure to support inclusive education. Few tertiary institutions had

access toilets for learners with physical needs, and pathways for wheeled equipment used by these learners. Most institutions had disabled classrooms, laboratories, bathrooms, toilets, hostels, dining halls, sports fields and surroundings that were incapable of accommodating learners with special needs. Failure to have facilities that accommodate learners with special needs violates the Ministry of Education and Training Inclusive Education policy of 2018 as amended and MOET 2019 Standards for inclusive education. Education institutions should have physical facilities that are accessible to all learners including learners with special physical needs [4] [7] [35].

Observations further revealed that buses that ferried students in tertiary institutions were old models that were purchased without consideration for inclusivity. They didn't have facilities that accommodated wheeled equipment used by learners with special physical needs. They only had steps that were only suitable for learners who did not use wheeled equipment. An example of buses that were designed and purchased with inclusivity in mind are Gautrain buses in South Africa that are used to ferry people to and fro Gautrain stations in the Gauteng province. These buses have facilities suitable for people who use wheeled equipment. Inside they have appropriate spaces that accommodate wheel chairs and a seatbelt for the user as well as a reserved seat for the person accompanying the person using a wheel chair.

It was also noted during observations that sports facilities in tertiary institutions in Eswatini did not cater for learners with special physical needs. Athletics treks, football, netball, volleyball and basketball fields only accommodated learners without special physical needs. United Nations (UN) convention 2006 in force in 2008 covers the rights of disabled people. Article 24 emphasises the right to inclusive education. The convention's Article 24:1 states that nations shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning to the development by students with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. Failure to provide sporting facilities to learners with special physical needs deprives them from developing their sporting talents and potentials. This is a breach of the United Nations (UN) convention 2006 declaration on people living with disabilities. Eswatini is a signatory to this binding resolution.

During interview participants said that their institutions did not have facilities and resources that supported inclusive education due to lack of support from the government and management. Participant 5 from institution C said:

*Institutions apart from having non-compliant physical facilities, they also do not have necessary resources that are needed for instructional delivery to learners with special needs. For example, there is lack of braille facilities for learners who have eye sight challenges.*

In line with this assertion participant 2 from institution A said:

*In my institution though we have braille material, but we do not have equipment for learners with hearing difficulties. There are no technological devices*

*and software to help these learners. Non availability of these resources is the one that makes institutions fail to enrol students with special needs.*

Instructional delivery to learners with special needs could not be feasible without necessary material and devices. The Salamanca Statement of 1994 in Spain in the World Conference on Special needs education called for inclusion to be the norm, and urged all education institutions to accommodate all children regardless of their physical or any other conditions. MOET's 2018 inclusive education policy calls on all education institutions to develop a flexible and adaptive physical and learning environment that would accommodate learners with special needs. Failure by tertiary institutions to provide a conducive physical environment and learning equipment and resources needed by learners with special needs meant failure to abide by the UN 2006 convention, MOET 2018 inclusive education policy and MOET 2019 inclusive education standards. MOET 2018 calls for the improvement of infrastructure to make it user-friendly from basic to tertiary level to support integration and inclusion of children with special learning needs in the education system.

#### **4.4. Benefits of Inclusive Education**

Participants stated that inclusive education has vast benefits at institutional and community levels. Participant 7 from institution D said:

*Implementing inclusive education in educational institutions is beneficial because we live in inclusive communities where people are diverse and have diverse backgrounds. So, there is need to integrate this diversity at classroom level if it is to work in communities at large.*

Participants argued that if children are separated in institutions of learning due to their disabilities then it would be hard to build cohesive communities where both children with and without disabilities live together. Participant saw inclusive education as a unifying force that promotes tolerance and appreciation of diversity from school level while children are still young and growing up. Participants' assertions are supported by [19] who states that students of different abilities develop positive understanding of each other and learn to appreciate and accommodate diversity if they learn together. Educating children with disabilities with non-disabled children creates an atmosphere of understanding and tolerance that prepares students of all abilities to function in a world beyond the school [19]. Inclusive education is seen as fostering inclusion in communities and reducing stigma and discrimination of disabled children.

Participants believed that inclusive education apart from fostering appreciation of each other and unity among learners, it also improves learners' performance in their school work participant 3 from institution B said:

*If inclusive education is properly implemented it can improve the performance of learners, because it enables learners who are diverse to work together, share information, ideas, and experiences resulting in the widening of their thinking horizons and knowledge base.*

According to [19] inclusive education enables students to respectfully and confidently work together at school and in communities. A constructivist teaching and learning theory advocates for the use of a collaborative approach to teaching and learning. If learners work collaboratively, they tend to share information and diverse experiences resulting in improved performance in their school work.

#### 4.5. Challenges Encountered in Implementing Inclusive Education

Challenges encountered in the implementation of inclusive education were similar in tertiary institutions that participated in the study. Participants concurred, that lack of necessary resources and infrastructure to cater for learners with special needs made it difficult to embrace inclusive education and implement it effectively. They argued that lack of essentials negatively affected the performance and progression of learners with special needs. Participant 6 from institution C said:

*Due to lack of necessary equipment and resources to address the needs of learners with special needs, these learners often change courses, repeat modules often and have high dropout rates.*

The findings of [24] showed that there were high numbers of repeaters and dropouts in schools because of unfriendly learning environment for diversified learners. Educational materials remain inaccessible for children with learning and other developmental disabilities [12]. Participant 7 from institution D argued that another major challenge that the implementation of inclusive education faced was shortage of trained lecturers in inclusion. This concern was raised by other participants as well. Participant 7 said:

*One of the major challenge faced by institutions in the implementation of inclusive education is that most of them have few or no lecturers at all who were trained in inclusive education. So they lack skills and knowledge of dealing with and handling learners with special needs. This makes these lecturers pay more attention to learners without special needs and less attention to learners with disabilities. This leads to stigma, discrimination and prejudice of learners with special needs.*

According to [12] and [20] teachers and school managers often ignore the rights and needs of children with disabilities, which results in discrimination that discourages children with disabilities from attending school. The environment in most developing countries is un-conducive for the practical implementation of inclusive education. Such a situation tends to prejudice learners with special needs from accessing quality education that they are promised in MOET 2018 education policy.

Participants also argued that lack of management and government support resulted in the lack of monitoring of the implementation of the inclusive education policy at national and institutional level.

Participant from school D 8 said:

*Challenges associated with poor implementation of inclusive education in ter-*

*tiary institutions emanate from the government and management of institutions. The government does not have a monitoring mechanism to check how inclusive education is implemented in institutions. The government also does not support institutions with necessary resources that cater for inclusive education needs. Management does not support lecturers with resources. Lecturers are left on their own, and there is nothing much that they can do.*

From the participant's assertion it can be argued that lack of government support makes it difficult for institutions especially lecturers to implement inclusive education effectively without relevant resources. Though the government of Eswatini has legislated inclusive education and enacted its policy, it has not yet effectively supported the implementation of this policy in terms of making necessary resources available to institutions [5].

#### **4.6. Strategies for Effective Implementation of Inclusive Education**

Participants came up with strategies that could be used to effectively implement inclusive education in tertiary institutions in Eswatini. They said that the government should support tertiary institutions with appropriate resources necessary in the implementation of inclusive education. Participant 1 in institution A said:

*The Ministry of education did well by coming up with the inclusive education policy. Now the government is supposed to assist institutions with resources that would enable them to successfully implement inclusive education.*

Participant 5 from institution C said:

*If the ministry of education wants inclusive education to be implemented well by all education institutions, they should come up with an implementation and monitoring plan that can be used by regional education officers and their staff to monitor how institutions are implementing inclusive education. The policy is already there, but it is not implemented well by institutions. An implementation and monitoring plan can help the ministry to enforce the implementation of the policy. They are also supposed to support institutions with relevant resources that are needed in the implementation of inclusive education, because even if institutions are committed to implementing inclusive education, but their commitments cannot work without resources that are needed to handle and support learners with special needs.*

In Australia [26] views the raising of resources by involved stakeholders as essential in supporting the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Participants also argued that one of the most important factor in the effective implementation of inclusive education in tertiary institutions in Eswatini is training of educators and administrators.

Participant 3 from institution B said:

*If inclusive education is to be successfully implemented in our institutions, management team members and lecturers need to be trained and equipped with proper skills, attitudes and knowledge of handling inclusive education in a*

*proper way. You can't implement something that you don't understand. Training is necessary so that lecturers and administrators could have a proper understanding of what inclusive education is and how it is supposed to be implemented.*

The notion of training and capacitation of staff members in education institutions is supported by [30] who argues that for inclusive education to be successful, attention should be paid to training of staff in education institutions to create awareness and promote inclusion at all level. Training is a tool that can be used to capacitate administrators and lecturers with knowledge and skills necessary for the successful implementation of inclusive education. Participants were of the view that tertiary institutions could derive from MOET 2018 inclusive education policy and enact their inclusive education policies that address their contextual needs. They believed that training could include policy formulation and implementation at institution level while also broadly addressing inclusive education and what it takes to successfully implement it at institutional level.

## 5. Conclusions

From data presentation and analysis, it was concluded that though the government of Eswatini through MOET enacted the 2018 inclusive education policy as amended, tertiary institution in the country had made insignificant progress in implementing inclusive education. An insignificant number of learners with special needs were enrolled in the country's tertiary institutions. Many governments in developing countries have not yet effectively implemented inclusive education policy frame work. Inclusive education still remains theory far from practice [23]. Progress to a larger extent was hindered by lack of institutions' management and government support in terms of necessary resources, failure by MOET to develop and implement an inclusive education implementation and monitoring plan, shortage of qualified inclusive education lecturers, lack of training of practising lecturers and administrators on inclusive education content and implementation.

It was also concluded that most tertiary institutions in Eswatini did not have proper physical facilities, materials, devices and resources to support effective implementation of inclusive education. The study further concluded that there was need for government and management support as well as training of lecturers and administrators to capacitate them with proper skills, knowledge and attitudes that are necessary for the effective implementation of inclusive education.

## Recommendations

Based on literature review, data presentation and analysis it was recommended that:

### **The Ministry of Education and Training should:**

- Develop an inclusive education implementation and monitoring plan and use it to assess the implementation of inclusive education in tertiary institutions.



- Train lecturers and administrators and capacitate them with the skills and knowledge of inclusive education.
- Support education institutions with resources like brailing machines, finances and building material to renovate and make buildings and playgrounds suitable for learners with special needs.

**Tertiary institutions should:**

- Enact their institutional inclusive education policies based on MOET 2018 inclusive education policy.
- Modernise their infrastructure such as buildings, surrounding and sports fields to accommodate inclusivity.
- Mobilise required resources and materials such as braille embosser, brailing machines, hearing devices, big computer screens to embrace inclusivity.
- Increase their enrolment numbers of learners with special needs to afford them a right to education in inclusive environments.
- Employ lecturers who are specialists in inclusive education and in-service those who are not.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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