1. The Education System facing the challenges of the twenty-first century:  

An Overview

1.1 Major Reforms and Innovations

(a) The Legal Framework of Education

The Kingdom of Swaziland now has a Constitution which came into force in July 2005. The National Constitution, which is influenced by the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All, has made provisions for access to primary education for every child. Specifically, the Constitution expresses education as an explicit constitutional right for every Swazi child as referenced in Section 29 (7) Rights of the Child which states that Parliament shall enact laws necessary to ensure that:

“Every Swazi child shall within three years of the commencement of this Constitution have the right to free education in public schools at least up to the end of primary school, beginning with first grade.”

All other national policies such as the National Development Strategy, Vision 2022 (1997), Smart Programme on Economic Empowerment and Development (SPEED, 2005), Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan of 2006, re-affirm the importance of education and the implementation of the Education for All agenda as an important program aimed at ensuring efficient and equitable distribution of educational resources and guarantees that all citizens have access to basic education. SPEED further made specific mention of special education as a great concern to Government. In that regard it states thus, “efforts will be made to improve and expand existing services, infrastructure, equipment and facilities for children with special needs” (SPEED, 2005).

Major reforms include a review of the Education Act of 1981 and its regulations of 1977 to be in-line with the Constitution and other relevant National Policies. The Teaching Service Act of 1982, the only legal document that provides for recruitment, deployment and discipline of
teachers, has been amended. Also to be amended is the Teaching Service Regulations of 1983 which regulates the practice of teachers. This is where the Ministry of Education will have an opportunity to regulate special education issues. The reviewed Education Act has called for the promulgation of a new Act called the Council of Educators Act which will regulate registration of Educators in Swaziland.

(b) The aims and purposes of education at each level

The goal of education as presented in the National Policy Statement on Education (1999) is the provision of opportunities for all pupils of school-going age and adults to develop themselves in order to improve the quality of their own lives and the standard of living of their communities. Education and training programmes therefore, are aimed at engendering a sense of civic mindedness and fostering skills that are necessary to participate effectively in the development of the country.

The Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) level is to ensure universal access to ECCD for all children in Swaziland and to promote and protect the rights of the young child for survival, growth, development and learning. The main of ECCD is to promote child development, prevent the occurrence of risks and ameliorate the negative effects of risks in the early years of life.

At Primary / Basic Education level, the objective is expansion of participation, ensuring that all pupils, irrespective of their social and economic classification have access to education. At Secondary / High School level, the aim is provision of a diversified curriculum that will enable pupils to exploit all opportunities available to them on graduation. At post-secondary level, the objective is provision of training programmes that are in line with the socio-economic needs of the country.

The tertiary education level aims at providing trained personnel in accordance with identified social-economic needs of the country. In particular, tertiary education is structured to suit the ‘world of work’. Furthermore, its purpose is to impart research skills and inculcate the culture of research for personal, professional and social development.

The main goal of Vocational Education and Training (VET) is to promote entrepreneurial skills and values as an integral element of VET
at all stages, sectors and areas taking into consideration the needs of the economy, the society and the individual.


(c) The Organization, structure and Management of the Education System

The structure of the education system has not had major changes since the last national report was presented. There is however, emerging development to focus on promoting an Inclusive Education system where ‘no child is excluded from education’. Swaziland is in the process of exploring ways of re-organizing the structure and management of special education to meet the aspirations of inclusive education. In line with the re-structuring, the Ministry of Education to create more posts for personnel within the Special Education Department to provide support to schools at regional education levels.

Another management change includes the strengthening of the inspectorate division of the Ministry of Education with an aim to improve monitoring of quality education in the school system. This has seen the establishment of more posts for both primary and secondary inspectorate. However, the personnel and facilities are still far below critical mass considering the tasks involved.

The Teaching Service Commission management structure has improved considerably over the past four years but still in needs strengthening especially in the legal department as it still relies on the Ministry of Education’s legal advisor who is overloaded.

The basic aim of upgrading the management structure is to improve the efficiency of the commission and as a result improve service delivery.
The commission is currently piloting performance contracting internally with a view to improve efficiency and service delivery.

In terms of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland, the Teaching Service Commission is an independent body corporate established by an Act of Parliament. The constitutional aspirations have not been fully met as the Commission is still located under the Ministry of Education. Even though it is independent, its operations face some challenges in terms of the autonomy envisaged by the Constitution.

**Education Planning and Budgeting**

This aspect is carried out by the Planning section of the Ministry of Education. The education planner and his team work closely with the accounts section and the Education Management Information Service (EMIS). Data is analyzed and projections made in order to plan for capital and recurrent budgets of the sector.

To improve education planning and budgeting, the Ministry is, through EMIS, in the process of developing a system that will make a complete diagnosis of the state of the education system including student enrolment, learning conditions, infrastructure, teaching staff, costs and education performance in order to ensure that the limited resources available are used effectively. This will ensure that policy formulation, management, planning, budgeting and evaluation of the education system are informed by relevant, timely and accurate education data and information.

The country has, for a long time, not had a coherent plan that strategically guides development of education. The Ministry of Education with technical assistance from the World Bank is in the process of developing a Comprehensive Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP). The ESSP will serve as a framework for development of education in the country. The Plan is intended to, amongst other things, lay out the future vision of the country’s education system and to outline the main lines of action that Government will pursue in the long, medium and short term in order to realize the vision.
Curricular policies, educational content, teaching and learning strategies

The country still advocates for a curricular that promotes entrepreneurship skills. This is motivated by the high level of unemployment and the fact that there are children who benefit more from a practical curriculum.

In the light of constant change in the Educational arena, the Swaziland Educational System adopted the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) curriculum in schools throughout the country in Form 4. In 2007 the programme proceeded to Form V. IGCSE is a two-year curricular programme leading to an internationally recognized qualification. One advantage of this programme is that it promotes the development of problem-solving skills and child-centred approach to learning. It caters for a wide range of abilities. Furthermore, it allows for the application of skills, knowledge and understanding and it explores pupils’ ability to: undertake individual projects; work in collaboration with other partners or participate in group projects. This form of curriculum advocates for a normal progression throughout the system. This in turn means that the country has to dovetail IGCSE with the other levels of education i.e. primary and junior secondary levels. This year 2008 the students will sit for the second IGSCE examination.

Localization of IGCSE into Swaziland General Certificate of Secondary Education (SGCSE) has been on-going and the first exam will be written in 2009. Subjects such as Mathematics, siSwati, Science, English and Home Economics have been localized. The localization will bring in the local flavor and reduce the cost of teaching and learning material and reduce dependence on UK systems. The localized curriculum will have a reduced number of examination papers in some subjects but maintaining quality and reducing the cost of examinations. The examinations will be locally brewed but will still have international recognition to allow students to study and work outside Swaziland.

The shift from O’Level to IGCSE curriculum has its own challenges. The education fraternity and the general public are still skeptical about the new IGCSE programme. The Ministry therefore has an assignment to clarify issues to the public so that the right perceptions about the programme are acquired. IGCSE has demanded a shift from teacher to
child-centered teaching approaches. This has had implications for teacher in-service and pre-service training. It calls for teacher training to focus more on child centered approaches so that graduates have the capacity to handle the new curriculum.

Another curriculum reform has been experienced in special schools where a more skills based curriculum has been introduced to cater for learners who need Skills for Daily Living or even Skills for Life. Learners in these schools are now taught basic skills such as cooking and sewing instead of Home Economics, gardening rather than the conventional Agriculture.

(e) Objectives and principal characteristics of current and forthcoming reforms

The major thrust of reforms is to improve access to education for all children. Coupled with efforts to improve access has been the move by the Ministry of Education to build an inclusive education system where ‘no child is excluded from education’ regardless of individual differences or difficulties. A major initiative in this regard has been the deliberate attempt to capacitate mainstream primary school teachers to absorb and support learners with special needs or learners experiencing barriers to education. The Ministry is doing this through support from development partners such as UNICEF and Support to Education and Training Project funded by the European Union.

Content of education, major challenges for the curriculum

The Ministry realizes the need to strengthen relevance of education to the increasingly digital work place. To this end, the Ministry, through the Computer Education Trust and the Republic of China (Taiwan) is supplying computers to secondary schools throughout the country. So far computers have been supplied to 120 secondary and high schools (61%) of the total number of secondary high schools and pupils are taught basic computer skills. The schools construct computer laboratories in rural secondary and high schools and the Ministry of Education continues to electrify the schools. The ultimate goal is to produce graduate with competencies in computer education.

The campaign for introduction of Information Technology (IT) in schools has seen the Ministry making considerable investment in IT
infrastructure in Teacher Training Colleges. The recent years have seen the construction of computer laboratories in all the three Teacher-training institutions. The computer laboratories are also equipped with 50 computers, 4 printers, 1 video projector and 1 video camera. The curriculum has been developed and forwarded to the University of Swaziland for approval.

However, one major challenge is the low salaries for College lecturers which make it difficult for the Ministry to attract and retain computer lecturers because the Private Sector generally remunerates them better. On the other hand, candidates who apply for the position of computer lecturer do not have teaching certificates and they end up engaged on contract basis. This has caused numerous problems. The country is challenged to start a programme that will produce computer lectures with a teaching certificate.

The pre-vocational programme implemented in 16 schools still has many challenges. Support is needed to establish a proper administrative structure that will enhance its management and monitoring system. Even though the programme has long passed its project stage it cannot be replicated to other schools due to lack of human resources and lack of an administrative structure.

1.2 Main policies, achievements and lessons learnt

Issues of access, equity, relevance and quality education are still a priority in the national policies and programming. All Ministry of Education efforts are therefore geared towards achieving access to quality education for children and youth in the country.

(a) Access, Equity and Quality of Education

Access to quality education for all children, especially marginalized and disadvantaged children, is still receiving a lot of support from the highest level of authority in the country. Each year, His Majesty’s speech from the throne highlights the need to increase efforts to improve access to education through providing free education at primary school level. Such commitment from the Throne has seen Government and non-governmental organizations putting a lot of resources towards basic
education especially at primary school level. This has seen a number of children who were out of school going back to school. This can be observed from the following initiatives:

**Access and Equity**

- The Government of Swaziland has, through the Ministry of Education, continued to provide bursaries to Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) both at primary and secondary levels. This programme has benefited mainly children who have been orphaned due to HIV/AIDS and poverty. The government allocated a budget of 16m in 2003; E38m in 2004; E47m in 2005 and 2006; E66m in 2007. Implementation of the OVC fund has seen enrolments increasing by 8.8% from 208,000.00 in 2003 to 221,000.00 in 2005 and approximately 229,686 in 2006. A considerable increase of 1.3% from 229,686 in 2006 to 232,572 in 2007 was observed. The phase in of ‘free’ primary education in elementary grade(s) in 2010 as dictated by the Constitution is expected to lead to even greater participation at this level.

- The Ministry of Education provides ‘free’ textbooks to all pupils at primary school level. This intervention started in 2002. By 2005, the Ministry provided workbooks to primary school pupils. In 2006 the Ministry intensified her efforts in reducing the cost of education at primary level by providing ‘free’ exercise books and stationery to pupils in grades 1 to 4. In 2007 school year, the programme was rolled out to all primary grades 1 to grade 7.

- Provision of Braille textbooks, devices and other learning materials for the visually impaired starting in 2007. The Ministry is also considering providing Braille textbooks to visually impaired students at high school level. Procurement of equipment, software, teaching and learning material for special schools has also been done.

- Introduction of Capitation Grant. The main objective is to increase access to basic education and enhance the quality of education. This programme which started with only 10 schools has been extended to more schools. Schools that participate in the capitation programme are given a flat rate of E100.00 per child (for all learners enrolled in the school). The schools further receive a total of E125.00 per orphaned and vulnerable child registered in the schools.
• Expansion of selected primary schools with an aim to reduce high teacher pupil ratio. This is done with support from the European Union through the Support to Education and Training Project.

Quality

The quest for improvement of education quality is one of the critical issues facing the country. The primary determinants of education quality are teacher qualifications, teaching strategy, availability of learning materials and schools facilities. To address the issue of quality the Ministry continues to:

- Provide schools with qualified teachers and to mount in-service courses to keep serving teachers up to date with the latest teaching methodologies.
- Mount in-service training workshops to equip mainstream school teachers with skills to identify and support learners with special educational needs.
- The Ministry of Education has embarked on a programme to expand teacher education at pre-service level. The objective is to keep up with the demand for teachers, particularly primary school teachers and Science & Mathematics secondary teachers.
- To ensure provision of high quality education, the Ministry will also continue with the provision of learning materials (textbooks and stationery as well as readers to schools), furniture and equipment, construction of physical structures required for the execution of education in the schools and teacher training institutions throughout the country.
- Swaziland has also gradually moved away from O’ Level curriculum to the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE). The fundamental principle of this curriculum assessment and examination system is that students are rewarded for positive achievement on the basis of what they know, understand and can do, rather than being penalized for an accumulation of errors.
- The Ministry is also making plans to ensure that the relevant structures and mechanisms for quality management and accreditation, particularly at higher education level, are in place.
Lessons Learnt

The implementation of these equity and quality driven interventions seem to have a positive impact on enrolments particularly at primary school level. However, there are challenges. Major observations made in relation to all the above mentioned national initiatives include the following:

(a) The Ministry’s focus on quality and equity driven initiatives at primary school level seems to be yielding fruit. The primary education sector has continued to expand and to attract pupils from low income families. A 1.3% increase in enrolments was experience in 2007 compared to 2006 total enrolments. The number of primary schools has also increased from 555 in 2006 to 557 in 2007. Despite all these achievements, there are still children who are out of school. Furthermore, there are children who occasionally drop out due to hunger and caring for their sick parent(s) or looking after their siblings.

(b) The increase in primary school enrolments is not matched with increase in infrastructure at secondary and high schools levels to absorb the pupils after grade 7.

(c) The demand for educational grants is increasing tremendously following the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, rising unemployment rate, increased levels of poverty and the escalating cost of education. The funds allocated for educational grants do not match the number of children who genuinely need the grant.

(d) The bursary funds do not cater for all the fees thus learners are still sent home for outstanding fees or top-up fees.

(e) Since Education in Swaziland is not compulsory there are still children who do not attend school because there is no law that requires all school-going age children to be in school. In as much as the initiative are aimed at attracting out of school children, there is still a huge number of children, about 38,000 who have dropped out or have never been to school.

(f) The Capitation grant is one initiative which has the potential to attract out to school aged children. However, this programme has partly addressed the issue of access. It should be built into the capitation programme to have participating schools reserve a number of spaces each year for children who are out of school.

(g) Overcrowding in some schools, especially urban areas has been observed since some of the initiatives were started. The high teacher pupil ratio does affect the quality of teaching and learning. It is for this reason that
some primary schools need to be expanded to reduce the teacher pupil ratio.

(h) Equal access and full participation in basic mainstream education of children with special needs has not been adequately addressed. Most of the initiatives have, to a small extent, benefited the very few who have been admitted in special schools. Most children with special needs in mainstream schools do not receive adequate support.

(i) The responsibility of quality control by the inspectorate has not been adequately addressed. The inspectorate is still thin on the ground and lacks transport and facilities to enable it to carry out monitoring of the system more effectively.

The issues of access, quality and equity still need to be strategically addressed in the country. The country is still challenged to develop a strategy that will retain students in school and also attract those that are not in school especially children with special needs. Working together with development partners such as UNICEF and non-governmental organizations, the Ministry can achieve Universal Primary Education thus ensuring Education for All by 2015.

(b) Early Childhood Intervention

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) in Swaziland refers to a holistic approach that encompasses both care and education for children from birth to the age of eight. It focuses on a range of needs from health and nutrition to cognitive, social and emotional development as well as environmental factors within the context of the family. This is the model that was adopted in principle but in practice ECCD in Swaziland refers to children from 0 – 6 years.

Planning, implementation, monitoring and coordination of the programme is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education however, a multi-sectoral approach to implementing the programme has been adopted.

To date the Ministry of Education has achieved the following:

- Development of a training manual for pre-school teachers. The manual focuses on preparing pre-school teachers to teach young children effectively by using the right approaches that are appropriate for
teaching young children. About 240 teachers have been oriented using the training manual.

- The ECCD curriculum has been reviewed to include ten themes that focus on the holistic development of young children.
- A draft ECCD policy has been developed guided by relevant UN conventions and recommendations from International Conferences.

(c) Learning outcomes / Performance at various levels

The performance at various levels as assessed through the end of year exams is generally good. However, there are serious inefficiencies observed in the system as follows. Primary school completion rates are just above 60% and secondary completion rates are just about 36%. This shows a high repetition and drop-out rates. To some extent it also indicates that teaching and learning strategies are not satisfactory. These issues are continuously addressed through running workshops organized for teachers to share strategies and good practices that could improve learning outcomes. Performance at various levels can be summarized as follows:

Swaziland Primary Certificate

The overall pass rate increased slightly from 88.10% in 2006 to 88.66 in 2007. A total of 155 schools (27.6%) were able to obtain a hundred percent rate. The number of primary schools performing badly in the SPC continues to decrease. This is partly attributed to a system of writing to schools that have performed badly with a view to helping them improve their performance. The good performance is largely attributed to the hard work of teachers, the provision of free text books, work books and stationery to all primary schools. All pupils now have equal access to the curriculum and are able to participate meaningfully in the teaching and learning processes.

Secondary Education

The overall pass rate in the 2007 Junior Certificate Examination (JC) improved considerably from 83.28% in 2006 to 86.67% in 2007. This represents an increase of 3.4%. Out of 13 241 pupils who sat for the JC examinations in 2007, 11 475 pupils passed. A total of 9 860 pupils sat for the International General Certificate of Secondary Education
(IGCSE) examination in 2007. Of these, 7,921 were graded as having passed. This was the first sitting for this type of examination in Swaziland.

(d) Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Training

Pre-Service

Enrolments in the Teacher training institutions have increased by 20% due to the demand for teacher supply both at primary and secondary levels. The two teacher training colleges that produce primary school teachers increased their enrolments from 100 to 120. However, increase in enrolments has not yet addressed the issue of increasing supply of primary school teachers. Presently, about 210 graduates are produced each year and this is just enough to replace teacher’s attrition due to death, retirement and resignation. In order to meet the demand for teacher supply, a plan to revive the Primary Teachers Diploma in one of the colleges responsible for training secondary school teachers has been proposed.

In order to improve quality of teachers, teacher training colleges raised the qualifications from certificate to diploma and the duration for training was raised from 2 years to 3 years. The quality of teachers and the quality of teaching has since improved according to reports from school inspectors.

The institutions have also diversified the curriculum to include Special Education, French and ICT. New posts for personnel to handle special education and French have already been established and the recruitment process has already started. This is a big milestone towards building an inclusive education system that caters for the needs of all children.

The Ministry has a policy in place to up-grade lecturers’ qualifications to Masters Level. Each year two lecturers per institution are funded by Government to further studies in relevant areas. This is aimed at improving quality and management of teachers training colleges in Swaziland.
Recruitment and deployment (policies, practice, achievements and lessons learnt)

Upon completing at the Teacher Training Colleges or University, aspiring teachers register their intentions to become teachers with the Teaching Service Commission (TSC). The TCS then deploys the teachers according to needs. As mentioned earlier, at the primary level there is still a shortage of qualified teachers. Teachers that graduate each year are evenly spread throughout the country wherever the TSC feels there is need.

At the Secondary level there is a shortage of qualified teacher in the areas of Mathematics, Science and Technology. The country has been relying on foreign teacher who come to seek employment. The country is currently engaging countries with surplus teachers so that an agreement could be reached to ensure that recruitment of teachers does not have a negative impact.

In-Service

Recognizing the importance of in-service training, Government established an In-service Education and Training (INSET) department. The department caters for professional growth and development of all school Head teachers and all primary school teachers. In order to strengthen the support offered to teachers, the government decentralized the department by opening eight Teachers Resource Centres (TRCs), two in each region. The department offers the following:

- Head teacher Management Training Programme (HMTP)
- Infusion Workshops
- Open Day Workshops
- School-Based and Clusters Workshops
- Literacy and Numeracy Enhancement (LaNEP) Workshops
- Schools as Centres of Care and Support
- School Visits
1.3 Role of the education system in combating poverty as well as other forms of social exclusion and cultural marginalization

Education and Training is a cornerstone for sustainable economic and social development of any country. It is known to be the panacea to most economic and social ills, the world over. The diversity of benefits of education has seen many nations scaling up their efforts towards extending educational opportunities to all their people and Swaziland is not an exception.

The country committed itself to extending educational opportunities to all its citizens, irrespective of their economic or social classification, with the view to enhance productivity, foster economic growth, and improve the standard of living of the people. The country is aware that empowering people with relevant and quality education, specifically the poor, is the most effective avenue to reduce poverty. It recognizes that with appropriately educated people, the economy will be transformed - national output will be increased and people’s incomes raised and the standards of living enhanced.

Education has been identified as a basic right for all Swazi citizens and is critical for overcoming the broader dimensions of poverty and social exclusion. In order to contribute towards combating poverty, the education system has a responsibility of providing primary education to everyone.

Efforts have been made towards making education more affordable through the introduction of measures that reduce the burden of the cost to education to parents in the form of bursaries, capitation grants, and building of more schools in some areas, provision of free text books to primary school children and re-organization of non-formal basic education. The non-formal basic education component is meant to cater for those children who are out of school and are above primary school age. It enables them to get an education equivalent to that offered in formal primary schools. Starting in 2010, all primary schools will offer gradually free education to children starting from Grade 1.
Other strategies that may contribute towards alleviating poverty include;

- Making education free for all primary school-going age children.
- Standardizing school fees at Secondary and high school level to accommodate the poor
- Increasing the number of schools and teachers to accommodate the out-of-school children
- Developing a proper mechanism for selecting vulnerable and poor households and children
- Strengthening efforts towards creating an inclusive education system
- Ensuring that all children with special needs and the disabled are catered for under Universal Basic Primary Education
- Gradually introducing universal secondary education and ensuring that it forms part of basic education.
- Training the citizens of Swaziland in life skills, such as vocational skills to ensure self-reliance. There is need for change of attitude towards practical skills work. The pre-vocational programme needs to be strengthened to help change peoples’ perceptions towards skills-based work.
- The system needs to empower the citizens to develop toward economic, social, cultural and ecological development.

Liaising with development partners and involving communities in the development of education would strengthen efforts aimed at combating poverty.
2.1 Approaches, Scope and Content

(a) Inclusive Education in the context of Swaziland

Swaziland as a developing country has been keen on following international trends as a way of respecting the rights of her marginalized members. Like other SADC countries, Swaziland embraced International Declarations that set the basis for Education for All and Inclusive Education.

Swaziland has adopted Inclusive Education as a broad vision for Education for All. Inclusive Education is defined as one that meets the needs of all learners, whatever their gender, life circumstances, health, disability, stage of development, capacity to learn, level of achievement, financial or any other circumstances. No child is excluded from education. The country believes that in an inclusive education system, a school place must be provided for every child of school age and barriers must be removed so that all children attend school unless there are exceptional reasons for their formal exemption from attendance.

The idea is to develop an inclusive education system that enables all children and young people to learn effectively, wherever possible, in mainstream pre-school, schools, colleges and universities with appropriate teaching and support so that their individual needs are met. Special schools will continue to cater for the severe cases keeping in mind that they are fully equipped and have all the necessary facilities and qualified staff to offer support in the most professional manner. The curriculum and teaching methods used in every class in every school should take into account the different abilities of the children recognizing that children with or without any disadvantages that are in the same class have different levels of ability and different support needs.

(b) Challenges for ensuring Educational and Social Inclusion

Challenges experienced in ensuring educational and social inclusion are:

- The parallel system of education which has created mainstream schools that do not cater for children who challenge their structure or functioning and special schools which cater for particular groups.
- Inadequate policies to promote educational and social inclusion
• People’s perception on inclusive education. Most people understand inclusive education to only refer to children with disabilities learning in regular schools rather than that it promotes the respect of human rights.
• Cultural myths which lead to some children being hidden by their families.
• School, as an extension of society, has reflected this negative attitude towards disabled learners. School culture has to some extent disadvantaged groups of children who do not conform to what is called ‘normal’.
• The dominance of the ‘medical disability model’ (which see the child as a problem) in defining what children need instead of using both the medical and social models (society and the education system must change) to inform programming.
• Lack of appropriate screening and assessment tools and techniques;
• Inadequate or even lack of resources allocated to the development of inclusive programmes
• A false notion that some children cannot learn;
• No accurate picture of the number of learners who are excluded from the school system
• The expectation on teachers to rise to the challenge of an increasingly diverse classroom. Some teachers have serious reservations about supporting the wide spread of pupils with special education needs in mainstream schools.
• Lack of a diverse curriculum that will meet the needs of the wide range of learners.

There is increasing recognition that education is a right for every child irrespective of personal differences or difficulties. In recent years, Swaziland, like other countries, has taken initiatives to promote inclusion as a means to break barriers that exist both in society and in the education system. However, since inclusive education was first promoted as a marginal theme on how learners with disabilities can be included in mainstream schools instead of looking at how to transform the education system such that it responds to the diversity of learners, it has been challenging to change people’s mindsets. Vigorous campaigns still need to be done in order to change people’s perceptions on the whole concept of inclusion.
(c) **Legal or Regulatory Frameworks that refer to Inclusive Education Issues**

Critical national policies that specify the desire to attain access to basic education for all, in a way promoting inclusive education, include the following: The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland (2005); Smart Programme on Economic Empowerment and Development (SPEED, 2005); the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Programme (2006); the National Development Strategy (NDS, 1999); National Policy Statement on Education (1998) and the draft Inclusive Education Policy (2008).

The NDS specifies that the country shall promote integration of persons with disabilities into the mainstream of the education system and that necessary equipment shall be provided to ensure that people with disabilities access training institutions. The Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Programme has proposed actions which may promote inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalized children. These actions include but are not limited to the following:

- Providing equal opportunities of access to primary education
- Admitting all school going age children in primary school
- Ensuring universal access to primary education, health and psychological needs for all the vulnerable groups.

Swaziland further developed Special Education Needs principles, guidelines and procedures that emphasize the right to education for all learners with special educational needs (LSEN) in mainstream schools within their communities. Furthermore, programming within the special needs unit has been guided by the principles of inclusive education.

Some of the objectives for SEN include:

- Increasing access and participation to education for all children and youth with special needs from primary to tertiary level
- Ensuring early identification of SEN and early intervention
- Increasing human resources to ensure full participation and learning
- Facilitating capacity building for SEN teachers and personnel
- Improving infrastructure in schools to be user-friendly to LSEN
• Provide relevant teaching and learning materials and equipment for SEN
• Designate special schools as centres of excellence in support of inclusive education programmes

It is worth noting that none of the legal frameworks specifically refers to Inclusive Education but to provision of Education for every child. In that regard they are indirectly promoting Inclusive Education. On a more direct note, the Ministry has started a process to develop an Inclusive Education Policy that will give policy direction on the implementation of inclusive programmes.

2.2 Public policies

(a) Current dimensions of the phenomenon of exclusion from and within education

The following dimensions have been observed as forms of exclusion from and within education:

• Traditional models of learning that fail to respond to the diverse needs of learners
• High school fees that exclude children from poor families
• Children with disabilities channeled to special schools only
• Most school infrastructure is not user friendly
• High drop out rate estimated to be 23% and high repetition rate
• Curriculum not accessible and flexible – all learners are expected to learn the same things, at the same time and by the same means and methods.
• Children not performing well not adequately supported in mainstream schools but referred to special schools

(b) Inclusive Education issues relevant for educational policies in Swaziland

There are a number of issues in inclusive education that could inform educational policies in terms of improving access to and quality of education, and ensuring equity and relevance. The search for increased access to quality, equity and relevant education should therefore be
placed at the heart of constructing an inclusive education system. Education policies in Swaziland need to define a set of inclusive principles together with practical ideas to guide the transition towards policies addressing inclusion in education.

Inclusive education is a process to ensure that Education for All really is for all. It helps to focus on a much broader range of children who may be excluded from or marginalized within education because of their apparent difficulties. Such children include those who are enrolled in education but are excluded from learning; those are not enrolled in school but who could participate if schools were more flexible in their responses and welcoming in their approach and a relatively small group of children with severe impairments who may have a need for some form of additional support. Adopting and implementing inclusive education would therefore accelerate the country’s efforts towards achieving education for every child by 2015.

Inclusive education also addresses the issue of equity in that it promotes fairness, which implies that access to education should not be inhibited by a child’s personal or social circumstances. Inclusion advocates for the minimization or elimination of barriers to school attendance, learning and achievement. Key to removing barriers to school attendance is making primary education compulsory and free for all children and that other barriers such as complete school uniform or discrimination because of a disability are removed. An inclusive education system minimizes or eliminates barriers to learning through striving to meet the needs of all learners, whatever their disability, stage of development, capacity to learn, level of achievement, financial or any other circumstances.

In an inclusive education system barriers to achievement are removed in that children are screened on entry to school so that difficulties with vision, hearing and understanding are identified early, referral to specialist services made, and teaching methods are adapted to meet the needs of different groups of children. This would therefore be a good policy strategy for reducing repetition and drop-out rates in the school system.

The issue of relevance in inclusive education is addressed through promoting an education system that offers real learning opportunities to
children. In that regard, educational policies would realize that
difficulties experienced by pupils result from the ways in which the
education system and in particular the schools are currently organized
and from rigid teaching methods.

c) **Groups considered to be more vulnerable**

Groups considered to be more vulnerable include, children and youth
with disabilities, orphaned children, abused and poverty stricken
children. Children with disabilities suffer most of the constraints and
their chances to get an education are weak given the current education
system in Swaziland. Another group that is vulnerable is that of children
who are in school but are excluded from learning. The education system
itself and the way it is organized needs to be re-structured to make it
more responsive to the diversity of learners’ needs.

(d) **Current education reforms addressing inclusive education**

The Government of Swaziland has initiated a number of reforms which
are aimed at promoting an inclusive education system. Even though
some of the reforms do not make specific mention of inclusive
education, they are built on the principles of Inclusive Education and
therefore have a potential to create an educational environment that will
celebrate diversity and consider differences in learners as a resource
rather than a challenge. The reforms include the following:

- Development of a draft Inclusive Education Policy to provide a road
  map for ensuring that all children who have special needs are included in
  high quality education.
- Construction of a high school for the deaf has provided an opportunity
  for deaf learners to further their education beyond grade 7.
- Introduction of special education courses at teacher training institutions
  in Swaziland.
- In-service workshops aimed at equipping teachers with skills to identify
  and support learners with special needs within mainstream schools.
- Establishment of the Special Education Unit in the Ministry of
  Education and creation of posts for human resource to implement,
  manage and monitor inclusive education programs.
• Provision of teaching and learning material for learners with special needs. These include provision of Braille text books and learning devices for all visually impaired learners. Procurement of equipment and software to enable learners with special needs to access the curriculum.
• Provision of bursary fund to cater for children who cannot afford to pay school fees.

1.4 Systems, links and transitions

(a) Main barriers (economic, political, social) to Inclusive Education

There are a number of issues or barriers to getting inclusive education principles accepted and implemented and scaled-up. Underpinning many of these issues is lack of priority being given to inclusive equitable education due to lack of understanding about how inclusive education principles can work in practice. The way the education system is structured is also a barrier to inclusive education. Specifically, the following problems have been observed to be a hindrance in implementing an inclusive education system. The barriers are as follows:
• Seeing individual differences as a problem not as an opportunity for enriching learning.
• Teachers’ attitudes towards learners with special needs and inclusive education
• Attitudes of discrimination against children in education
• Poor quality training of teachers
• Lack of relevant teaching aids and equipment
• Teachers and schools not adequately supported
• High number of drop-out and repeaters
• Inaccessible environments
• Rigid methods and rigid curriculum at all levels of education
• Parents not involved in the education of their children
• High unemployment rate
• High level of poverty. It is estimated that about 67.8 percent of the population in Swaziland lives below the poverty line. Thus unable to send their children to school.
(b) **Most important facilitators**

Inclusion should be viewed as a holistic approach that has to permeate the whole school experience of staff, students, parents and community. This wide view of inclusive education will be facilitated by addressing three major intertwined dimensions of the educational experience namely school cultures, policies and practice.

- Seeing individual differences as an opportunity to enrich learning.
- Promoting a culture of belonging where everyone is treated as valued individuals.
- A strong political will towards achieving education for every child.
- Positive attitudes from teachers would greatly facilitate the implementation of inclusive education in Swaziland. By design, teachers play an important role in the implementation of inclusive education. They serve as change agents in incorporating inclusive school and classroom instructional changes. There is a general agreement that for inclusion to be a success, teachers should be receptive to the principle and demands of inclusion.
- School cultures need to change to promote beliefs and values which create a secure, stimulating and accepting school environment.
- Inclusive school policies should state clearly the aims and strategies to be used in promoting inclusion in the School Development Plan, management, teaching and learning in the school.
- Practice should reflect inclusive school cultures and policies by ensuring that classroom and extra-curricular activities encourage the participation of all learners
- Dissemination of information on inclusive education, disability issues, causes and the effect of disabilities would assist in altering already held attitudes

(c) **Approaches and measures adopted to make the education system inclusive**

The Government of Swaziland is already committed to building an inclusive education system that meets the needs of all learners, whatever their gender, life circumstances, health, disability, stage of development, capacity to learn, level of achievement, financial or any other circumstances. The Government of Swaziland undertakes to:
• Ensure that all barriers to education are removed or eliminated
• Put in place systems to guarantee that all children with special needs are included in high quality education relevant to their specific needs.
• The whole education sector is made more effective through the use of inclusive child-based teaching methods and through more flexible approaches to learning.
• Reduce the cost of education through provision of locally produced teaching and learning materials.
• Guarantee equitable distribution of education resources to all schools. This is to be achieved by a comprehensive use of information acquired through the annual and 16th day school census.
• Revamping the pre and in-service teacher training such that graduates are able to handle children with special needs in mainstream schools.
• In 2006, nine mainstream primary schools were designated as models of inclusion. Four teachers from each of the schools were trained to identify and support learners with special needs. These teachers are now resource teachers for special education in their schools and surrounding schools. In order to strengthen early identification of special needs and intervention in mainstream schools, the Ministry introduced a School Screening Programme in the nine schools in 2007. This programme is being rolled out to more primary schools and the plan is to have all 600 plus primary schools screening children for vision, hearing impairments and learning disabilities. The School Screening Programme is done in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Social Welfare department, specifically, the Eye Clinic department. A system has been put in place to ensure that learners who need further assessment are referred to the hospitals or clinics and further receive the service they need e.g. glasses if they need them.

Even though there are a number of programmes targeting disadvantaged and marginalized groups of children, there is need to scale up the efforts to ensure that all children benefit from the programmes.
(d) Approaches and measures to make the education system more flexible in order to offer additional educational opportunities to those who have dropped out or have not attained an appropriate level of qualifications?

- Sebenta Literacy Programmes aimed at attracting children who dropped out of schools
- Introduction of the Non-formal Upper Primary Education (NUPE) aimed at getting learners back into the formal school system
- Braille Literacy Programme introduced by the Association for the Visually Impaired

1.5 Learners and teachers

(a) New approaches of teaching and learning implemented to increase educational opportunities for all improve student learning outcomes and reduce disparities

- Skills-based approaches as advocated by IGCSE and other educational trends are better geared to contribute towards socio-economic development. The approaches take cognizance of differing abilities.
- Remediation and continuous assessment are implemented at primary and secondary levels. Teachers are continuously sensitized on strategies they could use to support learners who are not performing according to their potential. Child-centred approaches are also being emphasized at all levels.

(b) In what ways is the curriculum being designed and organized to respond to the diversity of learners

- The curriculum has been diversified to include more practical or skills-based subjects. For instance, the secondary school for deaf learners will offer subjects such as Motor Mechanics, Tapestry and Hair dressing. There is also more emphasis on skills-based curriculum especially for children with special needs. The curriculum now includes Skills for Daily Living and Skills for Life.

(c) Number of instructional hours per year dedicated to learning reading in the early primary grades? For how many years?
The first three years of school, that is Grade 1 to 3 concentrate on teaching children reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Generally one hour to one and a half hours is dedicated to teaching the four skills per day.

(d) **How can teachers be trained and better equipped to meet the learners’ diverse expectations and needs?**

- Strategies to teach huge classes i.e. classes with high pupil ratio and to manage the demands placed on them and to cope with changes they are told are coming.
- The teacher training curriculum needs to be reviewed to include topics on inclusive education, what it means, its implications and how it can be promoted in society, school and classroom level.
- There should be a move from theory to hands on training which is the most effective form of training because it exposes trainees to practical situations to enable them to experiment with theories learnt.
- Classroom observation is an important tool and therefore should be an integral part of teacher training.
- School-based research skills and reflective practice should be incorporated into the pre-service and in-service teacher training curriculum.
- Incorporate the idea of team teaching, teachers watching or observing other teachers especially the experienced teachers teach.

(e) **How can the formal and non-formal learning environments be more effectively organized in order to ensure the inclusion of all learners?**

- Recruiting qualified teaching personnel
- Constructing user-friendly structures
- Reserving spaces (certain percentage) for children with disabilities
References:

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