The Lived Experiences of a Mainstream Primary Teacher in an inclusive classroom in Hong Kong

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Abstract

Research related to the development of inclusive education repeatedly and persistently calls for more appropriate teacher training. However, in some cases even when training is provided, teachers who are struggling with inclusion, may still feel inadequate. What struggles and problems do inclusive teachers face in the classroom? What kind of lived experiences are they having? How do teachers in different national contexts learn 'inclusiveness' as it applies to their own unique education and school systems? In this study, a narrative approach is used to narrate a teacher's inclusive experiences in a primary school in Hong Kong. The narrative is re-storied and retold by a school support agent who works closely with the teacher. Through lesson observation, interviews and reflection journal, seven permeating themes have been identified in the narrative. They include (i) catching in emotional struggle, balancing the needs of different groups of students; (ii) influence of life stories; (iii) language of imagery and metaphor; (iv) understanding students with special educational needs (SEN) as persons; (v) difficulties caused by poor learning attitudes, not purely ability problem; (vi) more than inclusive practice, creating 'feel good' experiences; (vii) students need teachers to help them set goals. These themes, though presented as separate items, are connected and overlapping. Together they weave the story of inclusion, the story inundated and infused with people, things, events and happenings. This narrative gives meanings to the inclusive experiences in a particular social, cultural, political and personal context.

Another important finding is that: SEN students, beyond the label, are no different from non-SE students. They have their strengths as well as difficulties, their stories are just like other children's stories in the classrooms which are full of complexities and uniquenesses. The study has significant implications for inclusive classroom practice in Hong Kong and indeed, other countries. In particular, the study demonstrates the value of teachers' personal knowledge in relation to inclusion and suggests making it public in the form of teacher learning communities. In addition, instead of focusing exclusively on SEN students, inclusive studies may consider giving narratives of both SEN and non-SEN students, an arc of inclusion that arguably has hitherto been significantly overlooked. Lastly, the dual role of the author, as a researcher and a support agent who works alongside with teachers in different institutional settings, may add significant value and richness to this 'co-constructed' piece of work.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Caroline Walker-Gleaves, who taught me with her head and heart. This work would not have been possible without her intellectual input. She gave me clear guidance and constructive feedback. She is a caring teacher who connected with me affectively. She raised many thought-provoking questions which I hope I have managed to answer several of them here.

This work is about a teacher's lived story. I am grateful to my participating teacher who agreed to tell her story for this study. It is also my story. It comes with the hope of being remembered and the fear of being silent. This piece of work was written at the time when my outside world was tarnished by political uprising and coronavirus pandemic. Feeling devastated and helpless, my study became my safe haven.

Lastly, none of this could have happened without the support of my family. I thank my husband, Simon who kept pushing me to stay focused and setting deadline for the completion of my doctoral program. I am also grateful to my brothers and sisters who worked together to help Mum recover from stroke speedily.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore and examine the lived experiences of a mainstream primary teacher learning to teach children with learning difficulties or additional needs in an inclusive classroom in Hong Kong. Currently the Hong Kong government has advocated a whole school approach to inclusion (Education Bureau, 2014; 2018). Teachers are expected to provide different levels of assistance to students with varying levels of difficulty (physical, emotional, behavioural and intellectual) in the same classroom (Peters & Forlin, 2011). A growing number of teachers have received in-service training related to inclusive practices. In 2018, the HK government reported that 74% out of 844 inclusive schools achieved the target of having at least 15-25% of teachers trained in supporting students with special educational needs (SEN) (HKSAR Government, 2018). In spite of that, a majority of Hong Kong teachers still feel that they are unprepared for inclusion; they lack sufficient resources, knowledge and skill to teach this special group of students (Cheung & Hui, 2007; Choi, 2015; Stella, Forlin, & Lan, 2007; Forlin, 2010; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008; Commission, 2012; Wong & Chik, 2016, Zhu, Jie, Li, Hui, & Hsieh, 2019).

Research shows that teaching is a highly demanding and complex task (Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, Hammerness & Duffy, 2005). Learning to teach inclusively in a classroom is an added dimension of practice that requires teachers to be cognizant of the dynamics of how pupil ability

overlaps with teacher practice and pedagogic principles (National Research Council, Donovan & Bransford, 2005). As such, learning to teach in an inclusive classroom is more than the acquisition of knowledge and skills, it involves understanding the needs of students with a diverse background and range of abilities, appraisal of the situation and application of multiple kinds of knowledge and skills in a challenging setting. The study aims to capture and understand these experiences from a teacher's perspective. It reveals how an ordinary classroom teacher views her learning and roles in her new identity as an inclusive teacher and how she views her students with and without special educational needs (SEN and non-SEN students). Her experience was analyzed within a narrative framework.

1.1 Background of the Study

In Hong Kong, an inclusive education policy has been implemented since 2004 (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2003). This measure could be interpreted as an extension of the long-existed integration policy. Under the old policy (i.e. integration), students with special educational needs (SEN) were placed in the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP) in regular schools. They were separated from the regular class during English, Chinese and Mathematics lessons but joined the class for the rest of the school day. The new policy (i.e. inclusion) proposes integrating SEN into regular class at all time and extending the SEN categories to include those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, 'mild grade' intellectual disability, sensory

impairment, physical disability and children with autism spectrum disorder with average intelligence (Peters & Forlin, 2011; Poon-McBrayer, 2014).

The Hong Kong government has long been criticized for its half-hearted attempt to implement integration (Humphreys, 2009; Potts, 1998; Pun Wong, Pearson, & Kuen Lo, 2004). Surprisingly, this has been openly admitted by the government itself: in the official report of the sub-committee on special education (Board of Education, 1996), the review committee reported that "Integration of students with special educational needs into the mainstream of schooling remains an aspiration rather than a reality" (p. 28). This strong statement pointed out plainly that integration appeared only in official documents but not in the classroom; and even if integration did occur, it was superficial rather than deep. Integration, its concepts, policies, practice and terminologies have been criticized to be transplanted directly from the United Kingdom, with no adaptation to suit the local context and thorough understanding of its philosophy and assumptions (Crawford, Heung, Yip, Yuen, & Yim, 1999). Arguably, it has been incongruent with other deep-rooted cultural context such as highly competitive and selective education system, the crowded and rigid central curriculum and the widely practiced teacher-centered pedagogy (Wong, 2002; Wong, Pearson, & Lo, 2004).

1.1.1 From integration to inclusion

Hong Kong used to be a British colony before 1997. Under the influence of

the British rule, Hong Kong has been a signatory to the Salamanca Statement since 1994 but it was only in 2003 that this policy was finally enacted in law in Hong Kong. The ordinance stipulates that parents of students with special needs have the right to choose neighbourhood schools; and schools, disregarding the severity of the children's disabilities, are obligated to accept them unconditionally. The enactment upholds the underlying principle of inclusion, which maintains that all students, no matter they are disabled or not, belong to the general classroom and they should not be segregated unless schools prove that they are not able to accommodate their needs by any possible and reasonable means.

In the process of moving from integration to inclusion, the government had the courage to admit its failure of implementing the prior policy of integration; however, it arguably lacked the capabilities to promote to the general public the underlying humanistic concept of inclusion. More importantly, it failed to generate a social discourse that involved stakeholders such as parents, school boards, principals, teachers, educational psychologists, social workers and the public to deliberate, explain and clarify the meanings and assumptions of inclusive education. The failure to do so has been openly criticized by the chairman (Lo, 2007) of the Subcommittee on Special Education, an official advisory body of the Hong Kong Government:

> the work of pursuing inclusive education requires first and foremost that everyone have an open attitude, tolerant perceptions, the courage

> to try things out, and the spirit of seeking the truth. Inclusive education does require ample staffing, efforts, and finances, but these are merely necessary elements required for its implementation. ***Inclusive education calls for brainstorming changes in educational thinking and elevating the art of educating people to higher levels.*** (my emphasis 2007, p. 61)

Financial means have been used to lure schools to accept this clearly structurally and pedagogically progressive move. Roughly about 60% of the school population in Hong Kong has joined the inclusive programmes (Sin, 2010). The government has offered additional Learning Support Grant to these schools. The exact amount has been determined by the number of students with SEN admitted per school (Education Bureau, 2003). A whole school approach has been advocated to promote inclusion and expected all personnel in schools to be responsible for catering for the needs of students with SEN (Education Bureau, 2014).

Since inclusion is a new educational policy, presumably most of the teachers should have no previous experience handling SEN students. However, in reality this is not the case. Before the formal implementation of inclusion, 'informal integration' had already happened. Some parents in Hong Kong refuse to accept their children's disabilities, especially when the disabilities are mild, and they do not want their children to be labelled (Commission, 2012; Wong & Chik, 2015). And, by not reporting their children's disabilities to schools or not having their cases assessed, it is easy for their children to

be admitted into mainstream schools. These SEN children may end up in the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programmes (IRTP) or in regular class. As mentioned earlier, IRTPs are segregated classes, teaching mainly Chinese, English and Mathematics, and are designed particularly for students who perform academically below normal standards. Technically, these students are regarded as low-achievers, and they are not formally categorized as SEN students at all. In Pearson, Lo, Chui, and Wong (2003)'s study, teachers are reported to be fully aware of this kind of 'informal integration', and their attitudes to these SEN students are mixed:

> On the one hand, there is a general normative acceptance that integration realises the rhetoric of equal opportunities and provides a chance for students to interact with a variety of peers. On the other hand, teachers are deeply concerned about being over-burdened. The statistical pattern, although tentative, suggests that the attitudes of teachers may not be static or solely based on ideology. They involve a calculation of the availability of resources and the possible consequences of doing other students an injustice. (Pearson et al., 2003, p. 501)

With the formal launching of the inclusive policy, SEN students become legitimated as 'ordinary' and mainstream individuals in the classroom. Teachers are expected to provide quality teaching to engage them in the learning process. This may involve adapting curriculum content, modifying instructional materials, employing differentiated teaching strategies and designing special learning activities for SEN students. To achieve this, the

government has put in place a mandatory teacher professional development framework to support the inclusive policy. The final target is to have at least 15% to 25% of teachers to receive 30-hour basic training in inclusive education and at least 6-9 teachers 90-hour advanced training in thematic course related to specific needs (Education Bureau, 2015).

To understand the impact of these training programmes on teachers, academics in related teacher training institutions have conducted a few studies on teachers' attitude changes to SEN students. They have been conducted in various countries such as Greek (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007), Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore (Sharma, Forlin & Loreman, 2008), Scotland (Boyle, Topping, & Jindal-Snape, 2013) and Turkey (Sucuoğlu, Bakkaloğlu, Akalin, Demir, & İşcen-Karasu, 2015). Teachers' attitudes to inclusion are believed to be important as there has been a strong correlation between positive teacher attitudes and perceived success of inclusive education in the classroom (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). In Forlin & Chambers' study (2011) conducted in Australia, the authors found that training courses could help address pre-service teachers' concerns about lack of knowledge and skills, increase their confidence in becoming inclusive teachers; and improve their knowledge of local legislation and polices. However, there were no positive attitude changes before and after the training. In another study done in Hong Kong (Forlin, Loreman, & Sharma, 2014) similar results have been found among experienced teachers who received basic and

advanced training on inclusive education. The changes in attitudes have been reported to be only slightly positive. Not surprisingly, these findings echo that in De Boer, Pijl & Minnaert's (2011) literature review of 26 other studies that concern regular primary school teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. The review concluded that most teachers hold neutral or negative attitudes towards students with special education needs. Likewise, studies in Hong Kong have showed that teachers' attitudes have been far from positive towards inclusion (Pearson et al., 2003; Wong & Chik, 2015; Yan & Sin, 2014). And even when positive attitudes are shown, the concession is they do not want students with special needs in their classrooms (Wong & Chik, 2015).

Generally speaking, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are not particularly positive and could not be counted as a stable factor for the implementation of inclusion. In the conclusions of the above-mentioned studies, a number of suggestions have been made. These include improving existing inclusion training (Sucuoğlu, Bakkaloğlu, Akalin, Demir, & İşcen-Karasu, 2015), making changes at the holistic level to support inclusion (Forlin, Loreman, & Sharma, 2014), involving teachers in the implementation of the inclusion policy (Boyle, Topping, & Jindal-Snape, 2013), mandating more resources in terms of training programmes and support staff (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007). However, as an on-site school support agent who has worked closely with teachers (my role will be explained further in Chapter 4: Researcher's Role as a Researcher and a Support Agent), I could identify co-workers in the primary

setting who have positive attitudes towards inclusion. However, as a researcher, I am aware of a research gap where this group of Hong Kong teachers' experiences of implementing inclusion at the classroom level are untold. Their stories are a useful addition to enrich understanding of, after bypassing the attitudinal hurdles, what actually happens when practicing inclusion in the frontline.

To further understand the implementation of inclusion at the classroom level, the government commissioned some large-scale research. In this study on the effectiveness of inclusive strategies (Commission, 2012), the survey results showed that "there is a large discrepancy in the perception toward the sufficiency and appropriateness of support given by schools to SEN students" (p. vi). Most teachers believe that they have used many strategies and measures to help SEN students, but "20% or more of the parents of SEN students are dissatisfied with teaching, adaptation of curriculum and assessment"(p. vi).

Clearly, Hong Kong still has a long way to go on the path to inclusion. Indeed, the progress to inclusive education has been described as slow and the goal as impossible (Yan & Sin, 2015). The local educational culture has been identified as an important barrier to such progress. The education system in Hong Kong has been described as exam-oriented and competitive (Education Commission, 2000; Pearson et al., 2003). The conventional practices of using

exams to drive learning and to stream students into different ability groups are likely to bring tough challenges and needless frustration to many SEN students (Forlin, 2007; Heung, 2003). In the study commissioned by the Hong Kong Government on understanding various stakeholders' views on inclusion (Commission, 2012), figures show that parents of regular students, when compared with teachers and principals in the community, are less accepting to SEN students. Parents express "disagreement with the extra support given to SEN students, considering it as unfairness. They worry that SEN students disturb classroom orders and slow down teaching progress" (2012 p. vi). Yan and Sin (2014) believe that owing to the Asian culture that values collectivism over individualism, Hong Kong teachers are more likely than their Western counterparts to be affected by contextual factors such as school heads, middle managers and parents, than personal factors such as attitudes and beliefs. They believe that the far from supportive attitudes of parents would make Hong Kong teachers less likely to "internalize it (inclusive education) and regard it as an obligation to the society as well as their professionalism" (2014, p. 82).

1.1.2 Theoretical background

Clandinin & Connelly (1996) believe that the best way to understand teachers' knowledge is through narrative. In the qualitative approach to research, narrative has become a widely accepted research approach (Olson, 1997). Even though positivistic oriented supporters in the research paradigm

criticize narratives as “just stories” which lack objectivity and rigour, the capacity of narrative to capture and present experiences in a holistic and synthetic way makes it distinctive in the research field (Jalongo, Isenberg, & Gerbracht, 1995) and pertinent to this study.

According to Polkinghorne (1995), there are two types of narrative: analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. Analysis of narratives aims at, through analyzing stories or narratives, producing paradigmatic typologies or categories; in other words, specific stories are analyzed to produce general propositions or knowledge. Narrative analysis aims at, through analyzing all kinds of data, producing stories. The storied narrative is not a collection of incidents in a time sequence, it is a story with a plot - a beginning, middle and end. This study is a narrative analysis with the intention of telling an individual teacher’s story of implementing inclusive practices at the classroom level.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Teacher learning is situated and contextualized. It is a complex activity in which individual teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, conceptions and prior experience interact with the contexts. Examining this issue from a socio-cultural perspective is particularly important as inclusive education is grounded on the principle of equality and equity, which is value laden and may have different interpretations in various contexts. A narrative approach

has been traditionally used to capture this complicated process. According to Moen (2006), there are three basic premises in this epistemological perspective. Firstly, people use stories to tell their everyday experiences. Storytelling is a natural way to organize and to understand the behaviour of oneself and the others. Secondly, when a storyteller recounts the experience, it is not only the story that he/she is telling; his/ her values, beliefs, perceptions and past experience are woven into the story, together with its cultural, historical and institutional settings; and in the (re)telling process, both the teller and the hearer are being transformed. Lastly, a narrative research encompasses a multitude of voices. It includes not only the voice(s) of research participants, but also voices of the researcher(s). In this narrative, my role is more than a researcher, but a support agent who helps teachers develop the English school-based curriculum. My background, values, beliefs, experiences and relationship have all become part of the plot I am going to weave.

1.3 The Purpose Statement

John Nisbet (1974) in his address to the inaugural meeting of the British Educational Research Association, talked about the "growth, trend and structure" of educational research and concluded his speech with the following remarks:

> Research of this kind aims to increase the problem-solving capacity of the educational system, rather than to provide final

> answers to questions or objective evidence to settle controversies. On this view, educational research is a mode of thinking rather than a short cut to answers. In the long run, the real influence of educational research is through its effect on the attitudes of those who teach. (p. 13)

Above all, Nisbet believed that "to sensitise" making people aware of problems is more important than solving them. Educational research can provide answers to some humble questions (depending on how one frames it); however, it is not unusual to find that, in the research process, more problems or doubts are raised than answers, and with more uncertainties added than reduced (Nisbet, 2005). Unfortunately, these views are shared more by researchers, but not all teachers. Some teachers believe that educational research must give them 'quick fix' answers. This is particularly obvious in the issue of inclusion. Teachers feel that "research literature does not fully address their professional apprehension about how to enact a policy of inclusion in their classrooms" (Florian, 2015, p. 6). Similar sentiments have been expressed in a number of inclusive studies in Hong Kong (Commission, 2012; Cheung & Hui, 2007; Choi, 2015; Stella, Forlin, & Lan, 2007; Forlin, 2010; Sharma, Loreman & Forlin, 2012; Sharma , Forlin, & Loreman, 2008; Wong & Chik, 2016; Zhu, Jie, Li, Hui, & Hsieh, 2019).

The intention of this research is to understand the complexities of teaching in an inclusive setting. It aims at investigating this from the perspective of a

general classroom teacher. It is the personal learning experiences of a general classroom teacher in an inclusive setting. By opening up herself and the classroom door, the teacher is sharing with the audience her feelings, thoughts and interactions with her students. It is going to be her story. It is a narrative analysis with the intended purpose of giving the voices and authority back to her. Her story challenges the old assumptions, raises concerns or even alarms, and may cause discomfort and unease. It has lived up to the primary purpose of an educational research – to sensitise, as advocated by Nisbet (1974, 2005). Hence the value of this study is not to produce generalizable knowledge or a solution for the problem; rather, it is to reveal the complexity of the teaching and learning situation and to enable readers, be they teachers, teacher educators and policy makers, to reflect on familiar thoughts or actions, reinterpret familiar everyday experiences, reexamine hidden assumptions and unravel implicit personal knowledge (Jalongo et al., 1995). Above all, it hopes to achieve the aim of bringing illumination for those who are in similar situations.

Teachers' reflection that is usually event-based can be very effectively incorporated into this narrative framework. Schön (1983, 1987) defines two types of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action occurs when the teacher reflects on the behavior as it happens and, based on that, adjust actions subsequently. Reflection-on-action occurs after the end of the incident, allowing the teacher to review, describe, analyze,

and evaluate the behavior in order to gain insights for future similar actions. Collaborative inquiry, as suggested by Schön (1987), is an effective means to promote reflection-on-action. In this study, my relationship with the target participant is a collaborative one.

As an on-site support agent, I visit schools regularly and work collaboratively with teachers to develop the school-based curriculum. Teachers and I are used to the working cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation at the classroom level. In this study, I invited a teacher practitioner who works in an inclusive school to be my participant. This study is to examine the process an experienced classroom teacher went through when she became a novice teacher in terms of inclusive practices. This research is to document the challenges, learning and struggles she encountered during the enactment of inclusive pedagogies.

1.4 Research Questions

The aim of this study is to explore and examine a mainstream primary teacher's lived learning experiences in an inclusive classroom in Hong Kong. There are two associated objectives:

- To explore how personal, sociocultural, curriculum and student factors affect an individual's perception in relation to the enactment of inclusive practices

- To understand how those conflicting philosophies at the systemic level manifest themselves at the classroom level

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- What are the learning experiences of a mainstream primary teacher within an inclusive classroom?
- How does the teacher perceive these learning experiences?
- What factors affect these experiences? What implications do these factors have on the inclusive policy in Hong Kong?

1.5 Significance of This Thesis

Since the government promoted inclusive policy with legislation, guidelines, funding and training, a number of inclusive-related studies have been commissioned to study its impact. The overall picture could not be described as satisfactory. Forlin, Loreman, and Sharma (2014) have done a study on teachers' attitudes, concerns, and perceptions of teaching efficacy for inclusion before and after the completion of the professional inclusive training programmes. The change was found to be small but positive. In another study done by (Commission, 2012), teachers' attitudes are found to be far from positive. About 47% of the teachers indicated in the questionnaire survey that schools should not include students with a severe disability in the mainstream class even if necessary support is given. It is highly likely that this small impact resulted from training could be gradually

worn off by unfavourable systemic and school factors in the real-life context.

The use of naturalistic and in-depth study can provide a holistic understanding of what teachers experienced when they enact inclusive practice in Hong Kong. To a certain extent, this study could be taken as a response to the recommendations given by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) in their review of the literature related to teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, which suggest adopting a socio-cultural perspective in the future research so as to provide a rich "understanding of the complex and interrelated processes of personal experiences, attitudes and practices" (p. 144).

This study is more than a teacher's story. It is the narrative of a primary teacher and a support agent. In narrative inquiry, the value of teachers as a reflective practitioner with an emic perspective has been widely recognized. Researchers' roles are important too, particularly when the researchers are school support agents as well. Studies have reported on the confusion and role conflicts of support agents when adopting both the 'emic' (insider) and 'etic' (outsider) perspective. However, this defect does not undermine the values support agents added to research. My 20-year experience of working with a range of teachers under diverse settings has provided me with a rich interpretative lens. In a quantitative study, I will have to be an impartial spectator and hide behind the research. In this study, I become part of the research. My identity, background and intentions are revealed and

scrutinized by the public. As such, this study has become a text which records the existence of such profession who has strong relevancy to the education community in Hong Kong.

This story starts with a focus on inclusion. When the story unfolds, it becomes more than an inclusive story. It becomes a story about both SEN and non-SEN students. Other stories on inclusion just focus on SEN students, excluding non-SEN students because they are not the prime interest in the context. My teacher participant, Mavis concerned all her students in the classroom. When Mavis told me her interactions with the students in the interviews, no clear distinction was made between these two groups. When I walked into the classroom and observed Mavis' lessons, I did not ask for the 'labels'. I just cared if everyone was engaged in the learning process. Students are interrelated, interconnected and interdependent beings in the classroom, this story will be incomplete if a selective view is chosen.

1.6 Structure of This Thesis

This study is presented in a linear fashion with Chapter 1 as the introduction to the thesis, with an overview of the local situations, this study's theoretical background, the research questions and the significance of the research phenomenon. Chapter 2 concerns with the value of teachers' practical knowledge and a literature review of narrative studies in inclusive education. Chapter 3 explains the methodology and the methods of collecting the data,

selection and background of the participant, the ethical issues involved and the processes of maintaining quality and rigour in this study. Chapter 4 examines my role as a support agent and a researcher. Chapter 5 presents the themes that emerge in the 'told' story. In Chapter 6, my story as a researcher and a support agent is told and connected with the told story. Chapter 7 provides a detailed recount of two episodes – in the co-planning meeting and inside the classroom. In Chapter 8, the implications of the findings are discussed. Chapter 9 is about the limitations, directions for future research and implications of the study.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Chapter 1 served as an overview of the narrative inquiry research study. Chapter 2 will provide an in-depth review of previous theories and literature related to teachers' lived experiences in an inclusive setting. It is grounded on the premise that teachers' enactment, both inside and outside the classroom, is a living embodiment of knowledge. Teacher knowledge is viewed as the interactions of thoughts and feelings, the outcome of cognitive reasoning and affective functioning of individuals. The epistemological value of such knowledge in relation to teacher learning will be addressed.

In addition, this chapter will present a summary and critique of the research findings that have been reviewed. First, a broad review of research pertaining to teachers' experiences in inclusion will be provided. This includes topics about teachers' attitudes or perception to inclusion, variables that affect teachers' self-efficacy, beliefs, views and perspectives in relation to inclusion, evaluation of various strategies such as professional development programmes and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework in promoting positive inclusive experiences among teachers. Then, a more detailed review on qualitative studies that use a narrative inquiry approach to study teachers' experiences in inclusion will be provided.

A comprehensive literature search of EBSCOhost, ERIC and ProQuest, JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest Social Science Premium Collection, and

the digital collection of Newcastle University and Durham University theses was conducted. In addition, peer-reviewed journals, books and online articles were assessed during the literature review. Keywords used in the search strategy included inclusion, inclusion in the classroom, inclusive teaching, teacher experiences, general education teachers, teachers' narratives, narration, narrative inquiry.

2.1 Theoretical Orientation for the Study

Traditionally, teacher learning has been shaped by the cognitive view of a body of knowledge, skill and practice. In this perspective, learning involves learners acquiring knowledge and skills in a context free setting and applying it in other situations. Shulman's view of teacher knowledge (1987) provides a good glimpse of this influence. His conception of teacher knowledge, grounded on the positivistic view, is assumed to be identifiable and definable, it is an entity which can be dissected and measured. Shulman theorizes that there are eight domains in teacher knowledge; namely content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and finally, knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical ground. Among all, Shulman believes that the importance of pedagogical content knowledge has long been downplayed in teacher education programmes, and by strengthening this domain, it can help improve teachers' overall

performance. Whilst there have been other bodies of teaching knowledge developed since Shulman's, including for example those oriented toward a more disciplinary perspective or experiential turn, such as Turner- Bisset's 'Knowledge Bases of the Expert Teacher' (1999), Shulman's theory remains a dominant theoretical fixed point in the field. He has certainly enriched our understanding towards teacher knowledge, and helped identify pedagogical content knowledge as a significant attribute of an effective teacher. However, one drawback of the cognitive view is that it provides a simplistic understanding of teacher learning and does not account for the interconnectedness of these bodies of knowledge within individual teachers and its enactment in various contexts. Another drawback is that it fails to address the problem of transfer. This has pointed out to be particularly important when teachers are facing the "challenges of "teaching effectively in an imperfect world" (Hamnerness, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 365) in which the knowledge, skills and understandings acquired in one setting cannot be easily transferred to other settings without facilitation and engagement.

Situated learning theories have provided an alternative view to understand the complexity of teacher learning. Unlike the cognitive theories, learning in these senses is regarded as highly contextual and interactive. Olsen (2015) believes that learning to teach is "not a direct, cognitive process of internalizing knowledge but a circular, holistic process of negotiating among

often competing knowledge sources and contexts" (2015, p. 6). Learning engages not just the new knowledge, but other elements such as prior knowledge, past and current experience, culture, personal beliefs, views, perspectives and affect. It is perceived as an on-going personal activity rather than a one-off event. The learning process is iterative and interpretative. Knowledge is assumed to be fluid and susceptible to change. It is highly individual as well. Teachers, instead of reproducing knowledge in the same way as it has been acquired, are assumed to have constructed their own knowledge. This constructive view of teacher learning falls into the broad socio-cultural perspective and coincides with the contemporary view on student learning as meaning-making, relational and highly situated.

Lave and Wenger (1991) stress the importance of the situational in the learning process. Here it means more than the physical setting, but the social and cultural elements within the context. That can manifest in beliefs, values, written code of practices; norms and convention which allows certain things to do, to be questioned, criticized, discussed or shared; or language used in meeting and daily conversation. It is then built up and acquired through discourse, actions, routines, events and objects. In the school context, knowledge becomes something that distributed widely across teachers, students and both tangible and intangible artefacts. These include school mission, conventional practices, expectations towards teachers, cultural assumptions regarding learning, teachers' roles and identities, departmental

standards and practices, school ceremonies and events, distribution of power, all happenings inside and outside classroom.

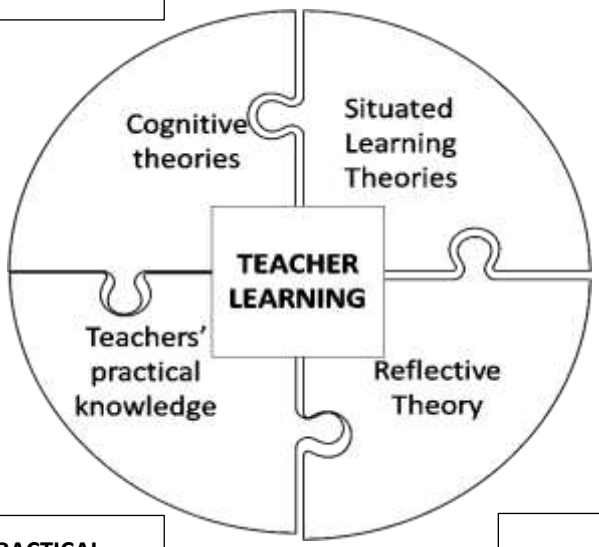
Schön (1983, 1987) proposes the reflection-in-action theory to suggest the reflective power of professional learning. Schön believes that professionals, when focusing on problematic situations or events, use more than their knowledge-of-practice, that is codified knowledge to make their decision. They utilize a wealth of tacit knowledge to discern and identify salient features of the practice situation; and engage in the iterative process of framing the problem. Professionals acquire the knowledge-in-practice by engaging in continuous reflective dialogue within themselves and with others (reflection-in-practice).

COGNITIVE THEORIES

There are 8 domains in Shulman's view of teacher knowledge (1987): (1) content knowledge, (2) general pedagogical knowledge, (3) curriculum knowledge, (4) pedagogical content knowledge, (5) knowledge of learners and their characteristics, (6) knowledge of educational contexts, (7) knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values, and (8) their philosophical and historical ground.

SITUATED LEARNING

Lave and Wenger (1991) stress on the importance of social and cultural environment in teacher learning. Teachers are actively constructing and co-constructing their identities throughout the learning process.



TEACHERS' PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

Clandinin and Connelly (1995) believe that teachers' practical knowledge is highly personal as it includes biographical details, personal feelings, morality and esthetic value.

REFLECTIVE THEORY

Schon's reflection-in-action theory and reflection-on-action theory suggest the power of reflection in teacher learning.

Figure 1. A graphic representation of teacher learning.

2.1.1 Teacher learning and teacher identity

Situated learning theories stress that teachers construct their knowledge actively in the work process. In addition, contexts, particularly "working practices and their associated ways of thinking which define their school circumstances" (Kelly, 2006, p. 507), play an important role in shaping teachers' practices, thoughts and beliefs. Lastly, identities are formed in the teacher learning process. Learning is more than a process that allows one to progress from a novice to an expert, from peripheral observation to full participation. A teacher's expert status is subject to negotiation and interactions among teachers and between an individual and the situation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It is indeed a transformation process that change a person's perceptions and beliefs.

Teachers' own understanding and interpretation of their roles, their responses to other people's expectations, their decisions, beliefs and ways of talking are manifestation of identities. Teachers are actively constructing and re-constructing their identities throughout the learning process. Kelly (2006) points out that this process "involves the development of situated teacher identities" (p. 515) - a "reciprocally and interpretatively constructed process" (p. 511). This suggests that identity formation is a sense-making process, which is likely to influenced by surrounding people's responses and recognition. Kelly (2006) believes that teacher identities are fluid and malleable. They are subject to negotiation, challenges and hardship. Hence,

it is possible that teachers accept the roles imposed on them by the authorities or the general public and turn them into part of their identities; however, with the change of school culture or practice, teachers change their way of looking at things or what they regard as important and make changes to their identities.

In addition, identity formation is believed to be the by-product of teacher learning. Kelly (2006) argues that the two constructs do not necessarily follow the same pace of development. Classroom practice can help teachers promote reflection in practice, thus leading to professional development; however, this does not guarantee the formation of expert identity or likewise. Teachers need to engage in other social and professional activities outside the classroom to help build or strengthen their identities. Since social situations or stakeholders at school may favour certain teacher identities over the others, Kelly (2006) conceives that teachers are likely to be influenced by that and may prioritize their learning, jobs and considerations accordingly. Therefore, dilemmas or conflicts will occur if an individual's preferred identity is not in accord with the identity promoted by the school authority. Likewise, Clandinin Downey & Huber (2009), in their study on teachers' attrition, point out that some teachers chose to leave the profession when their personal knowledge landscapes, which includes personal principles, mental images, past experiences, personal beliefs and perceptions were in conflict with the professional knowledge landscape.

More detailed discussion can be found in this chapter Section 2.1.3: *Teachers' personal practical knowledge* and Chapter 8 Section 8.7: Teachers' Personal Practical Knowledge.

2.1.2 Teachers' practical knowledge

One key underpinning assumption behind situated learning theories is the epistemological value of teachers' workplace knowledge. The hegemony of traditional research has long undermined the status of practical knowledge in the teaching profession. Knowledge produced by conventional scientific methods of hypothesis testing is standard, formal and law-like. Teachers' practical knowledge is recognized to be different from theoretical knowledge, and the connection between theory and practice is understood to be complex and highly contextual (Shulman, 1987). Shulman (1987), despite his cognitive stance to the development of pedagogical content knowledge, did recognize the importance of teachers' "wisdom of practice". Fenstermacher (1994) described teacher knowledge as "practical, personal, situated, local, relational and tacit" (1994, p. 6).

Clandinin and Connelly (1987) have reviewed teachers' working knowledge and their work has become a touchstone for understanding the significance of teachers' developing beliefs and practices. They found that, instead of using the same terminology, researchers use different terms to frame their studies. These key terms include teaching criteria, principles of practice,

personal constructs, construct, beliefs and principles, teachers' understanding, perspective, teachers' conceptions and personal knowledge. Nonetheless, Clandinin and Connelly believe that there are more commonalities among these inquiries than differences. Teacher's cognition, its content, language and structure are the shared interest of these studies; the main differences are the research methods and data interpretations. Another observation is that most research focuses on teachers' thoughts in isolation from action, or assuming its relationship with action to be simple and linear. The reverse, such as actions direct thoughts or actions stimulate thoughts as suggested by Schön's (1987) reflection-in-practice theory, is not a consideration in these studies. Lastly, Clandinin and Connelly argue that "knowing something involves aesthetic, moral and emotional states of mind" (1987, p. 499), however, teachers' feelings and their biographical history are largely disregarded in these studies.

Fenstermacher (1994) regards Connelly, Clandinin, Freema Elbaz and Donald Schön as researchers who share the same theoretical understanding of teachers' practical knowledge - "a conception of knowledge arising out of action or experience that is itself grounded in this same action or experience" (1994, p. 13-14). Elbaz (1991) has used the term 'practical knowledge' to refer to the body of active knowledge her subject Sarah used to guide the work, set priorities, make decisions and explain action. This knowledge is overlapping in nature and is strongly associated with contexts (situational

orientation), views towards theories (theoretical orientation), personal values attached to teaching (personal orientation), understanding of students' needs (social orientation) and work experience (experiential orientation). In addition, Elbaz examined the knowledge structure and found it expressed in the form of "rule of practice, practical principle and image" (1981, p. 61). The practical rule is highly specific and situational whereas the practical principle is more general, inclusive and reflective. Imageries are found to be widely used when talking about curriculum, subject matter, instruction, milieu and self. Elbaz believes they are product of teacher's feelings, values, needs and beliefs. They "serve to guide the teacher's thinking and to organize knowledge in the relevant area. The image is generally imbued with a judgement of value and constitutes a guide to the intuitive realization of the teacher's purposes" (1981, p. 61).

Elbaz (1991), with reference to Connelly and Clandinin, further elaborates that "This is not merely a claim about the aesthetic or emotional sense of fit of the notion of story with our intuitive understanding of teaching, but an epistemological claim that teachers' knowledge in its own terms is ordered by story and can best be understood in this way" (1991, p. 3). Since the conventional elements of a story include characters, time, place, problem and solution; to scrutinize teachers' practical knowledge, one cannot do so in isolation of the physical setting, people, values and culture. Moreover, Elbaz stresses the "inseparability of thought and action because it is

simultaneously the making public of someone's thinking and also a performance in the real world"(1991, p. 16). Thought and action are so interweaved in a teacher's world that the relationship between the two is not linear or sequential. It is holistic and integrated; "it is partly patterned or organized; and it is imbued with personal meaning"(1991, p. 11). Personal thought directs action. It carries the meanings an individual ascribed to actions. Through work and reflection, thought is refined, revised or reinforced and new ideas may be generated as well. The intricate and intriguing relationship between thought and action causes one to ferment or conceive the other; they are therefore inseparable in the context of studying teachers and their stories.

2.1.3 Teachers' personal practical knowledge

Clandinin and Connelly (1995) believe that teachers' practical knowledge is highly personal as it includes biographical detail, personal feelings, morality and aesthetic value. It is a kind of narrative knowledge, composing of teachers' stories in and outside the classroom; and is shaped by the 'professional knowledge context in which teachers live and work' (1996, p. 24). In brief, it is "prototypical, relational among people, personal, contextual, subjective, temporal, historical, and specific"(1995, p. 14).

Teachers' practical knowledge is different from theoretical knowledge (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012). It is a diverse body of knowledge that serves more

than bridging the gap between theory and practice; and deserves its own epistemological status. Clandinin and Connelly conceive that teachers' knowledge is narrative in nature. It embeds in stories about happenings in the classrooms and outside the classrooms. In-the-classroom events are 'secret stories' behind the door experienced by teachers and/or students. Whether teachers choose to tell these secret stories openly at school or not depends very much on the professional knowledge context in which teachers work. Out of the classrooms, teachers tell 'cover stories', they are narratives that are in harmony with the school policies or within the acceptable range of the school administration. Clandinin and Connelly (1996) stress that all these narratives are not to be judged. They are storied form that lives, is told and retold in the professional knowledge context. They are regarded as evidence of teachers' dilemmas between their personal practical knowledge and professional/theoretical knowledge. It is more than functional language, but one inundates with ""image," "personal philosophy," "narrative unity," "rhythm" and "ritual"" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1987, p. 131).

Clandinin and Connelly (1987) believe that narrative approach shares the same epistemological purpose and methods as that of Schön's (1983) notion of technical rationality. Schön argues that the question ""How ought I to act?"" has been tackled differently in the academic field and in the professional practice world. The academic world values positivist epistemology of practice, it is dominated by the rituals of scientific

experiment and theory testing. Schön named this conception of knowledge "technical rationality". The practical world is filled with messy, imperfect and uncertain situations that echo with multiple layers of complex decision making and undefined, frequently intangible outcomes. Professionals are above all, everyday practical problem solvers and decision makers (Schön, 1983). The way they tackle problems is found to be neither linear nor deterministic; rather it is a recursive and trial and error process, with questions to be framed and reframed repeatedly. Practitioners need to select or reselect what they should treat as the relevant factors of the situation, set boundaries and consider possible alternatives to solve the problem. Likewise, teachers' interest and reflection are action-oriented and problem-based. They are composed of specific teaching and learning events, awaiting to be identified, described, understood, explained and solved. Schön (1983) further points out that tacit knowledge plays an important part in the problem solving process. Action can be intuitive and spontaneous. A practitioner may not be able to explain what he/she knows, but wisdom is seen in the action done. Schön refers to that as tacit knowing in action. A practitioner's reflection ability is considered to be an important attribute for self-correction and improvement. It is this reflection-in-action ability that turns a practitioner into a researcher in the real world. His or her work theory is a combination of thought and action, theory and practice.

2.2 Teachers' Experiences in Inclusive Settings

Schools, classrooms in particular, are believed to be the receiving ends of educational polices. Some policies are products of long-term social, historical and economic evolution; and some are findings of research studies. When theoretical knowledge generated from research is put into practice, it is reduced to abstract statements of educational policy. They become research conclusions, stripping of its inquiry contexts and limitations. Clandinin and Connelly's (1996) call these highly prescriptive and out of context policies 'rhetoric of conclusions'. They are not as value neutral as they appear to be. They become directives with strong moral orientation that is difficult, if not impossible, for teachers to resist. Clearly, inclusion is a policy of this kind. Teachers are the last party to be consulted in the inclusive movement; and their doubts or reservation are judged by advocates who claim the moral highland in the social discourse.

Now that inclusive education has been implemented for more than two decades since the 1994 Salamanca Statement (United Nations Educational & Cultural Organization, 1994), the research field has been inundated with various topics related to inclusive education. Teachers, particularly their attitudes and beliefs (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002) have always be highlighted as a key factor in determining the success of inclusive education. In a literature review conducted by De Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert' (2011) on 26 recent studies on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, the findings are found to be far from positive. Most teachers are either neutral or negative

towards inclusive education. Their attitudes are influenced by factors such as teachers' training, personal experience with inclusive education and students' disability type. However, in other places such as Turkey (Sucuoğlu, Bakkaloğlu, Akalin, Demir, & İşcen-Karasu, 2015).and Greek (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007), teachers' attitudes are reported to be positive. The general impression seems to be that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are contextual, which is influenced by the interpretations and implementation of the inclusive policy locally.

Another common research topic concerns the impact of professional development programmes on teachers' capacities in implementing inclusive education. Waitoller and Artiles (2013) examined 42 articles related to various teacher development programmes for inclusive education and found that these programmes have at least three different theoretical definitions regarding inclusion. The first group, which comprises the largest majority, defines inclusive education as related only to ability differences, thus the training focus is to equip teachers with means to remediate learning of low achievers. The second group defines inclusion as overcoming gender and cultural barriers, and teacher own reflection has been used to promote inclusion. The last group defines "inclusive education as a process of overcoming barriers to participation and learning for all students (students with diverse abilities, cultures, gender, and racial/ethnic background)" (2013, p. 324). This perspective allows inclusion to be reviewed and examined at a

school level in a comprehensive manner. These professional development programmes vary a lot in terms of content and mode of delivery, it is difficult, if not impossible, to draw any conclusive remarks about its overall impact.

Another area of research explores the challenges and difficulties teachers faced in an inclusive setting. In Wong & Chik's study (2016), music teachers in Hong Kong primary schools are reported to have negative attitudes towards pupils with SEN. Teachers face problems such as failing to understand their students' musical needs and abilities, classroom management, and lack of pedagogical skill and knowledge to adapt the music curriculum to cater for SEN students. Since none of these interviewed teachers have received any inclusive training, the authors thereby conclude that in-service professional training is a legitimate solution to the problem. Research of this kind has turned researchers into teachers' advocates to articulate their concerns and voice their grievances. The conception seems to be that there are experts or resources out there to solve teachers' problems, and at the very least, the answers to the problems of inclusive education, is certainly someone, but not the teachers themselves.

In another study, Delconte (2000) conducted a case study of five inclusive teachers who were well trained and experienced in inclusive education and came up with the conclusions that there is no one right way to inclusive practice. The findings suggested that teachers learn in the 'doing' process. It

is only through continuous self-reflection and collaboration with other teachers in the inclusive setting can teachers continue to grow and develop. However, the underlying assumption seems to be that learning in relation to inclusion is merely a cognitive matter, affective and biographical factors need not to be addressed in the whole process.

In the studies conducted by Bemiller (2019) and Lowrey, Hollingshead, Howery, and Bishop (2017), researchers claimed that they wanted to hear teachers' voices, however, their intention has been found to be incoherent with the research design. In Bemiller's study (2019), the good intention was to find "what teachers want and need to best educate students with special needs"(p. 75). However, this stated intention was undercut by the fact that this study was "a commissioned needs assessment" (p. 74). The underlying assumption is that teachers lack the competencies and skills to handle the inclusive situations, they need more help and support in one kind or another. Hence one main interview question was "What trainings would be useful for these teachers who educate children with special needs?". The findings confirmed teachers' need for inclusive training in classroom management strategies, teaching and learning strategies and behavioural management strategies. Given that only about 35% of the interviewed sample had received special education training, the concluding remark was to appeal for more training to increase teachers' knowledge and confidence in promoting inclusive education. In another study (Lowrey et al., 2017), the researchers

proclaimed that “voices of practitioners are often missing in research studies” (p. 225) and a narrative inquiry approach was used to collect teachers’ stories. Nonetheless, the study became an evaluative study as the focus was restricted to teachers’ views on the implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework in the inclusive classroom. The findings were affirmative about the benefits of this framework in helping teachers scaffold students with special needs in their learning. The study found that teachers had various interpretations of the UDL framework. This included mixing up concept of intentional planning with good planning, designing a separate curriculum instead of the same curriculum under the UDL framework, and overusing technology in lesson design. However, instead of providing a more in-depth understanding about such interpretations, the researchers fed the gap between the researchers’ and teachers’ understanding of the above concepts into the deficit discourse of teachers failing to achieve full understanding and maximum utilization of the UDL framework.

In the study “Voices of experience: general education teachers on teaching students with disabilities” (Berry, 2011), a more open and comprehensive approach to understand teachers’ experiences was adopted. The researcher assumed that experienced teachers had rich knowledge about “what new general education teachers need to know and be able to do in order to effectively teach students with disabilities in general education contexts” (p. 632). Hence teachers were not asked to respond to researcher-constructed

questions, rather they were facilitated to generate relevant topics themselves in the focus group discussion. Teachers have identified nine topics of concern, they include instructional strategies, knowing the child, training/resources, policies/ procedures, classroom dynamics, communication with colleagues, teachers' positive attitudes and affective responses, parent-teacher relationships and understanding inclusion. The findings are similar to results of other qualitative studies summarized by Berry in the literature review. However, knowing the child has been highlighted by participants and regarded as crucial core knowledge in the study. Another finding is that the needs and perspectives of veteran and non-veteran teachers, rural and urban teachers are found to be different. All this certainly has implication to teacher training programmes and formulation of inclusive policies.

Similarly, in the study "Voices on: teachers and teaching assistants talk about inclusion"(Sikes, Lawson, & Parker, 2007), an auto/biographical and narrative approach was adopted in the research design and performative performance was produced as output. The researchers believe that inclusive experiences are more than educational experiences, but personal, subjective and emotional stories as well; and, to be understood, they need to be connected with autobiographical elements. The research data presented in the form of performance text is original and without unnecessary modification. These narratives are dominated by "Yes Buts" discourse, with the positive intention

of inclusion being undercut by other considerations which deter inclusion. The feelings communicated by these the teachers and teaching assistants include tensions, contested and contradiction. These story tellers tended to give specific, personal and situational reasons to explain their contexts and feelings. The researchers are never critical. They show acceptance and understanding; and provide a wider social and political context to account for the "tension between the systemic and personal elements" (p. 359) caused by the shifting and ambiguities interpretation of inclusive polices, and the gap between the rhetoric and reality of inclusion.

2.3 Narrative and Inclusion

Fenstermacher believes that one important aim of teacher knowledge research "is not for researchers to know what teachers know but for teachers to know what they know. It is for teachers to be knowers of the known" (1994, p. 50). This kind of empowerment and self-reflection are important to practitioners especially when the initiatives are in conflict with other existing values and practice in the real world. Inclusive education is a conception of this kind. Its high moral orientation makes it unchallengeable, yet it creates a lot of stress and anxiety among teachers. Teachers need to hear voices from their peers who carry not only work wisdom, but feelings and comforts to their work.

Narrative inquiry promotes this kind of in-depth study, allowing teachers as

individuals to be understood holistically in the context of inclusive education. In Burns and Bell's (2010) study, it allows teachers to show how their personal experiences shape their beliefs, perspectives and professional lives. Six teachers tell their own stories as educators who have been diagnosed with dyslexia working in various higher educational settings. These teachers are different in their nationalities (3 Finnish and 3 British) and expertise, yet they share certain commonalities in their personal experiences of disability. These teachers, in their learning pathway, regard their diagnosis positively as it helps them understand that they are not stupid or lazy. They just need more help to cope with learning challenges. They experience difficulties related to literacies in their job, but they are honest with their problems. They share the problem with their colleagues; and are able to establish good rapport with their peers. They have high sensitivity and are able to identify unidentified dyslexic students in class. They are sympathetic to students with various learning difficulties and are able to create an inclusive environment to accommodate their needs.

Burns and Bell's study tells inclusive stories of teachers, who struggled when they were learners and is still struggling in their teaching experiences. These teachers' personal disabilities and experiences are found to have strong influence on their professional beliefs, values and practice. Their personal stories have relived in their lives and connected with students and other people in other locations on the professional landscape contexts (Clandinin

& Connelly, 1995).

Sikes, Lawson & Parker (2007) believe that the attitudes of teachers are more than statistics, their lived experiences are complex and need to be told from a different perspective. Hence a narrative approach has been used to tell their personal experiences of inclusion and to uncover its dilemmas, problems and possibilities. Six inclusive teachers and assistants tell their lived stories, all mingled with biography, personal thoughts and struggles. The researchers find that the overall attitude is not a simple yes or no to inclusion, but a “Yes Buts” of inclusion. There are happenings that showed how, in one classroom, inclusion benefits both SEN and non-SEN students; yet in another classroom, it makes everyone suffer. These stories tell close interaction between personal agency and institutions, they are juxtaposition of multiple realities. The researchers honestly admit that since this report is not a complete representation of the original interview, their inclusion or exclusion of data is already an interpretation. These multiple, yet individual, voices convey thoughts as well as feelings. To a certain extent, the narrative approach allows data to speak directly to the readers, thus allowing individuals to have their own interpretation and understanding. It serves the purpose of enriching the public’s understanding of the complexity of the enactment of inclusive education in the classroom.

Altieri (2001) uses a narrative approach to capture the experiences, feelings

and thoughts of four inclusive teachers in a collaborative setting. The researcher is very honest with her intention, openly admitted that there are too many negative views about inclusive education. She chooses to tell the positive stories of four well-experienced primary teachers who have more than 12 years of inclusive experience. These teachers' reflections are neither technical nor pedagogical. They are full of new perspectives and feelings, with a strong sense of self-realization and acceptance of students' differences.

Similarly, in Del Rosario's study (2006), the researcher abandons the role of an invisible spectator and reveals her identity as a special needs teacher. The interviewee is a co-worker who has only taken an introductory course on special education but demonstrates firm belief in inclusive education. The interviewee tells how her experiences as a teacher, a daughter and a mother teach her to respect and accommodate individual differences and disabilities. All these life roles have played an equally important role in shaping the participant's attitudes towards inclusion. Although this individual teacher's biographical data and life events make the story unique and impossible to replicate, the researcher believes that the value of this study is to engage the participant and the researcher in reflecting on their practice and to provide inspiration for other teachers.

2.4 Summary

Chapter 1 and 2 have provided an overview about inclusive education in Hong Kong, the path from integration to inclusion. Studies related to teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and support given to teachers and schools at the systematic level have been discussed. The theories of Schön, Clandinin and Connelly have framed the discussions in relation to the reflective and narrative nature of teachers' practical knowledge. Most of the inclusive studies focus on topics other than teachers' lived experiences, and there are only a few studies using a narrative inquiry approach to study teachers' inclusive experiences.

Chapter 3. Design and Methodology

3.1 Conceptual Framework

A narrative inquiry approach is used in this study to explore and understand the learning experiences of a mainstream teacher who implemented inclusive practice in a primary setting. This chapter aims to provide a rationale for the use of this approach in uncovering a teacher's learning experiences. It includes the research design, methodology, sample and procedures for data collection, data analysis and data quality. As such, there is a section to address the concern of research validation, using the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Lastly, the chapter concludes with issues concerning limitation of this research.

The term "narrative inquiry" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Elbaz, 1997; Polkinghorne, 1995) denotes both the interpretative framework used in conducting the research and the discourse form used in representing the findings. Narrative inquiry is grounded on the belief that in the human world, men's lives are composed of chains of events. To individual persons, not all events are meaningful, some of these events are more significant than the others. Through the intended process of selection and juxtaposition of certain episodes, that is the 'emplotment' process (Bruner, 1986), a narrative is produced. These kinds of stories provide a valuable source of data as they can give insights into and bring understanding to individuals' interpretation of life experience. Apart from being an epistemological approach, narrative

is a genre for researchers to 'tell' their findings. The rich description of a narrative work allows human issues that are sensitive to social and cultural contexts to be explicated in detail and in depth.

3.1.1 Narrative inquiry and teachers' experiences

Connelly & Clandinin (Clandinin, Downey, & Schaefer, 2014) believe that the distinctive nature of narrative inquiry makes it an appropriate method for researching on teachers' learning experiences. Teachers' professional lives are understood to be a storied life. Their narrative stories come with a plot, people, setting, feelings and happenings. To fully capture teachers' lived experiences, Connelly & Clandinin point out the importance of "temporality, sociality and place" in a research. Together these three elements make up the "three-dimensional narrative inquiry space". The first dimension, temporality, focuses on the importance of time in affecting people and events. Time is not limited to present, but past and future as well. Teachers' current actions are likely to be shaped by their past experience as a student as well as foreseeable future consequences. The transitional nature of human's understanding towards ones' own experience is acknowledged in the research process.

The second dimension is sociality. Research is regarded as a social activity that involves both teachers and researchers. Hence the social and personal conditions of both parties need to be taken into consideration. These include

personal factors such as “the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions” as well as social factors such as “existential conditions, the environment, surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise, that form the individual’s context” (Clandinin et al., 2014, p. 480).

The third dimension is place. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) believe that certain actions or happenings may not be fully accounted for if the location is not taken into consideration. Clearly, a clear distinction is drawn between social setting and physical setting. Place refers to the “specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place where the inquiry and events take place” (2000, p. 481). Place is understood to be transient in nature as time may bring changes to place and has the power to shape a happening or an action.

Connelly & Clandinin’s theoretical concept is adopted in the current study as it recognizes the multi-dimensional and complex nature of teachers’ lives. It is the result of the past and present, the private and professional lives; and, oneself and the surrounding. And different from the positivistic approaches that aim at identifying discrete variable to account for teachers’ learning experiences, this research uses narrative concept to capture the complexity, uniqueness and interrelationship of all possible life parameters that shape a teacher’s inclusive experiences.

3.1.2 Narrative inquiry and inclusion

As mentioned earlier, inclusion is a fluid concept that is susceptible to a wide range of interpretations in different places. The degree of social and cultural variation in various institutional settings may further widen the spectrum. All this makes it difficult, if not impossible, to share experiences and to generate knowledge. Moen (2006) believes that inclusion is still an ideology waiting to be realized. Hence, it is important to give a rich and full comprehensive account of different complex situations and develop narratives to share how individuals make sense of the happenings and surroundings. Moen (2006) further points out that knowledge, lived experiences, values and feelings embedded in a teacher narrative has the strong power to provoke thought and generate professional dialogues among stakeholders.

Clearly, Moen believes that narratives have the power to question and reexamine old values; and can bring new perspectives to old practice. McEwan (1997) names this kind of narrative: emancipatory narratives. This kind of narrative has the power of liberating the oppressed and bringing social changes. In contrast, coercive narratives are stories that transit the commonly accepted values or practice. Clandinin, Connelly, and Bradley (1999) call this kind of teacher narratives “sacred stories of schooling” and “teachers’ cover stories”. These stories have the danger of preserving the legitimacy and power of the conservative forces, and continue to silent the voices of the oppressed ones in the society.

Polkinghorne (1995) suggests another way of categorizing teachers' narratives based on the underlining plots. They vary from 'tragic' to 'comedy'. A tragic plot carries a negative feeling, it may involve teachers not accomplishing a goal or failing to improve a stagnant situation. A comedy carries a happy ending with teachers celebrating their success in overriding all difficulties and bringing hopes and changes to people, situations or institutions.

The above way of categorization may help researchers to categorize an array of narratives and discover common elements among them so as to produce generalizable findings. Polkinghorne (1995) defines this as paradigmatic-type narrative inquiry. Nonetheless, there are many narratives that could not be neatly categorized. My research is an example of this kind. It is a narrative-type inquiry (Polkinghorne, 1995) that is full of actions, happenings and occurrences, a work that carries voices of challenge, but at the same time embedded with doubts, preservation and confirmation.

People and their experiences are the main body of knowledge in narrative research. They are not transformed into statistical figures or faceless individuals as in scientific research and some qualitative research. In the study conducted by Berg Svendby (2016) about the experiences of young disabled people in PE lessons, the two participants, Daniel and Emilie, are three-dimensional persons with multiple identities and strong feelings. They

are someone's daughter or son, friends and students. Their experiences in the conventional PE lessons cause hatred, frustration and bewilderment. They become powerless individuals who struggle to be understood. Eventually their voices, combined with that of the researcher, become one powerful voice to urge the PE community to reflect and change to achieve inclusion. The researcher's biographical details have revealed that he is a member of the PE community and this research is an embodied experience. His vulnerable self, bottled up with strong feelings as expressed in the poem entitled "Emotional rollercoaster", is placed at the beginning of the research paper not to command authority, but to appeal for reflection and action. The power of narrative research, involving emotional and cognitive engagement with the topic, become a powerful means to "illuminate individual experiences located within broader social and cultural structures" (p. 62). In addition, it has the emancipatory power of revisiting the old practice and challenge "well-worn, taken for granted realities about these phenomena and facilitate professional self-reflection" (p. 62) .

The emancipatory power of narratives in extending teachers' personal and professional knowledge and experience in relation to inclusion is further illustrated in the study conducted by Savvidou (2011). The study began with her sharing the experiences of teaching English to SEN students in the form of digital story, then subsequent digital stories were submitted by her three other colleagues in the university. Savvidou (2011) pointed out that "degree

of coherence in the types of stories and their organising themes is high. All teachers told stories set in a similar context, revolving around similar plotlines and featuring similar points of view"(p. 60). These narratives shared the same themes: instructional practice, institutional support, learning culture in the classroom and teacher emotion; and, the same story structure: stability narratives in which teachers faced challenges and managed to overcome the adversities. The resonance effect, as identified by Savvidou, was found to be empathetic and emotionally supportive. The researcher, in her reflection, believed that this study had successfully raised teachers' awareness about teaching SEN students and, most importantly, it empowered teachers to believe that they could generate their own understanding and knowledge of inclusion against experience. Nonetheless, an alternative interpretation of this study could be that the narrative produced by the researcher has created a coercive rather than resonance effect on the participants, thus causing them to reiterate similar content and structure. The fact that each participant had viewed the digital stories produced by the previous participants and that they belonged to the same English department in the university may have compelled them to structure their stories in the same way. Hence this narrative could be considered as emancipatory in the wider social and cultural context, but coercive in the micro-context.

Lincoln and Denzin (2000) name the future development of qualitative

research as “the seventh moment” - a time when morality is the main discourse. A moment that “asks that the social sciences and the humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation, freedom, and community” (p. 1048). Inclusion, as a rights-based movement for equal educational opportunity, has become a legitimate topic for interrogation. Given that there is no commonly established definition of inclusion (Bemiller, 2019), the contested frontier is therefore different in different contexts. In Berg Svendby’s study (2016) about the disengagement of disabled young people in PE lessons, clearly the concern is subject-based. When Phillion, He, and Connelly (2005) use narrative and experiential approaches to study the educational issue of segregation, the forefront extends to schools, families and society and cross-nations. The story tellers include teacher educators, teachers, principals and undergraduate students; they are of different ethnic, social, cultural and economic background. The kind of segregation they suffered is social, cultural, emotional, psychological and physical; and is caused by history, immigration, colour and economic status. These stories speak the same message: multiculturalism is an issue. Narrative inquiries may not provide causal explanations or generate universal laws or theories to explain the phenomenon, but it has the power is to promote understanding of these diverse individual, family and community experiences in multicultural contexts; and to provide insight into the multiple realities of inclusion.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1 Methodology

The methodological approach used within this study is that of narrative inquiry. According to Clandinin and Connelly (1995) teacher knowledge is a kind of narrative and embodied knowledge. It is personal as teachers' decision, thoughts and actions are the result of their personal principles, mental images, past experiences, personal beliefs and perceptions. It is tactic because the wisdom is not in teachers' articulation, but in their actions (knowledge-in-action). It is contextual because teachers are sensitive to the impact of social, cultural and political contexts in their practice.

The narrative approach is related to Dewey's (1938) belief that inquiries are grounded on social needs and conditions. They are undertaken when the existing beliefs can no longer offer an explanation or provide an understanding to the phenomenon. Dewey held the ontological beliefs that "experiences are the 'entities' that exist in the world. These experiences are derived from the dialectic relationship between the subject and his or her social and natural surroundings" (Caduri, 2013, p. 42). The principle of continuity can be applied to make sense of these experiences, that means that "every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (Dewey, 1938, p. 27). The three dimensions (temporality, sociality and places) are, as acknowledged by Clandinin and Connelly, connected to Dewey's

theories. A landscape metaphor has been used to describe teachers' professional knowledge. It is an interpretative framework which allows historical, moral, emotional and aesthetic elements to be interwoven in the narrative composed by time, people, places and things.

In addition, narratives on the professional landscape can be categorized into sacred stories, cover stories and secret stories, depending on the context and content of the stories (Clandinin and Connelly, 1988). Sacred stories are pitched on the moral and ethical high ground, therefore they are difficult, if not impossible, to dispute and challenge. They are commonly found in the public arena and are strongly associated with high-sounding educational policies and theories, which are presented as unassailable and value-free solutions to problems in various settings. The public place, referred to as the out-of-classroom place, is characterized as "a place littered with imposed prescriptions. It is a place filled with other people's visions of what is right for children" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 25). It is a place where the social discourses are controlled by people other than teachers. They include politicians, management people, academics etc. whose views are packaged as educational policies, initiatives, projects, programmes, improvement plans and performance assessments.

In contrast, secret stories refer to those stories or anecdotes shared among teachers. They are lived stories told in private, most likely confined to the

classroom. They are not necessarily stories of success, rather they are 'live stories of practice' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). They are stories about feelings, students, teaching, and events that happen inside the classroom. Teachers tell these secret stories to people, most likely teachers, in other safe places and expect them to be received in a non-judgmental manner.

Cover stories are stories told by teachers in the public. They are the dominant discourse ruling and shaping the profession. In these stories, problems are clearly-defined and teachers become all-round problem-fixers. They are successful stories with final resolutions to the problematic situations; and they match the expectations of the public towards teachers. The intriguing aspect of cover stories is that they "enable teachers whose teacher stories are marginalized by whatever the current story of school is to continue to practice and to sustain their teacher stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 25).

Another way of categorizing teachers' narratives, as proposed by McEwan (1997), is based on the message conveyed by the narrative. Basically, there are two types: coercive narratives and emancipatory narratives. Coercive narratives are similar to sacred stories and cover stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998) which preserve the status quo and transit the commonly accepted values or practice. They have the danger of protecting the power of the dominance and suppressing the voices of the oppressed ones in the

society. Emancipatory narratives refer to those stories that re-examine or challenge current values and practice, with the intention of bringing new perspectives to old practice.

3.2.2 Research questions

The aim of this study is to explore and examine a mainstream primary teacher's lived learning experiences in an inclusive classroom in Hong Kong. There are two associated objectives:

- To explore how personal, sociocultural, curriculum and student factors affect an individual's perception in relation to the enactment of inclusive practices
- To understand how those conflicting philosophies at the systemic level manifest themselves at the classroom level

My research questions are as follows:

- What are the learning experiences of a mainstream primary teacher within an inclusive classroom?
- How does the teacher perceive these learning experiences?
- What factors affect these experiences? What implications do these factors have on the inclusive policy in Hong Kong?

3.2.3 Sample

This study concerns only one participant, Mavis. She is a convenience sample,

a primary school classroom teacher who has received basic training related to inclusive education provided by the government (fewer than 30 contact hours). I worked closely with Mavis when I visited her class to provide on-site curriculum support. I was intrigued by Mavis' pro-inclusive attitude. This kind of positive attitude is not common among teachers in Hong Kong (Pearson et al., 2003; Wong & Chik, 2015; Yan & Sin, 2014). Mavis was enthusiastic about putting what she had learned in the inclusion training programme into practice. I wondered if it was because of her background, personality, experience, beliefs and knowledge. I believed the intricacy and richness of her professional experiences would evoke feelings and responses from teachers working in similar contexts. The wholeness and integrity of Mavis' experiences have been preserved in this narrative account. However, having only one single convenience participant in this study, the principle of representativeness has undeniably been compromised. The principle of representativeness will be further addressed at the theoretical level, situational level and personal level in Section 8.5 Representativeness of Mavis' Story.

Mavis' experiences as a general classroom teacher in an inclusive setting play a unique part in the research. However, one participant does not mean a lone voice. This study is more than a personal journey. Underlying the uniqueness of a personal experience is the common ground shaped by the current and past social and cultural contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). They speak

through an individual's voices. According to Bakhtin (2010), individuals' learning and development do not happen in isolation. An utterance is more than a single voice, it contains "other voices that have been experienced previously in life, in history, in culture. Thus a voice is overpopulated with other voices, with the intentions, expectations, and attitudes of others" (Moen, Gudmundsdottir, & Flem, 2003, p. 365).

3.2.4 Procedures

Prior to the implementation of the study, I completed and submitted the research proposal to the School of Education, Durham University. I was initially a Post Graduate Research student at Durham University, where this research was granted Ethical Approval, but I subsequently transferred to Newcastle University, and was granted Ethical Approval at this institution. Both universities have committees to review research studies for their potential harmful impact on and risk to participants. Since this study does not involve any underage individuals, sensitive issues or intervention programmes, it is therefore considered as low risk and was ethically approved.

My work capacity as an education officer from the government aided my negotiation into the field. I met Mavis in a local primary school. I was sent by the government to help teachers there develop the English school-based curriculum. Mavis was one of the English panel chairpersons. I had a work

relationship with her for three years. Nonetheless, this official relationship, if not handled properly, might create hurdles for building a trustworthy and open relationship. Taking heed of this factor, it was one year after the formal work relationship ended that I contacted Mavis and invited her to be my participant in the study. Connelly & Clandinin (1990) believe that researchers need to connect with the participants by creating "situations of equality, caring and mutual purpose and intention" (1990, p. 12). To achieve this, I asked for the approval of the school head only after Mavis had indicated interest in the study. This procedure guaranteed that my participant could have free choice, ascertaining no pressure from the situation or the school authority.

The informed consent documents and participant information sheet, provided and approved by the researcher's university (Appendix A and B), were forwarded and explained in the meeting with Mavis and the principal. The informed consent document includes such information as the name of the attached university, the title and main purpose of the study along with information concerning the title, signature and contact point of the researcher and the supervisor. In addition, the form includes other important information such as the rights of the participants to withdraw voluntarily at any time, the data collection procedures, the protection of the confidentiality of the participants, the known risks and the expected benefits (Creswell, 2013).

Mavis was given some time to review the consent form. Then I read through the consent form with Mavis to ensure comprehension. I particularly asked for her approval to audio record the interviews and videotape the lessons. I explained that the purpose was for transcription and data analysis and means would be used to guarantee security and confidentiality. Mavis was told that she could ask for any clarification before signing the form. I then asked Mavis to sign the consent form and date the document. A copy of both the consent form and the information sheet were given to her for reference. I informed Mavis once again that she had the right to withdraw at any time of the study or to rectify the interview transcripts. And in order to protect the school and her identity, pseudonyms were used. And all data would be secured in my personal computer with password protected and could only be accessed by me. The data, both electronic and non-electronic versions, would be destroyed once the time period restriction set by the university was lifted. In addition, I promised to share with her my reflection journal and encouraged her to openly challenge my assumptions or observation. All in all, I stressed very much on the importance of an honest and open relationship, which is the foreground of this study. Lastly, I let her understand that I was interested in not only her views, practices and learning regarding inclusive education, but also her as a whole person, that includes her past and present personal history, values, beliefs, feelings, thoughts, dispositions and actions.

3.3 Data Collection and Validation

Lincoln and Guba (1985), employing the naturalistic perspective within which research is conducted in a natural setting and accepts multiple realities, suggest the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to establish trustworthiness. For the purpose of this study, the above criteria will be examined.

3.3.1 Credibility

There are several strategies proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to establish credibility. These include prolonged engagement, persistent observation in the field and triangulation. In this study, the data collection process lasted for one academic year, starting from September 2016 to early August 2017. I visited the school and interviewed Mavis 1-2 times each month. There were altogether eight interviews (totally 15.25 hours) and 4 class visits. Each interview lasted for more than an hour, and the lesson 40-45 minutes.

Qualitative data including interview transcripts, observation notes, reflection journals, videotaped lessons was collected to examine and explore the learning experiences. During the interview, students' work was used to initiate discussion and to enhance the depth of understanding of the enactment process in an inclusive classroom. Throughout the process, Mavis was given ample opportunities to examine her assumptions, express her

views, and reflect on her thoughts and actions. According to Carrington (1999), this kind of reflection is important, as the process allows the teacher to develop more coherent principles for beliefs and practices and may even become more aware of instructional alternatives and conflicting philosophies; and, she may eventually progress on her enactment of inclusive practice.

In narrative research, the researcher is neither an impartial nor impersonal observer that hides behind a research tool and conducts the data collection process. He/she plays an active and 'visible' role in the research process; and the participant is not an entity for observation. Rather the relationship is collegial, interactive and dialogic. In the study, I observed Mavis' actions in class. I interacted with Mavis, prompting her to share with me her own assumptions, views and reflections of the lessons. In return, I shared with her my field notes and reflection journals.

The atmosphere in our meetings was informal, almost like chatting between friends. I did not have any leading interview questions on hand. In other words, I did not use any preset procedures to 'control' what data to be included in the research. I let the conversations flow naturally. We engaged in long discussions and we did not limit our topic to SEN students, but non-SEN students as well. We usually started the interview with the topic about recent happenings; and from there it wandered to her lessons, students'

performance in tests and examinations, happenings both outside and inside the classroom, personal lives and families. She was encouraged to bring into the conversations any matter that makes sense to her. I also shared with the teacher my beliefs, views and observation in the research process. Connelly & Clandinin believe that exchanging stories between participants and researchers in the narrative process could help create rapport between the two parties. Elbaz (1997) suggests that researchers' stories can have direct impact on participants; and vice versa. This kind of research conversation can become an interactive reflective process. Both parties may have new understanding and perspectives to certain issues. They may start to question assumptions and practice which they found to be acceptable in the past. They may unravel hidden values or beliefs which they are unaware of or taken for granted. Since voices of both parties become indistinguishable in the research process, Connelly & Clandinin call it 'a shared narrative unity'.

In the study, different sources of data such as interviews, videotaped lessons, field notes, and reflective journal were collected to make triangulation possible. In addition, I used member checks, a technique recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to be "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 135) . This method allows the participant to judge the accuracy and credibility of the data, it concurs with the principle of narrative research which advocates a collaborative dialogic relationship as well. I remember one time this mechanism served its purpose. Mavis disagreed

with the notes of the previous meeting. She admitted that she did say so in the last interview, but now she had changed her mind and would like to change the record. In this narrative research, Mavis is more than a participant, she is a collaborator as well. Not only does she have the interpretative power to her story and the dialogic power to guide the topic of the exchanges, she also possesses certain degree of authorship. Moen (2006) believes that this kind of collaborative dialogic relationship is an important characteristic of narrative inquiry research and is what the narrative interpretation is based on.

3.3.2 Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest providing readers "the data base that makes transferability judgement possible" (p. 316). The data is expected to be "rich thick description" (Creswell, 2013, p. 252) with detailed and sufficient information about the setting, participants or activities. This can enable readers to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred or not. In this study, the adopted narrative approach which acknowledges the importance of time, place, physical setting, biographical details, feelings, thoughts and actions can certainly satisfy this criterion. The political and social context of the study has been provided in Section 1.1 Background of the Study. It summarizes the historical development of inclusion and responses of the public, particularly teachers, towards inclusion. Nonetheless, in narrative inquiry, transferability is not a

prime concern. Hence contextual information is not provided to facilitate the transfer of experience to other contexts, rather it is used to enrich audience understanding of what experiences the participant has undergone and how he/she has been shaped by the personal, social and political context (Clandinin, 1985).

3.3.3 Dependability and confirmability

Dependability, similar to the concept of reliability under the positivist paradigm, refers to the confidence level that other researchers, based on the same data, may reach similar findings; whereas confirmability refers to the confidence level that the research findings are based on the data but not potential researcher bias. The two criteria are inter-related and can be achieved by the two means: reflexivity and audit trail (Creswell, 2013).

Narrative inquiry promotes reflection in the participant as well as the researcher. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), its nature invites reflexivity. Elbaz (1997) believes that reflection "brings the narrative researcher up against the edges of the work and requires him or her to examine the context within which the research is carried out and its broader implications" (p. 75). In this study, when I shared with readers my biographical details, conversation with Mavis and personal journals, I was, at the same time, examining my beliefs, values and assumptions. Why did I want to tell the lived experiences of an inclusive teacher? What was my

intention? My biographical details, experiences, biases and values in relation to inclusion allow the readers to know how these elements influence my understanding of inclusion and shape my interpretation of this issue. This kind of self-awareness and self-exposure is considered important in the reflexive process, which I will elaborate further in Chapter 4.

Based on Halpem's (1983) audit trail, cited by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 319-320), I have chosen six categories to allow my research process to be audited. They are as follows:

1. Raw data - including all raw data, written field notes, videos, audio recording, personal journal and documents
2. Data reduction and analysis products - transcripts
3. Data reconstruction and synthesis products – report drafts and final report
4. Process notes – essays and correspondence with supervisor
5. Materials relating to intentions and dispositions – research proposal
6. Instrument development information - work schedules

These documents are available and will be kept in file for the purpose of verifying dependability and confirmability.

3.4 Data Analysis

My prime source of qualitative data was based on my interviews with Mavis. The visits to the classroom were not to validate Mavis' inclusive practice, rather it was used as a means to deepen my understanding of Mavis' work and to generate more engaging conversations between us. Since Mavis is an

English teacher, all the lessons observed were English lessons. My visit to the class was infrequent and episodic. There was no specific agenda or procedures in the interviews. I usually started the interview by sharing with Mavis the interview records as well as reflective journal of our last meeting. Since a considerable amount of time may have passed in between, these records helped deepen processing and allowed certain degree of continuity to happen. Also over half of the interviews occurred after the class visit, hence what just happened in class became a natural topic in the meeting. This helped promote deep and substantial exchanges. The conversational topics covered: what just happened in the lesson, her views of the lesson and the English curriculum, self-evaluation, reflection, thoughts, beliefs, perception, feelings, general performance of her students and other happenings within the past few weeks. In return, I expressed my views as well.

Mavis and I conversed in our mother tongue (i.e. Cantonese) in the research process. The conversation was taped and transcribed. Instead of transforming the talk into a Chinese text, then translated it into English, it was translated into English in the transcription process. Since transcription and translation could be regarded as an interpretation process, by combing two processes into one, it was hoped that error or unintended false interpretation could be limited in the action of re-representation (Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson & Deeg, 2010). Mavis played an important role in the

transcription process. She, as an English teacher with a certified level of English language proficiency, acted as informant and translator in this study. This could help avoid any distortion or misrepresentation of meaning in the translation process. Riessman (1993) believes that, depending on research focus, methodological and theoretical underpinning and assumptions, there are different ways of transforming talks to texts. They vary from Labov's (1972) method of transcription that details every utterance with gaps, filters, pauses and laughter recorded to a broad summary of the whole conversation. In this study, the narrative method used is neither a verbatim transcription nor a gist, but a literal translation of the conversation. The following is an extract taken from my first interview with Mavis. It is written in the first-person narration, with 'I' referring to Mavis:

> *My students are still kids. They don't have much successful experience. Maybe their family don't have high expectations or their expectations are so high that they find it hard to achieve. I try to create 'small successful experiences' for them. I dictate the verb table. I write the basic verb from on the blackboard. Students dictate the past and participle form. Nobody will score zero as they just need to add 'd' or 'ed'. If I don't write the verb form on the blackboard, many students will fail. I think this is okay because in the exam, only the verb form is given. Students don't need to study very hard. I have used this approach for the past P.5 and P.6 students. Next, I will ask students to dictate twelve months. They still don't know how to spell twelve months after having written them for so many years. I think this is the basic competency they should have. (Document 4)*

The transcription used may just tell, not show, Mavis' feelings and thoughts,

and how she connects her actions closely with her thoughts (why she dictates the verb table) and context (her students have no parental support in their learning); how she connects her present with the past (she used the same strategy with her past students) and the future (her next step is to ask her students to dictate the twelve months).

My reflection log has close connection with Mavis' lesson and the interview. The following record is done after the first interview:

> *The interview is an 'unfolding' process. It is not in temporal order. Feelings dominate the discourse. It starts with negative feelings and metaphor 'tug of war', the focus is on the negative ones as if they are the only individuals in class.*
>
> *Mavis mentioned a lot of problems she faced. They came with solutions as well. For example, some students don't participate in reading aloud, she then insists and makes them understand how she values this and will not move on until they participate. When strong ones look bored, she introduces phonics skills to enhance the quality of interactions.*
>
> *I can reshuffle different parts of the interview and re-tell the story in a narrative order. It is a story with a plot starting with frustration but ending with hope.*
>
> *A lot of communication and interactions happen outside the classroom. She has a more understanding of the class when she teaches them other subjects (GS). Mavis has good observation of students' body language.*
>
> *I am not sure if I should probe Mavis directly to focus on SEN or whether*

I should let the topic comes up and use this as indicator of Mavis' concerns about SEN.

Mavis has already come up with a strategy to tackle with weak students (be they SEN or non-SEN), she tries every way to create successful experiences for them, to engage them in lessons and let them know her expectations and standards.

The above reflection sample shows that I attend to the mood, focus, language and content of the interaction. The therapeutic nature of the dialogic relationship is recognized when Mavis progresses from a negative mood to a positive one in the course of the interview. I am sensitive to the metaphor (tug of war) Mavis used to describe her relationship with the students. My writing invites reflection and reflexivity as well (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I am able to maintain certain distant with my participant. However, this does not mean that I have assumed a superior position with an omnipresent attitude. Rather I choose to share my inner struggle with Mavis (whether to direct our conversation focus to students with special needs or not) via the reflective journal.

Elliott (2005) believes that one key element of narratives, apart from the chronological arrangement of events and meaningful happenings, is the intended audience. In other words, storytellers have the intended audience in mind when the story is constructed. This has two levels of understanding. At the first level, teachers as narrators of their own stories are fully aware of the presence of their audience, the researchers. Through selection and

juxtaposition of happenings or actions across different time planes and various locations, teachers attribute certain meanings to the stories. These stories may not provide a true representation of the experiences. However, they are individuals' understanding of their own experiences. This is called the emplotment process (Bruner, 1985; Elliott, 2005).

The second level of emplotment happens after data collection. Researchers also engage in the process of selection and juxtaposition to provide an interpretation to the narrative. Kyratzis and Green (1997) call this 'a double narrative process'. They believe the authoritative role of the researcher in narrative inquiry has been undermined as some of the interpretative power has been given to the participants in the emplotment process.

According to Polkinghorne (1995), emplotment is an important narrative analytic procedures. It involves the intended selection and juxtaposition of certain incidents or actions to produce a thread of themes. The thematic thread is called the plot. The plot aims at giving narrative meanings to the human experience. Polkinghorne (1995) emphasizes that emplotment is a recursive process. Narrative researchers must be critical in the whole process. They must have healthy skepticism and confront contradictions or gaps when they occur in the data collection process. In other words, inconsistency of this kind could not and should not be ignored or discarded. If necessary, the researcher may approach the participant again and ask for clarification or

elaboration. Hence the emplotting process is a meaning attributing process in which significance is attached to particular objects, persons or happenings until the completion of the analytic process. It is common for the plot to be refined or revised during the analytic process.

3.5 Limitation

As mentioned earlier, narrative inquiry has the potentials to deal with research topics that are too vast to demarcate limits and boundaries; and involve elements that are complicated and interrelated. This research method allows the interconnectedness of the elements to be understood, the richness, fluidity and complexity of the contexts to be revealed (Carter, 1993); and, the richness of feelings to be recorded. However, its strength is drawn at the expenses of its limitation. The vastness of the data collected makes it difficult, if not impossible, to involve a large number of participants in narrative research. In this study, there is only one participant Mavis. Her identity and experiences as an inclusive teacher in this particular setting is difficult to be generalized to the larger population of inclusive educators in other countries. In addition, inclusive is a fluid term which have become different practices in other places, it is therefore difficult for readers to transfer learning to other contexts. Finally, my close relationship with Mavis may, to a certain extent, jeopardize my objectivity in this study.

Chapter 4. Researcher's Role as a Researcher and a Support Agent

A narrative approach has been used to explore the above research focus. According to Moen (2006), there are three basic premises in this epistemological perspective. Firstly, people use stories to tell their everyday experiences. Storytelling is a natural way to organize and to understand the behaviour of oneself and the others. Secondly, when a story teller recounts the experience, it is not only the story that he/she is telling; his/ her values, beliefs, perceptions and past experience are woven into the story, together with its cultural, historical and institutional settings; and in the (re)telling process, both the teller and the hearer are being transformed. Lastly, a narrative research encompasses a multitude of voices. It includes not only the voice(s) of research participants, but also voices of the researcher(s).

4.1 My Identity

In the narrative research paradigm, researchers, same as research participants, bring with them their past history and personal attributes to the interpretative framework. In light of this view, I, as researcher of the above proposed research, would like to make explicit my role in this research study. My role has been different from that under the traditional positivist approach. The conventional disinterested impartial spectator's role has been replaced by the engaged interactive role. A researcher is no longer an individual working behind the scene, but, as put forward by Bullough and

Pinnegar: “who a researcher is, is central to what the researcher does” (2001, p. 13).

Currently, I work for the government (that is the Hong Kong Education Bureau) to support teachers in developing the English school-based curriculum. My work involves visiting assigned schools regularly to co-plan lessons with level teachers, observe lessons if needed and conduct workshops. My job nature has been changed throughout the years. At the beginning, in response to the criticism that English teaching was too textbook bound, I helped teachers use teaching resources flexibly and make teaching and learning more interactive and interesting. Later with the introduction of the Territory-wide System Assessment (an assessment tool designed to evaluate students’ standards in English, Chinese and Math at the end of KS1 and KS2), I started to help teachers analyse the assessment data and prepare students for this exam. Inclusive education has been one of the many initiatives being launched. My observation is that this policy has been more rhetoric than reality. Most teachers, after receiving basic inclusive training offered by other institutions, often say that they still do not have the confidence, skill and knowledge to deal with students with learning difficulties.

I believe that deep learning in teacher development is situated and contextualized. It is a complex activity in which individual teachers’

knowledge, beliefs, conceptions and prior experience interact with the contexts. Examining this issue from a socio-cultural perspective is particularly important as inclusive education is grounded on the principle of equality and equity, which is value laden and may have different interpretations in various contexts. My research records the journey of a general classroom teacher struggling to be an inclusive teacher. It is also an account of my development, an on-site support agent who accompanies the teacher in the learning journey.

4.2 My Dual Identities as a Researcher and a Support Agent

Teacher support agents are closely associated with new initiatives/programmes or students' achievements. In Hong Kong, they carry the titles: school development officers or curriculum development officers. In other places, they may be called: professional development school liaison officers, reading specialists/teachers, advisory teachers, literacy coaches, facilitators or consultants. These support providers work closely with teachers, some even directly with students. This group of people has a new identity which is different from regular classroom teachers. Though their work contexts and support modes are different, they have three characteristics in common: (i) the work focus is on classroom teaching and learning; (ii) it is target-oriented; and (iii) support agents are more than extra hands that help maintain the status quo. Rather they are expected to improve and bring changes to the institutions, and so a large extent, they are

regarded as change agents in the systems. The assumption is that these two roles (support agents and change agents) are closely related and overlapped, hence these terms are used interchangeably in this study.

Most often, these people are new to the school systems. They may be hired by schools, or sent by the government/district authorities or other projects/programmes funded by the universities or other institutions. In other words, these support providers are both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' of the school systems. They carry a special identity which is different from school teachers. A number of research studies have been done to capture these experiences. Some of these studies report on the impact of the support services on schools (LePage, Boudreau, Maier, Robinson, & Cox, 2001), school principals (Warren & Higbee, 2007), individual teachers (Grimes, 2013), teacher communities (Nehring & O'Brien, 2012) or student achievements (Erskine-Cullen, 1995); some on the institutions or support agents themselves (Arencibia & Manuel Moreno, 2005; Blamey, Meyer, & Walpole, 2008; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010). However, these research studies tend to focus on individual variables. The focus is either on teachers, teacher communities, principals or support agents, but not the interactions among variables in the school systems.

Another related issue worth exploring is the potential role conflict of a researcher and a support agent. If a support agent conducts research related

to the work he/she engaged in with teachers, his/her relationship with teachers will operate on two levels: between a support provider and teachers being supported; as well as a researcher and participants. Breault (2010) pointed out that most support services provider-researchers have been honest with their double identities. Their close working relationship with teachers mean that they have invested much time and emotion in the project, so much that "for the sake of maintaining good relationships between partners, some things are left unwritten" (Breault, 2010, p. 402). However, whether this is an advantage or not depends very much on how far the compromise is; and, most importantly, what the research focus is. Clearly, dual identities have placed researchers in a challenging situation.

Blamey et al. (2008) face similar situations when they examined the actual and assumed roles of literacy coaches in the secondary setting. Literacy coaches have been a new position in the United States and carried different work titles in different districts, namely literacy coordinator, literacy/reading coach, reading specialist or reading teacher. The job specifications assume these coaches to take up multiple roles: collaborators, job-embedded coaches, evaluators of literacy needs, and instructional strategists. In this study, the respondents were asked to report on their own roles and responsibilities and suggest their own professional development needs. The findings echoed previous coaching research on the importance of fostering a trust relationship with teachers. The support given to teachers and

strategies used for coaching were reported to be different in different schools, depending very much on teachers' needs and situations. The researchers were honest about their background: having once been coaches in settings like childhood, elementary and secondary. They plainly admitted that this 'insider' background had been used as frame of reference for this research. Clearly their current/past identity would undermine their credibility if the research focus was to prove the value of literacy coaches. However, since the research focus is on coaches' roles, responsibilities and expectations, their background is more than an advantage. By having hands-on experience as literacy coaches, researchers could relate more closely to respondents' qualitative feedback and use their experience as an interpretative framework.

4.3 The Relationship Between Support Agents and Teachers

As for the relationship between support agents and teachers, its sensitivity has always been downplayed in research. A lot of studies on collaborative projects have emphasized on the importance of an honest and trust relationship between teachers/schools and external agents (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, 2010; Heineke, 2013). This has been regarded as an important condition for successful collaboration. However, little has been done to track down the development of this relationship or explore in-depth the complexity of this relationship.

In a study on secondary literacy coaches, the researchers stressed on the importance of support agents in forging “collaborative, trusting relationships with key stakeholders such as teachers, principals, and superintendents” and cautioned about the potential tension: “when working with teachers, successful coaches know how to maneuver between colleague and expert, walking a delicate line between the two” (Blamey et al., 2008, p. 311). Nonetheless, this caveat raises more questions than answers. What would possibly happen if the line was cross? Does that imply a hierarchical relationship? What if teachers disagreed with coaches’ judgement? Who would make the final decision? And where does the authority come from? Institutions, qualifications or evidence of work? If the progress was unsatisfactory, who would it shed light on? Administrators, teachers or support agents?

In one study, Anstey and Clarke (2010) use the traditional dichotomous model to categorize this work relationship into either coaching or mentoring. The former suggests collaboration with no hierarchical relationship involved whereas the latter is strongly associated with authority and status. By framing the relationship as either equal or authoritative, the authors have diluted the dynamic nature of this relationship as well as the complexity of professional learning. There is evidence in another study which shows that collaborative relationship is complex and multiples. Bean et al. (2010) found that teachers have different expectations of coaches’ roles. Coaches are

expected not to position themselves as teacher trainers, teachers do not fit them into the traditional picture of the “skilled coach and the less skilled teacher working together”(Bean et al., 2010, p. 111). Rather teachers prefer to view coaches as “problem solvers, resource coordinators, data managers, and consultants” (Bean et al., 2010, p. 112).

In another research, Heineke (2013) used an interpretive analysis framework to study the coaching discourse and interviews between four teachers and their four reading coaches. Once again, the researcher identified relationships as one key element in the context of coaching. Both teachers and coaches stressed the importance of trust and credibility in the coaching process. Data showed that individual coaches struggled in their own way to establish the positive relationship and the strategies used were found to be highly contextual. The author highlighted the issue of authority and power in a coaching relationship. Teachers have strong negative feelings when coaches judge them and treat them in an authoritative and patronizing manner. The author concluded that how coaches and teachers “situated themselves and their identities within their coaching relationships” (Heineke, 2013, p. 427) are important in relationship building.

In one research LePage et al. (2001) explore the relationship between school teachers and university faculty members in a nontraditional professional development program. Innovative components such as teacher research,

site-based teaching, collaboration and learning community are involved. Unlike traditional teacher development program in which university lecturers are expected to be knowledge providers and teachers as receivers, this program aims at cultivating a transformative relationship in which both parties could grow and be nurtured out of this experience. The researchers found that the relationships are full of inconsistencies and complexities, and discomforts cause individuals to fall back to the traditional roles. In order to secure this transformative relationship, the research team believes that: (i) both change agents and teachers must adjust their expectations and re-interpret conventional roles openly and explicitly; (ii) teachers need to overcome their awe to authority and be prepared to challenge the traditional notion of knowledge (i.e. bringing epistemological perspectives on knowledge and authority into discussion); (iii) both parties need to examine the influence of institutional power in the relationship and, (iv) stakeholders respect each other's abilities in the relationship.

Lynch and Ferguson (2010) study the beliefs and practices of literacy coaches in Canada. Since coaches are new to the school systems, without any old practice to follow and past experience to learn, coaches and teachers are rendered to a state of role confusion. Similar to the study of LePage et al. (2001), individuals' perceptions and expectations are found to be important in shaping the collaborative relationship. This study found that individual coaches define their roles based on the context realities. Teacher resistance

is a thorny issue. The cause is found to be both personal and structural. Some teachers perceive coaches as experts and evaluate them against impossible criterion. Without much collaborative time built into the school system, building a trust and supportive relationship between the two parties is difficult. This study further brings out the importance of role definition in the process of collaboration and suggests administrative support (e.g. involvement of school principals) as a means to overcome the barriers of teacher resistance. However, the authors believe that when venturing into an unknown domain, role confusion seems to be an inevitable stage. Shaped by experience and interactions, participants may adjust their expectations and beliefs; and roles may be defined or clarified gradually. As for resistance, the researchers cited Foucault's saying to support the view that resistance is an inevitable product of power inequality. The support agents could do nothing to avoid that, they just need to understand that this is a structural issue and learn to deal with it in a positive way.

Grimes (2013) reported that when he worked as an expert of inclusive education in Thailand, he had a hard time making teachers understand that they have their own expertise; and that support relationship could be mutual instead of hierarchical. He found that power inequality between the external agent and teachers is more than a contextual issue, but social and cultural as well. In Thailand, the cultural tradition of needing to treat a visiting academic with courtesy and respect makes it difficult to establish a non-hierarchical

collaborative relationship with frontline teachers. This issue could not be resolved but the author dealt with it honestly using the ethnographic approach, giving voices to both himself and the teachers.

Role conflict and confusion seem to be a natural stage of a collaborative relationship. West (2000) calls this stage delinquency. At the initial stage of collaboration, teachers have lots of doubts and struggles. Although collaborators may stress their supporting role (not leading role), teachers still expect leadership to be offered. It may take quite some time and experience before teachers could proceed to the next two stages, opportunity and utility. At these mature stages, leadership started to emerge from self or peers. Teachers' confidence of making professional judgment, which in the past used to rely on external authority, began to develop, together with the culture of inquiry, analysis and reflection.

If, in the model of collaboration, role clarification is difficult to achieve and role confusion may unsettle the relationship, why don't collaborators employ the strategy of deliberate ambiguity? Crafton and Kaiser (2011) argue that roles have the power of influencing the language, interaction modes and expectations of a collaborative relationship. Hence role clarification is vital when co-construction of knowledge is expected in the process. If a support agent is called a 'consultant' or an 'expect', the language is likely to become monodirective; and teachers become passive participants. If the title like a

'collaborator' or a 'learning partner' is used, language may gradually become more dialogic; and teachers are then positioned, by oneself or support agents, as an equal contributor in the meaning-making process. Nonetheless, the process, as described by Crafton and Kaiser (2011, p. 109) is "filled with struggle, participant needs, tension, ambiguity, and shifting power relationships". In other words, role definition is meaningful and necessary; and, collaborators need to be aware of its shaping power and evolving nature.

4.4 Support Agents as Mediators in Teacher Learning

Avalos (2011) reviewed the publications on teacher professional development in the past ten years (2000-2010) and reported that research interest in teacher professional learning has moved from traditional in-service teacher training model which features on training workshops and structured courses to a diverse model which acknowledges the complexity of teacher development. This model grounds on the constructivist approach which, unlike past transmission model, suggests that teachers' beliefs, perceptions, conceptions as well as emotion are important in affecting teachers' learning, their practice in classroom and their willing to pursue or enact alternative practice for improvement or change. It is also an interactive model. Historical, cultural and social factors are shaping forces in impacting teachers' course of learning. In other words, learning is more than an individual activity, but a social event as well.

Among 111 articles reviewed by Avalos (2011), around one-thirds of these articles are related to teacher reflection or mediating nature of teacher development programmes. Reflection is found to be more than a common means used to capture the beliefs, thoughts, needs, problems, change processes and emotions of teachers, it is regarded as a necessary process of teacher development. Teacher development involving mediations is closely connected to school-university partnership, teacher learning communities and workplace learning. Personnel such as university academics, researchers, consultants, coaches, members in the teacher networks or teams and peers are possible mediators for teacher learning. Learning happens through interactions like dialogues, conversations and participation. The author believes the change of teacher development model is likely to unsettle the traditional roles of academics and teachers. Teacher educators are requested to understand more about school complexity and to act as mediators in teacher learning in the workplace while teachers are urged to develop inquisitive depositions and to participate as co-researchers to conduct studies in their classrooms. However, the significance of other mediating agents such as coaches, consultants and support providers are understated in these studies. Clearly, they exist in the systems and have a contributing role in teacher development; they should not be treated as part of the teacher training programmes which is assumed to be generic and “one size fits all”.

Opfer and Pedder (2011) did a systematic literature review on teacher professional learning. The authors point out that much research has been done about teachers, schools and professional learning activities. However, not much work has been done to study the interactions among these elements in the learning process. In the end, the authors propose to adopt a holistic and complexity approach to understand patterns of interactions at a systems level, with the ultimate intention to "develop the conceptual and empirical basis necessary to test an explanatory theory of the complex systems of teacher learning" (2011, p. 396). They hoped to develop "an explanation for why teacher learning may or may not occur as a result of professional development activity" (2011, p. 381-382). This approach suggests the need to understand more about the interactive process of the teacher learning activities. This newly proposed model focuses a lot on interactions within the systems and how individuals perceive these activities. However, these individuals should include not only teachers, but other mediating agents as well, be they academics, consultants, peer teachers or coaches. They are beginning to emerge as an important component in this new model. By not acknowledging their existence or contribution, the new approach may fail to account for the complexity of teacher learning in some systems.

This point may be further explained by the Camburn (2010) study. In this study, the term embedded teacher learning opportunities was used to refer

to a year-long on-site professional development activity that involved engaging groups of teachers working together to reflect on their teaching, improve their practice, discuss their students' performance and learn from one another. The five essential characteristics of professional learning communities (PLCs), as proposed by Louis, Kruse and Marks (1996), namely: (i) shared values and norms, (ii) a clear and consistent focus on student learning, (iii) generative reflective dialogue, (iv) making teaching go public, and (v) teacher collaboration, existed in this programme. However, the author avoided naming this activity PLCs. One possible explanation could be because of the prominent role played by the instructional experts in these learning activities. These experts worked closely with teachers to help them adopt new instructional practices. They, through close social interactions, brought in knowledge and experience; and offered possible alternatives. Most importantly, they acted as third eyes to help teachers to "troubleshoot the implementation of new practices and make adjustment that reach students more effectively" (Camburn, 2010, p. 468). However, the relationship between these support agents and teachers could not be described as equal because other professional activities such as giving model lessons and directive feedback clearly suggest power and authority in the collaborative process. By using the term teacher learning opportunities but not professional learning communities, the author has played down the significance of these support agents in promoting teacher learning. Once again, they were treated as a part of the overall teacher training activities,

with no voices or status given.

Through reviewing research that involved people like me who work closely with teachers to bring changes to the school systems, it brings out the complexity of my dual roles: as a researcher and a support/change agent. These indistinguishable roles add an autobiographical dimension into the research. It is going to be my story as well as the story of the participating teacher. As pointed out by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), “self-study points to a simple truth, that to study a practice is simultaneously to study self: a study of self-in-relation to other” (2001, p. 14). Role confusion and tension which is found to be caused by individual perceptions and beliefs; as well as institutional structure and hierarchy, seem unavoidable. It is something that needs to be prepared psychologically and dealt with methodologically. Lastly, the significance of support agents in promoting teacher change in the systems has been found to be under-researched. By openly admitting this role and identity in my research, I hope it is not only my voice that is heard but also voices of other support agents working in the systems.

Chapter 5. Findings and Discussion I - the Story of Inclusion

This chapter includes the findings based on Clandinin and Connelly's narrative inquiry framework. The lived experiences of Mavis, an inclusive primary teacher, have been conceptualized narratively within the three commonplaces: temporality, sociality and place.

Under the narrative inquiry framework, time is not regarded as a fixed entity being captured at the time of research. Temporality includes past, present and future. When the participant or researcher recounts his/her experience, the inquiry involves more than the current feelings, thoughts and incidents. It includes what happened in the past lives (i.e. the biographic histories) as well as "the past, present, and future of people, places, things and events under study" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 436). When Mavis tells her lived story, she relates the present experiences with her past. Hence her past stories are connected with and embedded in the present. And through retelling the past, Mavis is re-interpreting her past based on the present perspectives (Carr, 1986). This kind of constructive and reconstructive temporal process happens throughout the narrative study. Fottland (2004), in her autobiographical study of teacher development, points that personal reflection has the power to connect past with the present, thus building a feeling of 'critical continuity' inside individuals. Teachers need this power to claim their voices and to develop their own "multifaceted language of practice theory" (657). More importantly, "in the teaching tradition,

teaching and learning stories have to be told and retold. The stories should be discussed and developed continuously through dialogue between novice and experienced teacher-actors in the great school playhouse. Such dialogues help teachers and children expand their understanding and insight, and to develop schools into the teaching and learning houses they are meant to be" (p. 657).

The second dimension of commonplace is sociality. It includes both personal and social conditions. By personal conditions, it refers to the relationship between the researcher and participants. The relationship is more than functional. It interacts at a humanistic and interpersonal level, involving "feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic relations, and moral dispositions" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). All these elements emerge naturally in Mavis' stories. They tie up with other threads in the story and become an important part of the narrative unity. As for social conditions, it includes the cultural, social, institutional and linguistic environment of the study. Since inclusive education is a fluid concept which is found to be interpreted differently in various social and cultural contexts, Mavis' understanding of her role as an inclusive teacher has been further re-interpreted in the school context.

The third commonplace, centrality of place, refers to the setting in which the event takes place. The boundaries can be physical, concrete and topological.

Mavis works under an education system in which primary teachers specialize in particular academic subjects. Mavis' story occurs primarily at school. Since she is an English teacher, most of the happenings occur in the English lessons. Yet her secondary role as a religious teacher makes some of the stories happen in the religious lessons. When she recalls her experience as a student, the narrative goes back to her own primary and secondary school; and when she recounts her nephew's experience, it involves another institutional setting; and when she talks about her son, she speaks as a mother and shift the setting to home.

5.1 Mavis' Story

Mavis grew up in a family with little parental support in learning. Her mother does not know English and could hardly help her in the study. However, she gave Mavis a lot of emotional support. Most often she would sit next to Mavis and encourage her. Besides, her mother gave her study tips. She would advise Mavis to record the dictation piece on a tape recorder for revision. As a teacher, Mavis gives similar tips to students whose parents do not know English.

Mavis met an inspiring English teacher when she was in the secondary. The teacher bought her a good grammar book and taught her from the basic. Mavis started to catch up and became interested in learning English. That provided a good foundation for her future study. Mavis met another good

teacher in her matriculation. The teacher gave her specific and effective feedback on her writing. She had a marked improvement because of that.

She has always wanted to be a teacher because she thought school is a safe place where she belongs to. She did not want to leave school, and the only way to do so was to become a teacher. After she became a teacher, she has had a lot of satisfying and reinforcing experience. She wants to bring positive learning experiences to her students.

Mavis has been teaching in this school for over 15 years. She had been assigned as panel head of the English Department for a considerable period of time. Recently, the school has sent her to receive in-service training related to inclusive education. She is one of the few at school who has received this kind of advanced training. Mavis is positive towards inclusive education. This may have several antecedents - her religious background as she is a devoted Catholic, or her disposition because she is a caring and loving person in her personal life, or through experiential matters, because she has a nephew who is a SEN student.

One year after Mavis completed her training, I invited her to participate in the study. Mavis agreed willingly as she thought this may help her reflect her experience. Taken into consideration of her hectic work schedule, I did not ask her to keep a journal. My past working relation with her as a school

support agent made her feel comfortable co-planning the lesson with me and letting me observe her lesson. I decided to use these occasions to understand her work in relation to inclusive practice. Mavis understood very well the focus of this research, but in the interview, she could not resist sharing with me a lot of details concerning English teaching and learning. I respect that as these elements takes up a substantial part in her everyday teaching and they form the platform on which the ideology of inclusion is realized.

Based on Clandinin and Connelly's commonplace framework, seven themes have been identified in Mavis' reflection: (i) catching in emotional struggle, balancing the needs of different groups of students; (ii) the influence of life stories; (iii) language of imagery and metaphor; (iv) SEN students not labels, understanding their needs as persons; (v) learning difficulties not purely ability issue, may cause by poor attitudes; (vi) more than inclusive practice, the need to create successful experiences; (vii) teachers communicate their expectations to students, help them set own targets.

5.2 Theme 1: Catching in Emotional Struggle, Balancing the Needs of Different Groups of Students

As noted above, Mavis is a teacher specialized in English teaching. She needs to follow a rigid curriculum and prepare students for uniform assessment tests. Though she can have great flexibility in instructional approach, she

needs to observe the same teaching schedule. Her class is of mixed ability, there are both SEN students and non-SEN students. Mavis is teaching a group of Primary 6 students who are in the last year of primary education. Most often, the same teacher teaches the same class in Primary 5 and 6. Because of special reason, Mavis takes up this class in their final year.

Many times, throughout the interviews, Mavis talks about her emotional struggles. She uses the term 'high achievers' and 'low achievers' to refer to two groups of students. At first, I thought she meant SEN students were low achievers. When engaging in longer conservation, I started to realize that I was the one who had biased. Mavis only uses this term literally to refer to those with good academic performance. She understands very well that situations vary among individuals. Being a SEN student does not necessarily mean that he/she is going to have difficulties in academic learning. There are many factors that affect student success, the SEN label does not tell everything. And in Mavis' experience, it may be rare to have SEN students with high academic achievements, but there are indeed cases when SEN students out-perform non-SEN students and have good academic results.

Mavis coins the term 'high achievers' and 'low achievers' to refer to students' engagement levels in class. She finds it difficult to fine tune the task difficulty to an optimal level at which the high achievers will find it challenging and the low achievers will not find it too demanding. The following extract (written

in first-person narration) captures what struggles Mavis faced:

> *I struggle to balance the needs of high achievers and low achievers. Take reading aloud as an example, during the first time reading, the low achievers do not read. When I prompt them to read in the second reading, they struggle to follow. Then in the third time reading, the high achievers are bored, but the low achievers have just been warmed up. When some students are bored, they tend to disturb others. My observation is when high achievers repeat the same phrases 4-5 times, they are bored. But low achievers need to take up longer time. That makes the learning atmosphere not very supportive.* (Doc 4.1)

> *Some don't understand the questions. This is not up to P.6 standards. I struggle a bit and wonder if I should explain all questions or not. In the end, I choose not to. Next time I will do the opposite, I will go through all the questions, but high achievers may be dragged down/bored.* (Doc 7)

Later, when Mavis reduces the time on whole class teaching and introduces more pair or group work in class. She faces another problem of having some groups finishing the task faster than the others. When she assigns an extended task to fast learners, she overhears "*one student tells her partner not to work too fast as she doesn't want to work more. She turns back and lectures the pair. It really surprises her as she thinks most classmates are quite positive and regards that as a glory to be able to proceed to long answers, however, there exists some who think the opposite*." (Doc 4.1)

Despite this kind of emotional turmoil, Mavis values the concept of inclusion. She recognizes the places of both groups in class:

> *High achievers can be good resources in class. I ask them to help apply phonics skill and small words in big words to decode new words. They succeed in decoding long words like 'architecture'. They have satisfaction and feel less bored.* (Doc 4.1)

> *When they have problem understanding, I should give them more thinking time to process. When I ask the student what 'blind' means, the phrase 'I can't see' is there. He still can't get it. He refuses to think. That seems to be that student's trait. I still struggle to find suitable ways to teach them.* (Doc 7)

5.3 Theme 2: Influence of Life Stories

When recounting her early life history, Mavis talked about how her mother and teachers supported and affected her learning. In one interview, Mavis talks about her nephew, particularly the time when she was having early sign of learning problem:

> *When she was promoted to P.1, she failed in all subjects. That put much pressure on the family. The kid had emotional outburst from time to time and her school performance fluctuated. When the family asked for help from the school social worker, the school sent the kid to a centre. One social worker in the centre suspected that the kid has learning difficulties and uses special ways to help her. The school did nothing. It was only in P.2 that she was sent to IRTP (Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme). The relationship between the girl and her mum was affected because of her school results, but has improved a lot after*

getting help from the centre. (Doc 12) (Appendix C)

Mavis said this experience has nothing to do with her receiving SEN training, she was sent by school to do so. But with this kind of knowledge, she is able to spot out her nephew's problem. (Doc 4.1)

Mavis uses her professional knowledge to help her nephew. This experience may explain her sympathetic attitude towards SEN students and her willingness to spend time understanding the background of the students and the family needs. Mavis' understanding of the problem is more than a cognitive one, it shows evidence of affective engagement. This echoes with Connelly and Clandinin's belief (1987) that the personal practical knowledge of teachers needs to be understood cognitively and affectively. Teachers' "aesthetic, moral and emotional states of mind", when compared with thought and action, should not be regarded as secondary in terms of its research value.

Mavis expresses the same intensity of emotion when she talked about her son's experience of learning English. Her son liked watching cartoons, thus his English was learned from TV. Mavis believes interest is the best motivator. That may explain why she mentioned in the interviews about reading students' body language and changing her lesson plan when students got bored:

Some of my students are interested in the outside world. For example, they wanted to know which words are British English and which are American English. Their body language tells you that they are interested. They change from folding arms to learning forward. (Doc 4)

I remember one academic said things need to be repeated 16-17 times before one can learn. I am not the last teacher to teach them but only one of the teachers. They will meet the one they can learn. I am sowing a seed. I hope I am not the one who 'kill' their interest. (Doc 4.1)

At the beginning of the term, I introduced 1-min talk in class. However, I found it impossible to continue as students were not interested and engaged. They came to the class front, but they were like a stone wall. There was no fun. Instead of dragging on, I called off this activity. After the examination, I introduced another speaking activity, like a kind of pair talk. I lowered my expectations and gave lots of encouragement. (Doc 19)

When Mavis talks about stories that happened in the classroom, she linked them up with these life stories (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). They are all personal family stories that carry, not just memories, but intense emotions. These stories connect thought with biography, yet this kind of linkage do not suggest causal relationship (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987). There is no warranted evidence to make such a claim and readers have the freedom to consider this as one possible explanation.

5.4 Theme 3: The Language of Imagery and Metaphor

Connelly and Clandinin (1985) believe that teachers know teaching

experientially through "images, rituals, habits, cycles, routines, and rhythms" (p. 195). They are components of teachers' personal practical knowledge that inform teachers' language, actions and beliefs. As such, images are understood to be a collection of mental representations in teachers' mind that are not easily presented or re-presented (Moen, Gudmundsdottir, & Flem, 2003). Imageries are more than images, they are rich figurative or descriptive expressions that are embedded with emotions and thoughts. Elbaz (1981) points out that it is the language used by teachers to narrate their work. Imageries, its richness, fluidity and flexibility, allow teachers to (re)present their practice to the public in a lively manner. I believe Mavis' figurative description could be apprehended more as imageries than images. This pictorial language helped enrich her expressions as well as 'portray' her sentiments in context. For example, when Mavis talks about those students who have lost their motivation to learn, she uses 'a tug of war' to describe their unwillingness to participate in class:

> *…they don't care whether the answers are right or wrong. They can be easily distracted and off-task easily. They don't raise their hands even though they know the answers. They seem not to care about the school results. It is like a tug of war in class.* (Doc 4)

This vivid description is more than a still image. It carries the strong feelings of tension and anxiety in her relationships with this group of students. It is a dynamic interactive process where both sides struggle to be in control. Another added perspective could be that students possess a playful attitude

towards learning. Hence, figurative language may not pin down on specific incident, neither are they clear in articulating teachers' thoughts or theories. However, imageries and metaphors allow comparisons to happen, thus providing a vivid description of the scene and event in the audience's mind.

As a second language teacher, Mavis has a special perspective about SEN students. She jokingly remarks that all second language learners are SEN students because*:*

> *ESL (English as second language) students are handicapped because the target language (i.e. English) causes much difficulty to them. They have other strengths but the fact that they have to speak and read English make them vulnerable. SEN students have other strengths as well. But in the school contexts, they face more constraints than the others* (Doc 2).

Mavis uses the imagery of classroom as field and teachers as farmers when she talks about how she positions herself in students' learning journey*: I hope I am not the last teacher to teach them but only one of the teachers. I hope I am not the one who kills their interest. They will meet future teachers they can learn from. I am sowing a seed* (Doc 4). Another time she uses the metaphor 'clay': *molding into different shapes, depending on whether you set targets for them, you can change them* (Doc 4.1) to describe the influence a teacher could have on the many possibilities of students' future.

Mavis uses the phrase 'tug-of-war' to describe her relationship with some of

the students:

> *They (students) see no reasons in learning, and not surprisingly, in English learning as well. This kind of sloppy attitude can be seen in their homework assignment. They do the TSA exercise in a 'carefree' attitude, they don't care whether the answers are right or wrong. They can be easily distracted and off-task easily. They don't raise their hands even though they know the answers. They seem not to care about the school results. It is like a tug of war in class. Some teachers attribute that to their laziness*. (Doc 4).

She perceives the classroom as the battlefield, with her on one side facing students on the other side. There is a strong sense of confrontation as she wants to pull students closer to learning, but they resist. She also uses the metaphor "resistant wall" "shut down" to describe students' responses to some of the class activities (Doc 19). Mavis reflects that students found this task demanding because they did not have the confidence to come up to the class front and spoke in English.

Moreover, she uses the metaphor 'swimming':

> *…students refuse to get wet because they have stranded onshore for a long time, they observe in a distance, thinking that they could get on the boat anytime they want. But the 'learning' boat has sailed away slowly (Doc 12)*

to refer to SEN students who refuse to try not because of their ability, but their poor attitudes. These metaphors all focus on students' learning attitude,

it may reflect, to a certain extent, Mavis' personal belief in the importance of cultivating in students a positive mind set in learning. She uses the imagery of 'a piece of puzzle' to refer to the ways teachers use to help students. She believes that:

> *individual students' patterns are different. Teachers holding a piece but not knowing the pattern may think there is nothing wrong with the puzzle they have on hand. The truth may be that the piece does not belong to the pattern. It is like teacher choosing the wrong means to help students. Their persistence may cause more unsuccessful experience to both sides.* (Doc 2)

This imagery echoes with Mavis' belief that a teacher should use different ways to help students learn. She found the following good quotation on web and shared with me in the interview*: If students can't learn in the way we teach, we must teach them the way the child can learn* (Doc 9).

5.5 Theme 4: Understanding SEN Students as Persons

When Mavis talks about her SEN students in class, she does not see them as a group of students who need extra needs and attention. Rather she sees them as individuals with own temperament and character. She thinks SEN students face more limitations and challenges than others but they do have the ability to learn; and teachers should have expectations towards them. She recounts a story of her handling a student with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. This boy has learned to control himself as he grows older. He only misbehaves outside the classroom. One time he became

very edgy and wanted to break the rule by shouting out in class, Mavis saw this and told him to write down his thoughts in paper. He calmed down and attempted to write down his thoughts, but soon he forgot what was in his mind.

Mavis tends to treat SEN students as normal kids. She has expectations towards them and is not willing to lower the standards easily. Nonetheless she is willing to give the benefit of doubt to students, especially when she is not clear why the students cannot perform to her expectations:

> *There are two parts in dictation. The first part is recitation, the second part is read-aloud dictation. One student remained seated and wrote nothing in the first part. He said he did revise but he forgot totally. I wondered if I should trust him or not. Then I read aloud the first part [of recited dictation] quickly one time. That student was able to dictate. Maybe he is telling the truth.* (Doc 7)

Mavis notes that there is one student in class who has tried hard to catch up. He cried when she asked him why he failed the test. Mavis believes he cares about his own performance. She says that he is not a certified SEN student but a suspected case when he was young. When Mavis gives him extra help and clear instructions, he is able to perform. Mavis' attitude is that: whether he is a SEN student or not is not important as she will try whenever method that helps him. At this point, I couldn't restrain myself from interrupting and give suggestion: pressing [educational] psychologist to recheck him. If proven,

he can be entitled to have more support in the future (Doc 12).

5.6 Theme 5: Difficulties Caused by Poor Learning Attitudes, not Purely Ability Problem

Mavis sees the SEN issue as a complicated entanglement. It is more than an innate quality or ability that hinders children learning. Her students are about 13 years old, their past learning experiences have created a lot of knots she needs to untie. One knot is poor learning attitudes. She notes that some SEN students' learning problems are caused by low motivation rather than their learning abilities. These students simply refuse to try and give up easily:

> *…when I supplement the explanation with L1 (mother tongue), they (SEN students) are able to understand. But they lose interest in learning and have poor attitudes, that's why they still do not do their homework well. It seems that they have switched off their learning mode for a long time, they just drift away* (Doc 12).

Mavis uses the metaphor of swimming to describe those students who refuse to participate in class:

> *students refuse to get wet because they have stranded onshore for a long time, they observe in a distance, thinking that they could get on the boat anytime they want. But the 'learning' boat has sailed away slowly* (Doc 12).

Mavis believes that the SEN issue can be a barrier to English learning, they cause poor performance in standard tests. However, she has different success criteria for SEN students. She sees progression as the change in SEN students' learning attitudes:

> *They no longer rest on table, they are willing to participate in lesson. They engage in the learning process. Their improvement in marks is gradual. Their speaking performance gives me a great sense of satisfactory. It shows that students learn, even though it is 'minimal'. They are able to use their own knowledge. Of course, there are other 'shut-down' SEN. However, their problems are not only ability-related, but attitude-related* (Doc 19).

Mavis does not see the SEN students as a separate group. They face the same problem as non-SEN students. Both suffer from family-related issue and may cause various behavioural problems. She recounts:

> *one time a boy runs around in class before lesson ends. I call him forwards and ask him 'What does he want?' The boy cries instantly. This boy's working mother has no time to discipline him and send him to a strict tutor at the tutorial centre for long hours. He does not want to go. He has a lot of negative feelings. He refuses to go to the tutorial centre any more. His results drop but he behaves properly now. Since he is enthusiastic about football and is a member of the football team, the bargain that he must hand in handwork goes well. His results are still dropping but he is able to complete his assignment* (Doc 17).

Mavis believes she needs to communicate her expectations clearly to students. Students are able to understand her seriousness and respond

accordingly:

> *I have to let my students know that I don't accept this kind of attitude and their work quality. I am very persistent about my standards. I make them understand the standards I accept. When one girl who is smart just copy the word 'anchor' without understanding its meaning in a dictionary activity, I talk to her directly and make her understand that I check every word she put down in the assignment. I am serious about my work and expect her to be serious as well* (Doc 4).

Mavis believes that there is space in the English curriculum to allow teachers to help SEN students. Teachers can set lower target in dictation to encourage students to memorize spelling. They can focus on speaking to encourage participation. This can help create successful experience and avoid comparison among classes about teaching progress.

Though Mavis talks a lot about expectations, she does not have a standard that impose on everyone. Rather she is flexible and is willing to adjust her expectations to suit the students' abilities and interests. But she insists that the students need to try first. She recalls the experience of introducing 1-min talk. She wanted to introduce this activity because it worked well in the past. However, this time it was not a successful experience as students built up a 'resistant wall' (psychological barriers), surprisingly across ability levels, which is difficult to break down within a year. She attributed that to time factor. In the past, she taught the same class of students for two years; now

she just teaches them for one year. She does not have enough time to change their past learning habits. Changes among students are found to be slow and gradual. By focusing on speaking, it could help prepare students for secondary school interview. In the past, Mavis even asked students to record their own performance and played back in class. Peers gave feedback and helped correct. One student came back and shared her successful experience on her first day at school in Secondary 1. She was the only one brave enough to put up her hand and introduced herself in class (Doc 19).

5.7 Theme 6: More Than Inclusive Practice, Creating "Feel Good" Experiences

Mavis reflects that her teaching strategy changed when she started to understand her students better. She had adjusted her expectations and teaching pace. She stresses more on explanation and checked understanding from time to time. She observes changes in students as well. Compared with the past, students had become more engaging. However, this improvement could only be observed in behaviours not marks (Doc 14).

Mavis finds the multi-sensory approach appealing. She knew this approach well before training. Training makes her understand more. She believes that the needs of SEN and non-SEN are similar. In an inclusive classroom, both sides benefit. She may need to use this approach more often. However, she is aware that high ability students may get bored or distracted if too much

time is allocated to multi-sensory approach or when she explains too long (Doc 19).

In addition, Mavis uses different levels of questioning to cater for student diversity. She recalls one time she started the lesson with easy questions and progressed to more difficult ones:

> *I name low achievers to answer simple and straightforward questions. However, high achievers are eager to answer right away, they are disappointed when they are not called upon. So, when I post difficult questions, high achievers choose not to put up their hands. And when I call their names, these students think I am challenging them. And sometimes because they are not attentive, they may think that I am humiliating them deliberately. This situation happens among individual students (Doc 9).*

Mavis emphasizes a lot on bringing successful experiences to learners. Students, no matter SEN or non-SEN, need to feel good before they can learn:

> *There are some students who have poor foundation. Their English standards are very low. I know them as I taught them last year in IRTP. For these students, given the right chances, I would praise them openly in class. One time, when I asked students to copy what they don't know in the note book. One weak student who is very serious about the work copied a number of words ending with '-er' and 'or' in the note book. I name this student and praised her in class. Then I gave students 5 minutes to share their work with other students in class. I could see that students were really proud of themselves* (Doc 4).

> *My students are still kids. They don't have much successful experience. Maybe their family don't have high expectations or their expectations are so high that they find it hard to achieve. I try to create 'small successful experiences' for them. I dictate the verb table. I write the basic verb from on the blackboard. Students dictate the past and participle form. Nobody will score zero as they just need to add 'd' or 'ed'. If I don't write the verb form on the blackboard, many students will fail. I think this is okay because in the exam, only the verb form is given. Students don't need to study very hard. I have used this approach for the past P.5 and P.6 students. Next, I will ask students to dictate twelve months. They still don't know how to spell twelve months after having written them for so many years. I think this is the basic competency they should have* (Doc 4).

Mavis says sometimes she is frustrated as she needs to teach by constant repetition and revision. She understands that her students have great difficulty remembering new words:

> *Last year I tried using Quizlet on i-pad. Students were highly motivated in lesson. They were able to read aloud key words in isolation. But then the next day, when I asked them again, students failed to recognize these words.* (Doc 12).

Mavis respects her students' needs. She also shared her practice of giving students five minutes to do revision before dictation. Students can then perform better. Mavis reflects that she also needs successful experience:

> *Sometimes I chose to lessen the control and allow students to be off-task in class. I want both myself and my students not to just focus on grade, but be positive about learning and to be able to learn. I need to adjust my views and remind myself to be positive from time to time. For*

example, when doing pre-dictation, I knew some of her students may forget easily afterwards, but I still spend time to revise before dictation. I want to create small successful experiences for my students. I find this strategy to be effective as gradually I am able to include those students who at first refused to copy date and day from the blackboard and just closed their books and watched (Doc 14).

5.8 Theme 7: Students Need Teachers to Help Them Set Goals

Mavis reflects that students need teachers to set target for them. Teachers need to have expectations. They need to communicate their expectations to students directly, telling them that they need to learn in lessons. She recalls one time when students are not attentive in class. She reprimands them for being inattentive and lack of response. SEN students are surprised when they know that teachers have expectations of them to participate in class. The next day, when an SEN student gives her good responses, she awards her 2 marks (an award system in class to promote positive behavior) and praises her. Their performance today shows that they understand what Mavis expects them to behave in class. She hopes they can keep up with this attitude (Doc 9).

Mavis understands that her expectations of SEN students need to be specific and personalized. Sometimes she worries that she may have set the standards too high for her students:

My message to SEN and parents is that they need to try hard first. I have to make my expectation very explicit so that they know whether they

> *meet my targets or not. For example, in the test, I expect them to circle 'time marker' in tenses. I demonstrate that in class using the PowerPoint.* (Doc 17).

Mavis does not mind students giving the wrong answers in the test, but they need to demonstrate that they attempt to circle the time marker. She believes this can reflect students' learning attitude.

Mavis recounted one past incident when the school finished levelling story books in the library, she asked students to choose books that are of their own level. Mavis has confidence that students are able to choose the right books. Students just need to be reminded of the difference between information texts and non-information texts, Mavis believes that teachers need to trust students' judgement. They need to let students try first, then help them adjust to higher expectations or tell them explicitly that avoidance is not a good strategy (Doc 19).

5.9 Summary

In this chapter, Clandinin and Connelly's narrative inquiry framework has been used to explore narratively a classroom teacher's lived experiences in a primary school. The three dimensions of commonplace – temporality, sociality and place – have provided the context for Mavis' story presented above. The seven themes have been identified to describe Mavis' experiences. They include emotional struggle, influence of life stories, language of imagery and metaphor, understanding SEN students as persons,

learning difficulties not purely ability issue, the need to create successful experiences and helping students set targets. These themes are threads in Mavis' story. They become retold story, being woven together narratively through the eyes of a school support agent. In the next chapter, I will tell my story as a support services provider-researcher into the larger narrative of inclusion.

Chapter 6. Findings and Discussion II – Restorying

6.1 My Story

As a narrative inquirer, I am more than an impartial observer (Clough, 2002; Denzin, 2000; Elbaz, 1997; Frank, Bird & Bridges, 1999; Moen, 2006) that record the people, things, happenings and places. The centrality of the researcher's own experience, as reminded by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), needs to be acknowledged as the prism of the interpretative lens. The autobiographical details of my story can explain the reasoning, interpretations, understandings as well as the limitations and constraints I have in constructing and reconstructing Mavis' story narratively. In the section below, I tell the story of my personal growth and the possible impact of my presence on Mavis' experiences.

The early memory of my English learning experiences, beginning with primary education, has always been associated with tedious grammar drilling. I remember specifically that there was one supplementary exercise called 505. Its name reflects its quantity, the grammar practice comprises of five hundred and five exercises. Each exercise has about 15-20 items. Considering that there are only 365 days in a year, one can imagine the number of exercises a kid has to do every day; plus, the amount of time the teachers spent on pair checking the answers. No wonder I have such a negative attitude towards grammar learning. It also explained why I had absolutely no interest in learning English in the primary.

I started to change when I was in the secondary. There was a reading lesson every week. The selected course book was *Flowers for Mrs. Harris* by Paul Gallico. It is a book about an old cleaning lady who is obsessed with buying a Dior dress. The vocabulary is difficulty and demanding for a second language learner. Yet the idea is appealing to girls. Most importantly, my teacher tried her very best to make the lessons interesting. She even bought her own Dior perfume to class and let us smell it. Coming from the working class with no idea what perfume was, this incident had become an impactful "sensory" experience to me. I started to believe that English is a language I could use to explore and connect with the outside world. Later I even took the initiative to join a pen-pal club and started writing letters in English to children in different parts of the world. English has become a live language with so much fun and excitement. It has become larger than grammar learning. On this point, my participant Mavis and I share the same view. We believe learners need to be engaged in the learning process, and interest is the best motivator (Dewey, 1906).

This belief has become one of my guiding principles when I became an English teacher in a secondary school. Interestingly, I did not choose to be a teacher when I first graduated from the university. I had worked as a personnel and administrative officer in a manufacturing company for 2 years before I joined teaching. Unlike Mavis who always has positive feelings

towards schools, I was those who perceived it as an unchallenging place, as compared with the outside world. Most obviously, my initial conception of teaching has been affected by my apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) when I was a student in the classroom.

As a fresh university graduate, I had a strong interest in the fancy world outside. I chose to run away from the familiar setting - schools. In these two years, I felt that office work was fairly mundane and I was not interested in working for money. I started to become open-minded and gave myself a chance to teach. I took up a teaching post in the middle of the term, thus I had 3 months to settle down to the job before the new term started.

I continued teaching in that school after the summer break. Being a teacher has been a totally different experience from what I expected. I found that I enjoy teaching. Teaching could be a very satisfactory experience if you appreciate beaming smiles and attentive eyes in class. This experience has made me become sensitive to teachers' background and feelings. I was particularly sensitive to teachers who share similar experience as I do. These who are not quite sure if they like teaching or not; or feel that they don't have a choice but teaching; most often I would share with them my personal experience and to encourage them to listen to their voices inside, and to be true to oneself. Teaching primary students seems like an easy job, but it is demanding emotionally. One needs to be able to see the meaning behind

the job and appreciate the educating process. I believe positive feeling is the best motivator for teachers to take a further step to help student learning.

While I was teaching, I received the 2-year part time postgraduate training in education. That means when I first started teaching, I was not trained. At the time when trained teachers were not enough, that was considered acceptable. There was no mentoring system or shading programme. I swam in the sea and struggled on my own. The only thing I could rely on was my apprenticeship of observation experience (Borg, 2004; Lortie, 1975).

My lessons were modelled on those lessons which as a student I found motivating and stimulating. I was like a “legitimate peripheral participant” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). However, my teaching was emulation without understanding. Everything was initiative based on my memories (Borg, 2004). Sometimes it worked but sometimes it didn’t. I did not have the knowledge to reflect deeply. I could not understand my conditions of success and the critical factors in decision making. My study in the postgraduate teacher education program brought me to a next level of understanding, I started to proceed from “doing without knowing” to “knowing why it is doing”. These kind of interactions between theories and practice help expand and develop my professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996).

I changed to another secondary school and continued working for 7 years.

During that time, I continued doing a master degrees in second language teaching. I remember I barely met the entry requirements of the programme: at least 5 years teaching experience. It was a competitive programme and teachers needed to fight in the interview to get a place. I was being admitted. I was elated and could not resist asking the lecturer why. His answer was that the number of teaching years was only a reference, it was not that important because some people may have the same teaching experience repeating 5 times. I was impressed by his answer. I then always remind myself that teaching years makes sense only if you are progressing.

I was lucky because the school had provided an ideal place to put my learning into action. If the school culture was rigid which did not allow teachers any flexibility or if students were not motivated, my teaching experience would never be so positive and motivating. However, I only have this kind of awareness years later after I changed my job, when I have chances to work with teachers in different school contexts did I recognize the importance of context in shaping teachers' experiences and promoting personal growth (Fullan, 1997).

During my seven years of work in the secondary, I met my "informal mentor". She is called Chris, she is a native English teacher from Australia. She was a senior teacher in her forties, whereas I was a young teacher in my twenties. Even though the school did not facilitate any collaboration among teachers,

somehow our common passion in teaching drew us close to each other. We became close working partner at school. We often had lots of shop talk after work. As a critical friend, she let me know my strengths and limitations. My teaching style was different from other colleagues as I refused to spend so much time on grammar teaching. I was not the “main stream”. Chris was affirmative about my teaching style. We engaged students in a lot of interesting and creative activities. Her encouragement and students’ feedback assured me of my way. Most importantly, she demonstrated what teaching professionalism means. Following the rules or conventional practices without challenging them is unprofessional, one needs to have passion to change and the drive to excel. Being an English teacher is more than teaching a language, I need to teach students to think critically and independently as well. As a young teacher who got trapped in a hierarchical system with little hope of leading change, Chris convinced me to purse my dream. With her support and encouragement, I ventured out to see the bigger world outside.

I left my comfort zone and jumped onto the bandwagon of curriculum reform. I left the secondary and took up the offer to work as a school-based curriculum officer in the primary. My identity has changed completely: from a classroom teacher to an official. The work context has changed: from working in the secondary to the primary. The job nature has changed: from working with students to working with teachers. However, at that time, I had

no idea what the job was. I only knew that I had to provide on-site support to teachers, but I had no ideas what support teachers needed and how to help.

My learning has been contextual and social in nature. I don't have ready-made materials or program. I start with questions: What do you think we could do together to help students learn better? What problems are we facing? What solutions can we try? When teachers and I work together to plan a teaching module, we may have different ideas. We need to articulate our thoughts, beliefs and assumptions clearly and explicitly so as to enrich one another. When the plan is implemented in class, we observe students' reactions and reflect on our thinking and actions. This helps improve our metacognition, challenge the old beliefs and provide a safe haven for testing new initiatives. I often experience this kind of construction and co-construction process in my work life (Schön, 1987). It accelerates my learning and promote other teachers' learning as well. However, this kind of collaborative work relationship is not easy to build. It takes time and needs lots of trust and mutual support (Anstey & Clarke, 2010; Blamey, Meyer, & Walpole, 2008; Erskine-Cullen, 1995). Hence, sometimes it happens, and regrettably, sometimes it doesn't. Teachers need to be critical too. And when we evaluate our work, feeling good is not good enough. To improve the reflection quality, I encourage teachers to adopt sort of ethnographic approach, collecting evidence and allowing "the story" to emerge (Frank,

Bird & Bridges, 1999). The evidence includes tangible ones such as students' work or assessment results and non-tangible ones such as classroom observation or students' views. This kind of evidence-based reflection is a luxury in teachers' hectic schedule, but it is a powerful tool to bring about long-term changes.

6.2 Retelling

6.2.1 Dual roles: a support agent and a narrative researcher

My job allows me to have chances to work in different school settings with different groups of teachers for a considerable period of time (ranging from 2 years to 5 years). I share Connelly and Clandinin's view that narrative inquiry which centers teachers on the dimensions of temporality, sociality and place, can help provide a narrative perspective to their experiences. My dual roles, as a support agent and a narrative researcher, allow me to undergo the experience three times: living in the experience when I work as a support agent, experiencing it with my participating teacher Mavis; and constructing and reconstructing it in the narrative process.

As noted in Chapter 4, the relationship between support agents and teachers has been a subject of research in different institutional settings. A majority of the findings stress on the importance of openness and credibility (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, 2010; Blamey et al., 2008). My work relationship with Mavis shares similar features. With trust and honesty,

Mavis is willing to open up herself and her classroom and welcome me in. However, extending this relationship to a research level is a double-edged sword. On one hand, this friendly, yet formal relationship facilitates direct lead-in, with no time needed to spend on establishing relationship and building rapport (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988). On the other hand, it has some complexities. The smooth lead-in can cause role confusion (Avalos, 2011). Mavis does not look upon herself as an impartial participant joining a research to help the education community. Rather, she looks upon herself as an enthusiastic co-worker helping an acquaintance who once helped the school develop the school-based curriculum. It has become a kind of reciprocal relationship. At the beginning of the interview, she expresses her worries about me not discovering what I want in my study (Doc 2). When I press further what she means, she says she is very positive about inclusion. She thinks it will be difficult for me to show any significant change in attitudes during the study. I then explain to her that my research focus is not on the effectiveness of any research tools, but on her lived experiences in the classroom. I thought I had explained to her earlier in our first meeting and again when she signed the consent form. It turns out that she shifts back to the post-positivist mode (Clough, 2002) and thinks that our reflection is an intervention tool awaiting to be proved in the study.

This kind of role confusion happens in myself as well. When I reflect with Mavis about her teaching, I can’t resist taking up the role of an on-site

support agent, wanting to give her some advice on curriculum planning and language teaching and learning. One time I had a workshop (an unplanned event under the request of the panel head) with the other English teachers. I introduced the summarizing strategy SWBST (Wilfong, 2019) to teachers in the workshop, hoping that this may help students complete their book reports. Few weeks later, when I interviewed Mavis, I could not resist gearing the conversation towards book reports. Instead of talking about the effectiveness or the difficulties students had when they did the reports, Mavis' concern was on another aspect: whether students were given the autonomy to choose their own books when doing the school reports. She discussed in length about the importance of teachers having confidence in students' ability in choosing right books for themselves. She complained that other teachers worried too much and thought letting students choose their own books is a complicated matter; and teachers wouldn't recommend books for individual students either as they worried about the workload. So in the end, they suggested a target book which meant the same book for all students. She complained that her colleagues always wanted to have uniform requirements and standard answers. They often preferred questions with right or wrong answers to open-ended questions; and some even want to have a standard answer for the book summary.

I want to bring this summarizing strategy to the foreground, whereas Mavis turns it into the background, instead bringing forward an important point:

there are other things such as teachers' belief and current practice (Fullan, 1997) that affect the implementation of this strategy. Finally, my support mode subsides. My role as a researcher overtook my role as a curriculum developer. I went with the conversation flow and let Mavis poured out her feelings and thoughts about her colleagues in this aspect. I wonder if my choice would be different if I needed to collect evidence in relation to this strategy, would there be a difference in my priority? Would I discard Mavis' feelings and insist her to focus the discussion on the effectiveness of the strategy? Nonetheless, compared with the scenario when a researcher takes up the dual role of a support agent and a researcher simultaneously (Breault, 2010), my role conflict is containable.

6.2.2 Engaging in the research process

Clandinin and Connelly believe that narrative inquiry is a process of inquiry built upon the relationship of the researcher and the participant. It is not a static relationship, rather a dynamic one; and "in the process of beginning to live the shared story of narrative inquiry, the researcher needs to be aware of constructing a relationship in which both voices are heard" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4).

There are a few obstacles Mavis and I need to overcome before we can truly engage in the narrative inquiry process. The first one is the research intention (Denzin, 2000). Obviously, at the beginning of the research, when I told Mavis

I was interested in her lived inclusive experiences, I failed to communicate my research intention successfully. Mavis did not share the same understanding of what “lived experiences” meant. That explains why Mavis worried that I may not be able to have any findings in the study. Gradually, after meeting for a few times, she began to relax and get used to our mode of interaction – a causal style of conversation, with no guided questions or lots of prompting (Carter, 1993). Our conversation is disciplined, yet natural. When Mavis talks about her family stories, they are related to the topic. Finally, a shared understanding of the research intention has been reached between us and collaboration happened naturally in the “storytelling and restorying” process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Another obstacle Mavis and I need to overcome is the “language” barrier. It is true that this study is conducted in mother tongue and located in a shared cultural and institutional context (Carter, 1993). However, this does not guarantee that we are speaking the same “language”. Are we referring to the same concept when we use the same term? How about the assumptions or meanings behind the term? One obvious example is the use of the terms: high achievers and low achievers. Mavis and I share the understanding that we are talking about academic achievements. However, at first, when Mavis used this term in the context of inclusive education and talks students in class, I mistakenly thought that SEN students, in Mavis’ mind, were equivalent to low achievers. If the power between the researcher and the participant is

not equal and when communication is not honest and open, I may overlook the complexity of the situations and jump to the conclusion that Mavis had a very narrow interpretation of inclusive education. It was only later when we went deeper into the interview did Mavis have the chance to clarify my misunderstanding. She believes the two concepts are not in a linear relationship. She has some SEN students who are high achievers academically, their problems are behavioral, social and emotional. There are a handful who are struggling. Nonetheless, Mavis believes that the main obstacle is not their own deficiency, but their poor learning attitudes and low motivation. She is disappointed that some SEN students, even when she simplifies the tasks to accommodate their needs, refuse to participate in class. This may have been caused by frustrating learning experiences in the past and low self-esteem which cannot easy to be resolved in the short term.

At this point, my role as a researcher is not a distant and impartial observer, but a warm body with own judgement and interpretation. Clandinin and Connelly (1988) believe that:

> Openness of Judgment and Interpretation. This criterion specifies that researchers will not be dispassionate, objective observers of the situation but will, as a consequence of participating in the situation, care for it. Values come into play and more desirable courses of action are suggested and discussed with participants as appropriate. (p. 271-272)

My relationship with the participant needs to be honest and open so as to

avoid any misinterpretation and misunderstanding. I need to listen and respect the participant's voices (Moen, 2006; Moen, Gudmundsdottir, & Flem, 2003). And in the interview process, I am participating in the situation as well. I co-plan lessons with Mavis and observe her class. We reflect on lessons and comment on students' behavior. I can't and shouldn't withhold my judgement because I am part of the situation. My assumptions and biases are examined in the work process as well. At the same time, I have a duty of care to both Mavis and her class. When Mavis mentioned one student "*who tried very hard to live up to the expectations, he cried when asked why failed the dictation. He is able to follow suit when extra help and step by step instruction are given. This is not a SEN case, but a suspected one when he was younger*" (Doc 12). I couldn't resist interrupting, suggesting that the school should send him to the educational psychologist as he may be a "missed" case. If he is proved, he can be entitled to have more support in the future.

6.2.3 Re-searching my participants' roles

Clandinin and Connelly's narrative inquiry framework has been used to explore narratively Mavis' biographical history and her lived experiences. The commonplace dimension of temporality allows Mavis to talk about places, things and events along the timeline, narrating backward and forward over time towards the past, present as well as the future. When Mavis narrates what happened in the past (her English learning experiences,

her teaching history and family stories etc.) and in her classroom, her retelling is not regarded as a "true" description of the story (Clandinin, 2007), rather it is a reconstruction of her lived experiences. It provides a personal re-interpretation of her lived experiences, and most importantly, a "narrative unity" (MacIntyre, 1981 as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 1988 p. 280) to explain Mavis' current beliefs, views and practice. The second dimension is sociality. It concerns both personal and social conditions, which have been explained in Chapter 5.1 Mavis' Story and the first section of this chapter My Story.

The third dimension is place. It provides further inquiry space for researchers and participants to foster collaboration. Clandinin and Connelly use the metaphor of landscape to convey its vastness and three-dimensional nature. It is composed of happenings both inside and outside the classroom. In the institutional context where classroom teachers stay with students in the same setting the whole day, classroom is a natural demarcation of border. Nonetheless, in this study, given the special nature of the education system in Hong Kong where primary teachers are highly specialized in various subjects, the dimension of place could be extended further to include happenings in various lessons. The bell signals the beginning and ending of lessons. Each lesson lasts for about thirty-five minutes. It is true that most lessons happen in the same setting. However, with the change of teachers and teaching content; the dynamics, atmosphere and mood of the same

setting change completely.

Mavis has different roles in these settings. In the homeroom/class period, she is the class teacher. In the English lessons, she is an English teacher. In the religious lessons, she is the religious teacher. After class, she is a teacher of IRTA (Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme). Mavis reveals a different side of herself when she takes up different roles. The present study focuses mainly on Mavis as an English teacher which takes up about 90% of her time, but this does not limit the conversation to that. One time, Mavis talks about her religious lesson when she has a meaningful discussion with the class about religion: "*I am their religious teacher as well. I allow them to ask questions in class. They like to ask questions of various topics: what is Islam and whether I am a believer or not.*" (Doc 4) Mavis is teaching in a Catholic school and herself a devoted Catholic. The religious lessons are designed to preach the gospel. The fact that she allows students to explore other alternatives suggests an open-mindedness in providing learning opportunities and accepting differences. After all, inclusion has taken a much broader interpretation which includes issues more than disabilities and learning difficulties; and the ultimate aim is:

> *to eliminate exclusion that is a consequence of negative attitudes and a lack of response to diversity in race, economic status, social class, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation and ability.(UNESCO, 2009, p. 4)*

Mavis also makes use of her role as a religious teacher to help a SEN student in the English class. She is a slow learner with IQ below average. She is a headache in class:

> *She just rests on the table. She refuses to follow any instructions. She has no learning motivation. But she is able to hand in all assignments because she has a tutor who allows her to copy answers. Her parents accept that as well because this can satisfy the school requirement of handing in homework. Her neighbor has positive impact on her. The peer urges her to learn, to take out the textbook. I have talked to her after class and let her take part in the Religious scheme to help P.1 & P.2 students. This is a good way to help her build up her confidence*. (Doc 17)

Another role as an IRTP teacher allows Mavis to teach students in a small group (a group of 7-8). Students in this group usually have below average academic results. They may or may not be SEN students; however, most of the time they are SEN students (Pun Wong, Pearson, & Kuen Lo, 2004). Since IRTP has been regarded as a form of segregation, recently with the promotion of inclusion, the number of IRTP class has been reduced (Forlin, 2010). Mavis recognized some of the students she taught last year in her class. She understands their learning frustration, that is why she stresses a lot on creating successful experience so as to engage them in class:

> *They are students in last year's IRTP, I recognize some of them because I taught them in IRTP. I ask them to copy words they don't know in the note book. One weak girl is serious about the work, even though they are words that end with '-er' or '-or'. I name these students and praise*

them in class. Students are given time, about 5 minutes, to share with other students. I can see that they are really proud of themselves. (Doc 4)

Mavis believes that being a class teacher is important. This role gives her much responsibility, but it also gives her more time to spend with the class. She can understand the students better, especially the relationship with peers, family background and situations at home. She values this role more than her role as a religious teacher. She values a lot about her relationship with the students. She feels sorry that she teaches them for only a year. This differs from the conventional practice which allows subject teachers to teach the same class for two consecutive years (P.5 and P.6). Mavis reflects that she has not spent as much time on understanding the students as she did in the past because she has been distracted by her own family and workload. She has a small kid who just enters kindergarten and has taken up a new administrative duty at school.

When Mavis talks about her family in the conversation, the dimension of place has extended from school to her personal setting – home. It provides another dimension to look at inclusion. As noted earlier in Chapter 5, Mavis mentions that she has a nephew who is a SEN student. This little girl experienced learning difficulties at school when she was in P.2. Before she was diagnosed, nobody knew what went wrong. Her relationship with her mum was greatly affected because of her poor results. Mavis told me this

story when I suggested following up a suspected undiagnosed case in class and talked about the possible consequence of causing distress to both the kid and the family. Her belief in the importance of family in supporting SEN students' learning can be seen in the story she shares with me. This is what I put down in my reflection log:

> *Mavis and I reflected together. Our reflection seems to be echoing each other when we come up with the same observation that most high achievers have family support, parents who care about their learning in every subject. These significant others help kids connect things learn in different subjects, they also help kids connect things learn outside the classroom with that learn inside the classroom, connect learning with living experiences. Family support may not directly link with socio-economic background but is strongly associated with social and cultural capital.*
>
> *Mavis recalled one SEN who comes from a family with educated parents, both are teachers who can help this student overrides learning challenges. For those students who scored ten something out of 100 marks, their parents said they had asked their kids to revise or sent their kids to tutorial centres, but they rarely took any concrete actions themselves. They always say they are busy. This may reveal their views on learning and family values.* (Doc 12)

Mavis' personal experience and strong connection with the students make her adopt a sympathetic attitude towards them. She understands the difficulties facing her students and she cares a lot of whether her students have tried hard or not, others become small issues. She recalls one particular incident when a SEN fails to get parent's signature, she knows what happens

in the family and recognizes that this student is facing a larger than life issue (Doc 17). Mavis sees the SEN issue as one of the many challenges some students face. She believes that family problems are not limited to SEN students. Both SEN and non-SEN students face the possibilities of working parents who suffer long working hours or single parents with low income. These parents do not have time to take care of their kids, neither do they have the knowledge to support their children in learning. The only way they can do is to send them to private tutors or tutorial centers. Mavis observes that long hours of "detention" at the tutorial center may cause behavioural problems or emotional distress. At this point, I began to notice the connection between Mavis's growing experience and her concern. Mavis recalled that her mother was not able to help her with the studies, but she showed her support by accompanying Mavis and giving her study tips. Clearly, this kind of emotional support is missing among some of her troubled students.

6.3 Summary

Chapter 5 and 6 have provided a personal account of myself as a researcher and Mavis as a participant. They are stories of autobiographies and experiences which formed part of us and shaped our present thoughts, feelings and beliefs. Chapter 6 has also attended to my dual roles as a researcher and a school support agent, and most importantly, the inquiry relationship between me and my participant. In the next chapter, I will take

my collaborative relationship with Mavis to another level: inside the classroom. This is a more intimate level as it is there teachers' "untold" stories are being told.

Chapter 7. Findings and Discussion III – Shared Space

This chapter recounts two stories. The first story is about a co-planning meeting Mavis and I have in the mid-August and a follow-up meeting. The planning meeting provides evidence of how our 'cognitive' states of mind (Schön, 1987) are expressed in the planning process; and in the follow-up meeting, the complexities of the situations emerge, thus making judgement and decision more than a cognitive matter, but a mix of values and affection. The second story is about what happens in an English lesson and a follow-up interview. I will use the four directions, namely inward and outward, backward and forward to connect the experiences both inside the classroom and outside the classroom (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). The overall recounts of these experiences will provide an understanding of how our collaborative relationship unfolds in the inquiry process.

7.1 The First Story:

7.1.1 In the co-planning meeting

This inquiry is an experiential process in which Mavis and I undergo together. We are part of the process being constructed, we interact, reflect and act on it. Our voices become one as we live together in the inquiry process. In the reflection journal, I write in first person singular and use first person plural 'we' to include Mavis.

In this meeting, Mavis and I discuss about the approach we will adopt in the

first teaching module in the coming academic year. Since the new term hasn't begun, Mavis has not met the students yet. Clearly our planning is preliminary and has been influenced by our values, beliefs, autobiographies, past experiences and principles regarding teaching and learning, particularly theories related to second language learning and curriculum design (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

I have borrowed the materials related to SEN training from Mavis. At the beginning of the meeting, I returned the training materials to her, I then made a remark about that:

> *there are not many strategies related to English language teaching for SEN. Common generic strategies such as using colour coding, visual means and physical setting etc. are recommended. Specific examples cited in the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) are more social and behavior-oriented. Examples related to Maths instead of English language are used in target setting…Mavis agreed with my views. We argued a bit whether visual clue is a SEN-specific strategy or not. But then the point that some learners having visual learning styles makes us believe that this is not a SEN-specific strategy.* (Doc 3)

In the meeting, we make reference to the learning theories such as activating students' schema before teaching and connecting students' prior knowledge with the new one; and the second language teaching principles such as creating a meaningful and purposeful context for learners to understand how the language is used (Siegler, DeLoache, & Eisenberg, 2003). However, in the

discussion, we rarely make reference to the strategies mentioned in the training materials. Even when we decide to include graphics in the PowerPoints so as to help students learn the target vocabulary, we do not think we are putting a SEN-related strategy into practice. After all, using visual aids to enhance learning is nothing new, it has always been part of the learning theory (Slavin, 2019). At this point, we refute the argument that:

> students who have been identified as having special or additional support needs require teaching methods and approaches that are pedagogically different to those that are used with most learners. (Florian & Linklater, 2010, p. 370-371)

Many times, in our discussion, we are aware that certain learning theories are in conflict with second language teaching principles. For example, when the learning theory suggests reducing tasks into manageable parts for students to learn (Slavin, 2019); the reading theory stands against this idea as text fragmentation may hinder the reading process and kill the interest of the readers (Aebersold & Field, 1998). The learning theory believes in the importance of comprehensible and meaningful input, otherwise effective learning may not happen among students. Yet second language teaching advises teachers to avoid using mother tongue when teaching the second language, learners are then taught to tolerate ambiguity and to guess teachers' instructions contextually. We admit the existence of these complexities and challenges, but they don't bother us much. We have the confidence, skill and experience to exercise flexibility in setting priorities to

make appropriate accommodation.

As experienced second language teachers, we plan the module from a language perspective. When we think about the 'future' students, we tend to categorize them according to their English language proficiency: high, medium and low. Mavis joked that all ESL leaners (English as a second language) are SEN. She stated that we should not assume SEN students to be students with low language proficiency. Their needs may not be specific at all. Most likely they will share commonalities with other struggling learners in terms of learning needs and abilities. The issue could be regarded as catering for diversity rather than accommodating the needs of SEN students. We believe this belief may benefit students from both ends.

7.1.2 In the follow-up meeting

When Mavis and I met again in the follow-up meeting, Mavis has been teaching her class for almost a month (end of September). She is not interested in talking about the effectiveness of those teaching strategies we planned in the co-planning meeting. Rather her conversation is all about her students' performance in class and her memory is loaded with negative feelings and emotional struggles.

Mavis is not bothered by her students' language standards. Her grave concern is their learning motivation. She is upset by their poor learning

attitude. They are easily distracted and off-task. They don't even bother to raise hands and answer questions in class. She observes that this permeates in other lessons and most obviously, this has nothing to do with teachers or students' abilities. This kind of unengaged attitude can be seen in students' class performance as well as their homework assignment.

Mavis is anxious about establishing rapport with her students. She is determined to let her students know that she does not accept sloppy attitude and poor quality of work:

> *I am very persistent about my standards. I make them understand the standards I accept. When one girl who is smart just copy the word 'anchor' without understanding its meaning in a dictionary activity, I talk to her directly and make her understand that I check every word she put down in the assignment. I am serious about my work and expect her to be serious as well. (Doc 4)*

She talks a lot about creating successful experiences for her students. She sees this as a way to create opportunities for her to praise openly those students who are willing to participate in class:

> *I try to create 'small successful experiences' for them. I dictate the verb table. I write the basic verb from on the blackboard. Students dictate the past and participle form. Nobody will score zero as they just need to add 'd' or 'ed'. If I don't write the verb form on the blackboard, many students will fail. I think this is okay because in the exam, the verb form is given. Students don't need to study very hard. I have used this approach for the*

past P.5 and P.6 students. (Doc 4)

She is eager to instill positive values in her students. The first module is about the topic jobs:

> *I ask them 'what they want to be when they grow up?' I probe them to think. I make them understand that all jobs, no matter high or low, have values in the society. We need people to do different kinds of jobs in the society. I want them to be positive about their future and think about their future jobs*. (Doc 4)

When facing the dilemma of whether to insist on using English whenever she can in the English lessons or to connect with the students intellectually and emotionally, Mavis chooses the latter. She believes she needs to engage her students emotionally before they can learn:

> *In the English lessons, when I think the message is important, I will switch to Chinese so as to make sure that they understand. Some of my students are interested in the outside world. For example, they wanted to know which words are British English and which are American English. Their body language tells you that they are interested. They change from folding arms to learning forward.* (Doc 4)

Mavis' understanding about the importance of visual clues in promoting learning has been deepened by an incident in class. She asked students to match job titles with job description in the class front. Mavis thought it was

an easy task. However, when she gave individual students the word cards (with no pictures on it) and instructed students to do the matching, some weak students couldn't do that. Without pictures students could not recognize the words. Mavis reflects that visual clues are an explicit way to scaffold learning, she needs to give students more time to process the pictures and the words before she takes away the pictures:

> *I need all students to participate in reading aloud, not just the high or average ability groups. When students read aloud, they need more time to process the pictures. They want to view the pictures, to process the images before they read. I need to slow down and let down understand/view the pictures before asking them to read.* (Doc 4)

7.1.3 Reliving the story

When Mavis narrated her story, I was silent most of the time. I could not chip in the conversation as I was absent from the class. I listened attentively. This is what I put down afterwards in my reflection log:

> *Mavis' feelings, thinking and memories all mingle into one at the beginning of the interview. It is the negative feelings that emerge at the beginning. The feelings are that there are many problems that need to be resolved. I did not ask any lead questions as I want to observe how Mavis sort out her experience*. (Doc 5)

I am certainly not a distant observer. When the first story is retold, my views have been expressed in the selection and the juxtaposition I made from Mavis' 'monologue' (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I have chosen not to

repeat the conversation that has been selected and organized under different themes in Chapter 5. I have chosen to exclude Mavis' conversation about how she used Quizlet (an app) to help design differentiated tasks for students, the ways she handled reading aloud session in class and her complaint about students' poor listening skill. These episodes lose their value narratively as they do not contribute to the unity of the narration (Beattie, 1995).

The episode about the use of visual clues in helping weak students to learn has been included in the narrative. In fact, in the co-planning meeting, the conversation about visual clues is causal, similar comments have been made about other aspects such as colour coding or IEP. If the story boundary has been restricted to the co-planning meeting, visual clues will have lost its narrative value. However, by connecting it with Mavis' narrative retrospectively, this strategy began to gain its significance. In the inquiry process, a meaning has been attached to it narratively in the "plotting' process (Polkinghorne, 1995) and is shared between the researcher and the participant. In the future, when this story is recalled and retold, its significance will be weaved together with time, people, things and event narratively and new significance will be added to it (Fottland, 2004).

Carter (1993) points out that narration allows readers to "*seek coherence and causal connections among these incidents and conventions as they*

construct for themselves, often retrospectively, the meaning or theme of the story"(p. 6). In other words, it allows multiple interpretations of experiences. In the first story, it is united by the theme - Mavis' negative feelings and her emotional struggles. Readers may come up with other possible themes such as gap between theories and practice or the failure of inclusive training etc. However, in order to avoid this work degenerating into "mere relativism, i.e., "anyone's interpretation is as good as anyone else's" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988, p. 273), this interpretation is linked up with the evidence which demonstrates how Mavis overcomes her negative feelings, establish rapport with students and instill purposes in their studies. In addition, I use the juxtaposition between the first meeting and the follow-up meaning to highlight the complexities of the situations, and the influence of students' behavior, past learning history, motivational levels and expectations on Mavis' 'rational planning'.

7.2 The Second Story:

7.2.1 Inside the classroom

The lesson takes place near the end of the term (in mid-March). Mavis invites me to her class. We have not co-planned the lesson. I have no idea what the lesson is about. She does not assign any specific role to me. I just go with the flow. I sit at the corner of the classroom and observe. When the students are on task, I walk around and offer help when needed.

It is a listening lesson. Mavis begins the lesson with a quick recap of last lesson's focus. It is about story map. A few students respond quickly: title, setting, characters, problem, solution and ending. Mavis then instructs students to turn the textbook to page 14 to listen to a story. Whilst listening, students need to complete the information in the story map and number the sentences into correct order. Before Mavis plays the sound track, she reads aloud the sentences in the story map and checks students' understanding of the key words: *rivers, flood, heavily*.

Mavis then plays the sound track. She pauses after question number one and re-checks students' progress. Mavis plays the tape in one go. Afterwards she asks students to put up their hands if they can complete all ten items. Mavis does not check the answers right away. She plays the sound track the second time. She gives extra help to students by pausing at places where answers can be located. Once again, she asks students who can complete all items to put up their hands. This time students respond better, there are more hands putting up. More students are able to follow the task and fill in the blanks after the second hearing. Mavis then distributes the tape script and checks the answers. There is an award system on the blackboard. Mavis puts stars against students who can get all the answers correct.

Mavis then moves onto explaining the answers. She instructs students to pair up and looks up for words in the tape script which mean *'a big flood, loudly,*

no water, very hot, rain heavily'. Students put up their hands. One student put up his hand but cannot pronounce the word '*thirsty*', Mavis asks him to come out and point out the answer. Then she asks students to underline the phrases: *hotter and hotter, thirsty, rained and rained, they filled and filled, water get higher and higher, as loud as she could*. She also asks them to circle the phrases: *first, then, after that, finally*. She tells students that these phrases are useful as they are going to use them to write a story.

Before the lesson ends, she assigns homework assignment. Students take out the supplementary exercise. Mavis goes through the rubrics and reminds students that they need to do two things: (1) sequence the sentences, then (2) fill in the blanks with 'first, then, after, finally'. To make the exercise easier, Mavis helps students number the sequence of the story. They just need to fill in the blanks at home.

7.2.2 In the post-lesson interview

We have a conversation immediately after the class visit. Mavis is eager to share with me some of her thought and feelings about the lesson. When she plans the lesson, she doesn't expect students to have difficulty listening to the story. She plans to play the sound track once. However, when she starts to play the sound track, she notes that some students struggle with the listening task. She pauses the track and explains. Then she plays the track in one go. She appraises the situations again. She is not sure about her

judgement, she asks students to put up their hands if they can complete the task. After seeing few hands, Mavis changes the original plan and plays the sound track twice. Clearly, Mavis has reviewed the situations and checked the progress on the spot. She adjusts her plan and changes the action purposefully to accommodate students' needs. 'Reflection-in-action', as named by (Schön, 1983, 1987), happens at this point. It is dynamic and situational in nature. If this incident had not been reconstructed in the conversation, the reflective act would have been missed.

Mavis has also engaged in another type of reflection, 'reflection-on-action' (Schön, 1983, 1987). She has prepared two differentiated sets of tape script: one set with no hints and another set with hints to help students locate the answers. She gives the tape script with hints to weak students, including a few SEN students. However, she reflects that this could not help much, only few could get the answers. Some weak students relied on their partners to help. She needed to stand next to a group and assist by pointing out the answers directly. She thinks that highlighting the hints in red instead of black may help the weak students focus more easily.

In the post-lesson interview, Mavis connects her action with thought. The relationship between thought and action is not linear, with action being directed by thought (Elbaz, 1997). Rather it is found to be evidentially dialectical. The classroom situations and students' reactions inform practice

and change Mavis' thinking and action. In the conversation of co-constructing the experiences, Mavis has brought her biographical details, emotion and values (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987) into the narrative accounts. When, after the first time listening, Mavis decides to slow down the teaching pace because only a few fast learners can complete the task; she is making a choice. Her value of engaging slow learners in the learning process takes precedent over challenging the high achievers. She understands that the fast learners will find repeating the task boring. She has expressed this thought in other conversation:

> *Today students give 'face'. They finish the task quickly. Some don't understand the questions. This is not up to P.6 standards. I struggle a bit and wonder if I should explain all questions or not. In the end, I choose not to. Next time I will do the opposite, I will go through all the questions, but high achievers may be dragged down and become bored.* (Doc 7)

> *Only a few in class could understand when I teach in normal pace. Some could answer questions correctly when named, but they are passive in class, fold their arms and look bored. A few students who are bored are easy to be off-task, they talk to neighbours and cause disruptive behaviours, this happened when reading aloud key words*.

> *I struggle to balance the needs of high achievers and low achievers. Take reading aloud as an example, during the first time reading, the low achievers do not read. When I prompt them to read in the second reading, they struggle to follow. Then in the third time reading, the high achievers are bored, but the low achievers have just been warmed up. When some students are bored, they tend to disturb others.*

> *My observation is when high achievers repeat the same phrases 4-5 times, they are bored. But low achievers need to take up longer time. That makes the learning atmosphere not very supportive."* (Doc 4.1)

Clearly, the decision made is more than momentary, neither is it purely cognitive. It is a moral choice made by Mavis (Clandinin, Downey & Schaefer, 2014). Her decision to give them extra help is consistent with her biographical history and beliefs. When Mavis was young, she was not the brightest kid in class. She is grateful for her teacher's extra help in the secondary. She understands well that help may be affective. She acknowledges the importance of her mother's emotional involvement in her learning. This may account for her sympathetic attitude and emotional support to slow learners. She believes that it is important to motivate slow learners by creating more successful experiences in class and engaging them more in the learning process.

7.2.3 Reliving the Story

In this section, I use Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) four directions, namely inward and outward, backward and forward to retell the experiences. These directions share the same characteristics as the three dimensions – temporality, personal and social, place (as explained in Chapter 5). They are all metaphorical terms that help navigate teachers' professional landscape: inside the classroom and out of the classroom. They can give a vivid description of the key elements such as people, places and things within the

landscape. The inward direction refers to the internal conditions of a person, it is similar to the personal dimensional. It includes “feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987). The outward is the opposite of the inward, it refers to everything outside, in the environment. The backward and forward is equivalent to the dimension of temporality, it refers to past, present, and future.

In the interview, Mavis talks a lot about her students. This time, they are no longer groups of students under the label: high achievers or low achievers, SEN students or non-SEN students, fast learners or slow learners; they become individuals with their own identities, stories, feelings and voices. Students have come out as individuals to be understood. They have stories behind actions. They too have a story to tell. What happens outside the classroom affects what happens inside. Mavis has to connect the two places together to understand the story behind:

> *…one time a boy runs around in class before lesson ends. I call him forwards and ask him ‘What do you want?’. The boy cries instantly. This boy’s working mother has no time to discipline him and send him to a strict tutor at the tutorial centre for long hours after school. He does not want to go. He has a lot of negative feelings. He refuses to go to the tutorial centre any more. His results still drop but he behaves properly now. Since he is enthusiastic about football and is a member of the football team, I bargain with him that he must hand in handwork. His results are still dropping but he is able to complete his assignment.* (Doc 17)

Another student has a hidden feeling inside. Her inaction is her chosen action. Clearly, her rebellion is a cumulative act connected with the frustrating past experiences. Mavis hears this inner voice:

> *But daily incident tells you that she is weak in problem solving. Her behavior seems to get worse now that she grows older. She does not bring her glasses back to school. It is like a 'protest in silence'. I understand that if I treat that seriously, this may lead to open confrontation. I know that I need to use soft approach to handle misbehaviors. I do not want to affect the overall learning atmosphere. I need to treat kids differently; their needs are different.* (Doc 17)

Mavis struggles with her feelings. She also struggles with her surroundings. She feels that she struggles a lot in balancing the needs of the English department and students' needs. The school system emphasizes a lot on uniformity in the scheme of work, assessment and homework assignment. It is a rigid system which discourages flexibility and individuality. Mavis learns to navigate on this landscape looking for space and support. She sees that there is space in the curriculum she can make use of to help herself and students. She identifies that as speaking. She sees students' improvement in speaking skill as a source of emotional support and successful experiences:

> *I can see the improvement in SEN's learning attitudes. They no longer rest on table, they are willing to participate in lesson. They engage in the learning process. Their improvement in marks is gradual. Their speaking performance gives me great sense of satisfactory. It shows that students learn, even though it is 'minimal'. They are able to use their own*

knowledge. Of course, there are other 'shut-down' SEN. (Doc 19)

Mavis' belief in using speaking to promote active learning is grounded on her past successful teaching experiences – a past student came back to the primary school and shared her successful story in the secondary. Mavis believes that this time it doesn't work well because of the time factor. If she has longer time with this group of students, she is confident that speaking can improve their attitudes towards English learning:

> *Teachers can set lower target in dictation to encourage students to memorize spelling. They can focus on speaking to encourage participation. This can help create successful experience and avoid comparison among classes about teaching progress.*
>
> *In the past, I taught the same class of students for two years; now I just teach them for one year. I don't have enough time to change their past learning habits. Changes among students are found to be slow and gradual. By focusing on speaking, it could help prepare students for secondary school interview. In the past, I even asked students to record their own performance and played back in class. Peers gave feedback and helped correct. One student came back and shared her successful experience on her first day at school in Secondary 1. She was the only one brave enough to put up her hand and introduced herself in class.* (Doc 19)

Mavis is persistent about her belief – her faith in using speaking as an entry point for learning. She prefers to change the speaking task from 1-min talk to pair talk, but keeping oral as the focus:

> *At the beginning of the term, I introduced 1-min talk in class. But I found it impossible to continue as students were not interested and engaged. They came to the class front, but they were like a stone wall. There was no fun. Instead of dragging on, I called off this activity. After the examination, I introduced another speaking activity, like a kind of pair talk. I lowered her expectations and gave lots of encouragement. I also made my expectations very explicit (only two sentences with elaboration). I shared examples in class as well. I was pleased to see the weak ones who were struggling but willing and trying hard to meet the target. Though students' performance was not up to P.6 standards, I really appreciated students' effort. But I could still find students that remained silent throughout the activity. They are not students with special learning difficulties, they are normal students who have low self-esteem and have lost interest in learning completely. (Doc 19)*

Moreover, evidence of backwardness and forwardness – past, present and future - can be found in Mavis' thought process. First, when she plans the lesson, she recalls what students have just learned – story map. She expects students to have the concept of a story. They are familiar with the story elements such as characters, setting, problem and solution. She starts the lesson with a quick recap of these elements. Second, she knows students will need to use this concept when they write stories in the coming writing lessons. Third, she knows that some students because of their poor English foundation may struggle with certain vocabulary in the task. That explains why she prepared a set of tape script with hints before the lesson.

Entering into Mavis' classroom to experience the lesson and having quick contact with some of her students, I have extended the boundary of the

research landscape. The distance between Mavis and me has been shortened. However, I am aware that my relationship with the students remains a considerable distance. This is what I put down in my reflection log after one early class visit:

> *I have a strong feeling that students are not quite themselves when I am in the classroom. They are strongly aware that there is a stranger in the classroom observing them. My effect tends to fade off a bit in the middle of the lesson but comes back again when I walk around during pair work. I try to help a bit. I suggest visiting the class every Wednesday (same lesson). I want to be 'a fly on the wall'. I hope eventually students will get so used to me in the classroom that they can just be themselves. In this way, I could see the 'reality' more. I get the seating plan of the class but I still insist on not wanting to know who the SEN are in class. I try to avoid the labelling effect and treat everyone as individual with various needs.* (Doc 8)

Later I began to realize that getting familiar with the students does not mean I have closer approximation to reality. It is a meaningless claim (Clandinin, 2007). My presence is part of the experiences these students and Mavis are experiencing. A relationship among the three parties: Mavis, students and I, has been developed during the inquiry process. This relationship is context bound and temporal, but transformative. Through living and reliving the story in the interview, it is likely that the minds and subsequent actions of everyone involved in the inquiry process will be changed.

7.3 Summary

There are many alternative stories I can retell in the inquiry process. These stories are chosen because of its narrative significance, they contribute to the overall plotting of this narrative account. The first story happens at the beginning of the term. It starts the narration with negative feelings and emotional struggles. The second story which happens near the end of the term ends the story with peace and love, a reconciliation between Mavis and the environment and an understanding between Mavis and her students have been reached.

Chapter 8. Discussion

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part focuses on Mavis' inclusive story. I will summarize Mavis' experience and discuss it in relation to inclusive education (Section 8.1). Then I will examine the concept of inclusion and exclusion and its interpretations in various contexts (Section 8.2 & 8.3). Lastly, I will explore Mavis' identity as an inclusive teacher (Section 8.4) and the issue of representativeness from different perspectives (Section 8.5).

In the second part, my reflection mainly focuses on theories related to teacher learning, teachers' personal practical knowledge and the notion of teachers as story tellers. I will discuss the cognitive and constructive views of teacher learning (Section 8.6) and teachers' personal practical knowledge (Section 8.7). I will end the last section (Section 8.8) with the deliberation on teachers as story tellers, with particular reference to the concept of narrative unity and the types of narrative account.

Part 1: Reflection on Mavis' Story

8.1 Mavis' Story of Inclusion

I have provided the biographical history of Mavis in Chapter 5. The history describes the role Mavis' mother played in Mavis' learning (giving her emotional support), the inspiring English teachers she met in the secondary, her long-term views about school as a safe place. The account focuses mainly on people, incidents and things that are related to Mavis' present life as a

teacher. With the knowledge that the inquiry topic is on inclusive education, Mavis adds to the account the training she received related to inclusive education and her positive attitudes to inclusion. Interestingly, she does not mention about the story about her nephew's learning difficulties and the fact that she is a devout Catholic in the same conversation on personal history. These two pieces of biographical details came up in the later part of the inquiry process. In the processing of composing the research text, I have grouped them under Mavis' life story and made them appear as if they are recorded in the same conversation as other biographical details. In the subsequent part of Chapter 5, I have presented the 'influence of life stories' as one of eight themes identified in Mavis' interview texts. This is done purposefully to create a chronological sense of events, and, most importantly, to create a sense of coherence and quasi-causal effect. These facts are connected with Mavis' sympathetic attitude towards SEN students and her willingness to understand their background and needs, Clearly, the selection and arrangement of the data has provided an implicit way of interpretation to promote a convincing connection between these events.

Polkinghorne (1988) points out that the technique of recounting events retrospectively to create a reasonable explanation for a happening has been commonly used in everyday lives. It is the way humans use to make sense of events. Nonetheless, narrative research should be different from everyday narrative. Researchers should be reflective and conscious in the composing

process. Wider perspectives and sufficient data should be provided in the research text to promote deep understanding and possible interpretations. In this research, readers learn that Mavis has a positive attitude towards inclusion. They also learn from the literature review that teachers' attitudes are found to be a determining factor in the successful implementation of inclusive education (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). In addition, they understand that positive attitudes do not guarantee success. Sikes, Lawson & Parker's study (2007) have already reported that inclusion is not a simple yes or no to inclusion issue, but a "Yes Buts" of inclusion. Their study of six inclusive teachers and assistants' lived experiences have provided background information about the dilemmas, struggles and possibilities of inclusion in other cultural setting. Readers may connect this with Mavis' emotional struggles (one of the identified themes); and become attuned to the complexities of inclusion in the real world.

There are five other themes identified in Mavis' narrative account. They are: language of imagery and metaphor, understanding SEN students as persons, learning difficulties caused by poor attitudes, the need to create successful experiences and helping students set targets. Clandinin and Connelly (1987) have given special status to images in teachers' knowledge. They are believed to be expressive language commonly used by teachers to express their beliefs, views and feelings. Images can be treated as teachers' own interpretation of their experiences. The images used can reflect their feelings

and understanding of the situations; and they can capture the essence of the experiences (Sikula et. al., 1996).

In this research, Mavis uses the image of a farmer sowing seeds to talk about her role. Similar image has been used by a teacher called Aileen – planting the seed - in one of Clandinin's teacher stories (Clandinin, 1995 as cited in Sikula et. al., 1996). This image seems to be a common one across cultures. It is inundated with emotions, strong feelings of endurance, patience and hardship are being conveyed. The other images Mavis used – tug-of-war and swimming – are dynamic in nature. They are all used to describe her relationship with the students. They carry strong connotations of power, struggles and exhaustion. Mavis uses all these images to conclude the work she did in the past and to describe her current situations, it is likely that these images will come up again in her future conversation. In other words, this image acts as a thread that weave the present with the past and is likely to be connected with the future. Lastly, the 'piece of puzzle' is the overall image Mavis used to express about the puzzlement she feels towards her inclusive experiences. She believes individual students' needs are different, hence teachers need to be flexible in helping students learn. This image sums up Mavis' teaching experiences holistically, it is an example of strong and stable images 'personal truths' that teachers hold on at the time of difficulties and complexities (Sikula et. al., 1996). I believe Mavis has always have strong belief that teachers should use different ways to help students learn and that

teachers should be ready to change to accommodate students' needs. However, this belief has been intensified by the feeling of puzzlement and unease in the inclusive practice. Her feelings about balancing the needs of SEN and non-SEN students, high achievers and low achievers are embedded in the conversation about her classroom experiences.

8.2 Inclusion and inclusive education

The 1994 Salamanca Statement calls for the removal of all barriers that limit children's educational opportunities and the provision of support to students to meet their academic and social potential. Implementing inclusion would be unproblematic if inclusive education merely means mainstreaming (placing SEN students into ordinary schools), provision of special facilities and support services, and curriculum adaptation. Complexities emerge because some barriers are invisible and discrimination may exist among various stakeholders, with themselves not knowing the existence of the culprits within.

Florian (2015) points out that teachers' lowering of expectations towards SEN students' academic achievements is a barrier to the implementation of inclusion. In England, one common inclusive practice is to set different learning goals for SEN students and provide them with differentiated tasks in the classroom. The intention is to cater for their individual needs, however, the expected attainment levels are found to have been compromised in the

scaffolding process. Florian (2015) believes that differentiated inclusive practice with lowering of teacher expectations would induce further difference and widen the achievement gaps among students.

In Hong Kong, the Territory-wide System Assessment is a tool devised by the government to evaluate students' academic performance in English, Chinese and Mathematics in Key Stage 1 and 2. SEN students' results have been treated differently in this attainment test. Their performance is included in the overall school report; but yet, they are expected to be deviant and an additional report has been prepared for separate review. The low academic performance of the SEN students is a phenomenon that has raised some concerns among individual schools, but it is not a common discourse in the education community.

In the narrative, Mavis shows her understanding towards learners' complexity (detailed description can be found in Chapter 5 Section 5.2 Theme 1: Catching in Emotional Struggle, Balancing the Needs of Different Groups of Students). She acknowledges that there are many factors that affect students' performance, SEN labels do not tell everything. Her knowledge about the SEN students is not limited by the categorical difference they are identified to have. She believes SEN students could have good academic achievements. However, maximizing their learning opportunities and setting high academic expectations is never her intended

goal.

Mavis mentions about ‘changing’ her views towards SEN students and uses different means to help students get good marks in dictation:

> Sometimes I chose to lessen the control and allow students to be off-task in class. I want both myself and my students not to just focus on grade, but be positive about learning and to be able to learn. I need to adjust my views and remind myself to be positive from time to time. For example, when doing pre-dictation, I knew some of her students may forget easily afterwards, but I still spend time to revise before dictation. I want to create small successful experiences for my students. I find this strategy to be effective as gradually I am able to include those students who at first refused to copy date and day from the blackboard and just closed their books and watched (Doc 14).

Clearly, Mavis wants her students to have successful experiences. Working under the pressure of a competitive and selective education system, and teaching a crowded and rigid central curriculum (Wong, 2002; Wong, Pearson, & Lo, 2004), Mavis is appreciated for her willingness to slow down and provide students with guidance and drill practice. Nonetheless, I would argue that this happening is a means to an end, rather than an end itself. Mavis wants to use this assessment result to motivate her students to learn, but she does not have the same academic expectations towards SEN and non-SEN students. In most cases, physical and socio-emotional engagement is her ultimate goal. She does not have the intention of narrowing the performance gap between the two groups, nor is she cognizant of any

structural inequality in the school system.

What should an inclusive classroom look like? Florian (2015) points out that there is not much detailed description about what is happening in an inclusive classroom. Rouse, Florian and other research members (Black-Hawkins, Florian and Rouse, 2007; Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011), in the University of Aberdeen School of Education Inclusive Practice Project (IPP) project commissioned by the Scottish Government, have proposed inclusive pedagogy as a solution. It is an alternative to other approaches that focused on learners' categorical differences or 'additional needs' and is defined as "an approach to teaching and learning that involves the creation of a rich learning environment characterized by lessons and learning opportunities that are sufficiently made available to everyone so that all are able to participate in classroom life" (Rouse & Florian, 2012, p. 18). To help frontline practitioners envisage how inclusive pedagogy works in the classroom, Florian (2015) has drawn a detailed comparison between what additional needs approach and inclusive pedagogical approach looks like in practice. Inclusive pedagogy is grounded on teachers' craft knowledge, a re-conceptualization of current good practices in inclusive schools. It is built on the routines, culture and practice of the education system in England. The key concept is that teachers need to take account of students' needs in the planning stage and allows students to explore all possibilities in the process.

Since inclusion is a fluid concept which can manifest in different forms in various settings (Florian, 2015) and teacher-centered pedagogy is a common practice in Hong Kong (Wong, 2002; Wong, Pearson, & Lo, 2004) , it may not be appropriate to transplant inclusive pedagogy directly into the local context. However, learning from inclusive pedagogy about the stigmatizing effect of assigning differentiated tasks with lowering expectations for SEN students is important. In addition, Mavis' lessons (Chapter 7 Section 7.2.1 Inside the classroom) have provided a rich description what inclusion looks like in an ordinary classroom in Hong Kong. These lessons show the craft knowledge Mavis used to solve immediate problems and promote participation in an inclusive context. It has successfully engaged all students in the learning process, but whether it can achieve learning for all and reduce educational inequality may need more scrutiny. Although this 'wisdom of practice' (Shulman, 1987) remains fragmentary and context-sensitive, it is valuable as it provides meaning and support to other teachers who are struggling with implementing inclusion in similar contexts; and allows the public to understand what happens in an inclusive classroom in Hong Kong. If mainstreaming SEN students into ordinary classrooms and engaging them physically and emotionally is the current status, then asking for quality inclusive education with equal opportunity of success is a coming vision teachers should strike to achieve.

8.3 Issue of Inclusion and Exclusion

The setting of Mavis' inclusion story has four characteristics. Firstly, it happens in an education system which has always been described as "rigid, highly competitive and strongly weighted towards academic subjects" (Pearson, Lo, Chui & Wong, 2003, p. 490). Teachers are subject trained and specialized in particular subjects. Secondly, the school day is divided into different time slots for various lessons. Students stay in the same classroom waiting for different teachers to walk in and start the lesson. Thirdly, the school has a rigid curriculum, teachers across the same level need to follow the same scheme of work and curriculum. All students sit for the same end-of-term examination. Lastly, this group of students are about 10-11 years old. They have entered their final year of primary education. Their family background, personal challenges, abilities, self-esteem, past learning experiences, habits, interests and difficulties have shaped whom they are now. This information is important as they are part of the social, cultural and institutional setting which play a significant part in shaping the people, things and incidents in the story.

The issue of inclusion and exclusion has a different interpretation in this context. When Berg Svendby (2016) talks about the experiences of Daniel and Emilie, two disabled teenagers, in the PE lessons. Their physical disabilities prevent them from participating in the lessons. Their exclusion is evidential and hurtful. In Mavis' story, SEN students' deficiencies are diverse and opaque. Given that this is an English classroom where students are

learning a foreign language, everyone is in a 'deficiency' mode, as jokingly described by Mavis' saying 'every ESL learner (English as a second language) is a SEN'. The line between SEN and non-SEN students is not as obvious as it appears to be. Rather, what is more obvious is the attitude of students towards learning. Mavis tends to use the language: high achievers and low achievers to describe the students. A more accurate description should be students with high motivation and students with low motivation. Since highly motivated students usually have high academic results, Mavis tends to name them as high achievers. The underlying understanding is that the low achievers are not necessarily SEN students as some SEN students have achieved high academic results in class. Clearly, this observation is different from that perceived by the general public who usually regards SEN students as lower academic achievers and that they have negative impact on the academic performance of non-SEN students (Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson, & Gallannaugh, 2007a, 2007b; Krammer, Gasteiger-Klicpera, Holzinger, & Wahlhart, 2019).

Mavis' observation, grounded in the context of second language learning, illustrates the complexity of human difference. Human competencies are dissimilar and diverse, there establishes no linear simple relationship with learning. Factors that affect students' academic performance have been found to be complex and multifarious. In a quantitative study conducted by Krammer et al. (2019), the relationship between the presence of SEN

students and other non-SEN students' mathematic performance in inclusive classrooms has been found to be very small, depending on individual class conditions and other personal variables such as socio-economic status, cultural and ethnic background. Similar studies in English learning have not been done so far. However, Mavis' observation may, to a certain extent, concur with the belief that conditions affecting students' academic performance are complicated and are difficult to pin down solely on individual factors. This echoes with Rouse & Florian's (2012) fundamental concept of inclusive pedagogy which takes difference as an ordinary aspect of human difference and that SEN students' needs are not as totally different as other ordinary children. The categorization of learners into different 'needs' groups means nothing in Mavis' eyes. Her experiences tell her that these 'differences' are not hindrance to learning a second language, and their meanings have lost its significance in this context. Mavis knew she had to treat SEN students as other ordinary students. This does not mean that she disregards these students' needs, rather the vital message is to treat them as an individual rather than falling into the trap of limiting them to the 'label of categorization'.

To a certain extent, Mavis has lived up to the principle of inclusive pedagogy which states that "the classroom teacher accepts responsibility for all pupils in ways that do not marginalise or stigmatise some learners as different from others of similar age" (Rouse & Florian, 2012, p. i-ii). However, due to the

distinctive cultural, social and structural difference of Hong Kong's education system where teacher-centered pedagogy (Wong, 2002; Wong, Pearson, & Lo, 2004) is practiced widely, Mavis inclusive craft knowledge is interpreted differently from the inclusive pedagogy that centered on student-centered collaborative approach. As reminded by Rouse & Florian (2012), a socio-cultural perspective towards learning has been adopted in the development of inclusive pedagogy. Hence teacher educators in other places, instead of directly transplanting inclusive pedagogy, may need to develop and connect with current practices in their contexts to develop alternative pedagogy. 'Inclusive pedagogy' may manifest in alternative forms in various setting, yet the determination to challenge the "deep-seated assumptions about human differences and an exploration of alternatives to deterministic, bell curve thinking about human abilities" (Rouse & Florian, 2012, p. ii) and the concept of reducing educational inequalities and promoting the possibilities of success to everyone in the classroom should be the fundamental principles that unite them all.

In this study, the conditions of exclusion experienced by students are found to be distinctive. Designing various interesting activities to engage students of different ability in the learning process has become the main inclusive strategy. Students' language abilities have become a significant consideration in the planning process. The inclusion criteria are creating successful experiences for different types of students and communicating

understanding and acceptance in the teaching process. The issue of exclusion experienced by some students can be understood by the backward and forward dimensions with reference to past, present and future, as proposed by Clandinin & Connelly (1987). It is a complicated issue that is likely to have been caused by students' past 'exclusion' experiences, lack of family support, low self-esteem and poor foundation. Some students' own disabilities are an undisputable issue, but they may not be the determining one. Other outward behaviours such as lack of interest, refusal to participate and short attention span have become a bigger obstacle in class. This problem will be carried forward to the future. Mavis understands this well, she always reminds herself that she does not want to be the children's 'last teacher'. The implication of this saying is that students are so afraid of English that they refuse to participate when they are promoted to the secondary; or in an extreme case, drop out of school. From a philosophical point of view, this possible development is against the principle of inclusion which promulgates the concept of equal participation and the development of every student's potentials to the fullest (Forlin, 2010). Hence, as an inclusive teacher, Mavis enacts her understanding of inclusion by improving her teaching pedagogy to include every student in the English lessons.

8.4 Mavis' Identity as an Inclusive Teacher

As noted in Chapter 6.2.3, Mavis has different roles at school. She is a middle manager responsible for the management of the school property. She is also

a homeroom/class teacher, an English teacher, a religious studies teacher and an IRTP (Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme) teacher. These are the roles assigned by school. Some of these roles such as IRTP and class teacher are found to be transient and temporal. Mavis might have taken up certain role in the past, then switch into the present role and may take up once again anytime in the future.

Roles and identities are two different concepts. Roles are defined socially and professionally whereas identities are defined personally. They can be in conflict or in harmony. It is possible for a teacher to be assigned the role of an admission manager at school but regards herself more as a classroom teacher than an administrative officer. Mavis has been assigned many roles. Among all these roles, one consistent role throughout these years is being an English teacher. This is Mavis' expertise and her identity. That may connect with her past role as the head of the English Department. The professional discourse expressed by Mavis is more related to English teaching and learning than to inclusive education. Mavis aims to provide a supportive classroom environment to engage all students in English learning. Mavis is willing to give up her identity as a language teacher to trade for a more important role - an educator. She is willing to abandon the so-called 'sacred' rule of second language learning, switch to the mother tongue to achieve a higher goal – to communicate with students, to satisfy their curiosity of the outside world and to instill in them the value that all jobs are

important so long as it makes contributions to the society. Interestingly, the identity of an inclusive teacher is missing in the interview. Mavis never calls herself an inclusive teacher. She rarely mentions about this role in the conversation. The concept of creating a supportive learning environment to cater for the needs of SEN students is not strong in the conversation. Mavis looks after the needs of all students, balancing their needs from time to time. However, she does not see herself as a defender or advocacy of inclusive education.

Fullan (1993a; 1993b; 1997) points out that, to bring about meaningful educational change, teachers need to have moral purpose and change agentry. The former is guided by the needs and interests of the students whereas the latter refers to the skills teachers needed in initiating and accommodating change. In this regard, inclusion, as a rights-based and moral matter, certainly needs teachers to take up this challenging role - change agents. They need an inquisitive mind to challenge conventional practices and explore alternatives (Fullan, 1993a). Mavis' role as a change agent has led to possible pedagogical change at the classroom level. One time, in the co-planning meeting, P. 6 teachers discussed about the strategy SWBST (a method used to write a summary). Mavis wanted to try it in class, but other teachers seemed to have reservation. Mavis did it on her own. She used the blackboard to model this strategy in class. She took some photos of her blackboard arrangement and shared them with other teachers (Doc 19).

Mavis has successfully convinced other teachers to use this strategy in their lessons. She has taken up this role consciously. She uses the term 'change agent' in the interview. However, the direction for change is not oriented to inclusion. She does it for the support of another educational goal – to promote skill learning in the English curriculum as she believes skill development is important for students in the long run (Doc 19).

8.5 Representativeness of Mavis' Story

According to Polkinghorne (1995), there are two types of narrative research: analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. The former aims at producing generalizable findings based on collecting and analyzing an array of stories; the latter aims at studying an individual or a number of individuals to provide a rich description of events or happenings. This study is a narrative analysis. It is a story about Mavis, a primary teacher in Hong Kong. It is the story about her lived experiences in an inclusive setting. Since this work has only one lone participant, the issue of representativeness may be a concern. It will be discussed at three levels: (i) at the macro-level, (ii) at the meso-level and (iii) at the micro-level.

8.5.1 At the macro-level

At the macro-level, the issue of representativeness can be discussed with reference to the research paradigm. How far can experiences in real lives be captured and represented in the research text written by the researcher?

This question has brought to the forefront the issue of representational crisis (Denzin, 2015). Similar doubts have been expressed by Bruner (1986) when he questions about the gaps between reality, experience and expressions. Denzin (2015) further elaborates on this point stating:

> any social text can, accordingly, be analyzed in terms of its treatment of four paired terms: (1) the 'real' and its representation in the text, (2) the text and the author, (3) lived experience and its textual representations, and (4) the subject and his or her intentional meanings. The text presumes a world out there (the real), that can be captured by a 'knowing' author through the careful transcription (and analysis) of field materials (interviews, notes, etc.). The author becomes the mirror to the world under analysis. This reflected world then re-presents the subject's experiences through a complex textual apparatus which typically mingles and mixes multiple versions of the subject. (p. 650)

This belief challenges the traditional assumption that there is a 'real' world out there which can be captured, through the researcher/author as an impartial observer, into field notes and research text.

Another factor adding to the crisis, as pointed out by Denzin (2015), is the assumption that the transcription of language equals the told and lived experience:

> Language and speech do not mirror experience, they create it and in the process of creation constantly transform and defer that which is being described. The meanings of a subject's statements are, therefore, always in motion. There can never be a final, accurate representation of

> what was meant or said, only different textual representations of different experiences. (p. 650)

The inadequacy of language and speech in expressing the 'lived experiences' and in expressing thought and feelings has widened the gap of knowing. The fluid nature of language and speech which makes recounting the past experiences more than a recall of memory, but a transformative process has added further complexity to the representational crisis.

From the perspective of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996), these gaps have been acknowledged and accommodated in the research process. Narrative inquiry has never made any truth claims. There is no representation of 'the truth', only a shared construction of work by the participant and the researcher. It is understood that the embodied experience told by the participant has been constructed and reconstructed in the telling process, it is not a reflection of the 'reality'. The participant's lived story is told and re-created, relived and retold in the research process. Finally, the story is reconstructed again in the process of transmitting it to the written text. As pointed out by Denzin (2015), "there can never be accurate representation of what was meant or said – only different textual representations of different experiences." (p. 650)

In quantitative research, the issue of representativeness needs to be addressed properly as any failure to do so will lead to crisis about the

research work's legitimacy and generalizability. However, in narrative inquiry, the epistemological view that there is no 'single reality' out there in the human world, to a certain extent, has undermined the significance of representativeness of the subject(s) in the research. Narrative research has given up the positivist assumptions about producing generalizable findings or theories. Narrative researchers do not aim at providing a single interpretation of human experiences. This may mirror the real world where problems do not necessarily have a single solution and that problem solving does not work in a linear fashion. In addition, the nature of narrative research which acknowledges the importance of biographical details in understanding the thought, action and feelings of the participant has added certain degree of uniqueness to the study. Lastly, other possible functions of qualitative research such as to shed light on the complexities of a problematic situation, to provide alternative perspectives to certain events or to deepen our understanding towards an issue are justifiable reasons to downplay the importance of representativeness.

Qualitative researchers choose to provide a rich, thick and voluminous description of the context. This makes the situations more transparent, thus allowing audience to re-examine, reflect and develop alternative interpretations. As pointed out by Springer, "interpretations are produced in cultural, historical and personal contexts and are always shaped by the interpreter's values." (p. 35 as cited in Denzin, 1997). By revealing the social,

political and cultural aspects of the situations, together with the assumptions, values, principles and background of the researchers, the audience may understand that the research work is not value-free. The research work is produced by the act of interviewing and observing. It is a kind of situated understanding. It is grounded on the shared understanding of certain cultural and social values. It comes with situated interpretations. Narrative researchers become part of the research. Their own biographical materials, observation, reflection together with the participants' lived and retold experiences are constructed and co-constructed in the inquiry process. Hence neither the researchers nor the participants are representing themselves, they become a unity in the research work.

8.5.2 At the meso-level

Mavis is a convenient sample. She is one of the few teachers who were invited to participate in this research. However, she is the only one who responded positively and agreed to let me in her classroom. She is a self-chosen participant. Her childhood experiences, background and work experiences make her a unique person. My personal growth and lived experiences also make me distinctive. However, underlying us is the commonality of the situations. This includes cultural, social and political situations. We are the agency with the capacity to act and to make our own choices. We shape the situations, but at the same time we are shaped by the situations. Our interpretations are situated and embodied. This kind of

shared understanding makes us relive and retell the story from a particular social, cultural, ethnic and political perspective.

Shared understanding between the participant and the researcher is important as narrative inquiry promotes an 'emic' perspective in the study. In contrast with an 'etic' view in which an outsider's perspective is adopted, Mavis and I are the insiders of the teaching community. We adopt an emic view in the study. We share a lot of intrinsic cultural understanding, which may be meaningful only to the people in the same situation. This kind of intersubjectivity can help produce detailed and culturally rich information; and can uncover events or happenings that go unnoticed to an outsider. This is an important means to deepen audience's understanding of the topic.

In the study, the political, cultural and social situational understanding shared between Mavis and I is made explicit at the beginning of the research text. It serves as background of the study in Chapter 1 Section 1.1. For example, the chapter provides the information that only five categories of SEN students (i.e. those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, 'mild grade' intellectual disability, sensory impairment, physical disability and children with autism spectrum disorder with average intelligence) are included in the classroom, this may help audience understand the reduced complexity of the situations. The past practice of integration, which operated under the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP), and the reported

finding that there were many ‘unconfirmed’ SEN cases in the IRTP (Pearson, Lo, Chui, & Wong, 2003) become important information when it is connected with Mavis’ story, about her past work as an IRTP teacher. The implication is that Mavis may have certain kind of SEN-related experience even before she receives formal training.

In addition, social structures and cultural practices are enactments of shared values. They reveal the philosophy and core values underpinning the education system in Hong Kong. Rigid school timetables, formal setting, specialist teachers, uniform curriculum, frequent assessments and regular homework assignments are all too familiar to the participant and the researcher to be mentioned in the conversation. However, these familiar things may be unfamiliar to the audience. They are important background information which can help explain the strong identity of Mavis as an English teacher and the significant focus on students’ academic performance. Other cultural expectations such as parents’ involvement in students’ learning and the social emphasis placed on academic achievements may help audience understand why students are sent to tutorial centers after school and why assessment is a common topic in the interviews.

Competing ideological forces such as collectivism versus individualism (Yan & Sin, 2014) and equity versus equality which exist in most systems may become intensified or otherwise diluted under different cultural and social

contexts. In the story, Mavis adapts the teaching pace and instructional strategies to help SEN or low-achieving students. However, the disheartening fact that some students lose their interest in learning does not secure Mavis to have the freedom to design an alternative curriculum to motivate her students. She has a uniform teaching schedule to complete and the students have to sit for a uniform examination at the end of each term. These structures restrict her power in inducing drastic changes. In addition, the societal value which places equality before equity create great barriers to enact inclusion. Interestingly enough, part of this resistance comes from SEN parents. They consider the concept of adapting the curriculum to suit their children's needs as unfair because they believe a diluted curriculum will cause their children to be lagging behind their normal peers (Cheng, 2007). The idea of exempting SEN students from the uniform assessments (these examinations rank students and send them to schools of various ability groupings) has also been considered unfair by some parents. This kind of unresolved conflicts at the system level do affect agency. Researchers may not be able to understand the struggles and ambivalent feelings experienced by Mavis unless they know the competing philosophies and values in the system.

Lastly, within the social system, individual schools as artificial constructs have their own cultures and practices as well. Kelly (2006) points out that dilemma or conflicts will occur if an individual's preferred identity is not in accord with

the identity promoted by the school authority. Mavis works in a school where collaboration is highly valued. This may account for Mavis' enthusiasm in promoting the new teaching strategy in the co-planning meeting. She takes pictures of her blackboard arrangement and shares with other teachers how she carried out the strategy in class. Clearly, Mavis identifies herself as a change agent. The fact that this is a Catholic school in which "honour God, love all people and be an upright person in all aspects of life" is the school motto; and that Mavis is a committed Catholic may explain Mavis' positive attitude towards inclusion and her continued disposition to be a caring teacher. Kelly (2006) regards identity formation as situational and is an interactive and socially constructed process. The fact that Mavis has received advanced training in inclusive education and that she is expected to take up an expert role in advising other non-trained English teachers in their daily practice do not necessarily mean that Mavis will have a strong identity as an inclusive teacher. The school does not have any professional activities or meeting time outside the classroom where she could build this identity. Mavis practices inclusive strategies inside the classroom, but she rarely mentions about this side of work outside the classroom. She feels herself more as a language teacher and a loving teacher than an inclusive teacher.

8.5.3 At the micro-level

In narrative inquiry, participants are, unlike subjects in positivistic research, 'knowing people' (Heilbrun, 1988 as cited in Connelly & Clandinin 1994 p.

149). They are embodiment of knowledge and experiences. Their personal practical knowledge is a valuable asset unrecognized and under-researched in the teaching profession. Teachers' personal knowledge needs to be accessed narratively through understanding their past life history, thoughts, actions and feelings. The notion of knowing exists in narrative researchers as well. They are not impartial observers, but thinking being that makes repeated interpretations in the inquiry process. The transformative interactions between the researcher and the participant make it difficult to draw a clear distinction between the two, hence the research work is regarded as a shared narrative account. Nonetheless researchers own the authorship power and other hidden power as well. As pointed out by Josselson (2006),

> The practice of narrative research, rooted in postmodernism, is always interpretive, at every stage. From framing the conceptual question through choosing the participants, deciding what to ask them, with what phrasing, transcribing from spoken language to text, understanding the verbal locutions, making sense of the meanings thus encoded, to deciding what to attend to and to highlight — the work is interpretive at every point. In addition, from a hermeneutic point of view, there are tensions related to Paul Ricoeur's distinction between a 'hermeneutics of faith' and a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Ricoeur, 1970; Josselson, 2004). Does the interpreter/researcher privilege the voice of the participant, trying to render the meanings as presented in the interview — or does the researcher try to read beneath — or, in Ricoeur's metaphor — in front of the text — for meanings that are hidden, either unconscious or so embedded in cultural context as to make them seem invisible? (2006, p. 3-4)

How far can the participant's voice be preserved in the research process? This raises a thorny question. Apart from the power of authorship, language is another important barrier. As pointed out by Denzin (1997), there are "three types of discourse: ordinary talk and speech, inscriptions of that speech in the form of transcriptions, and written interpretations based on talk and its inscriptions" (p. 33). In the study, another hurdle is that the interview language and the research language are different. The interviews are conducted in Cantonese and then translated into English. The translations are done literally rather than in verbatim accounts. In the end, Mavis read the English transcripts for member checks. It is highly possible that meanings may be reduced or added in the translation process. The fact that Mavis is an English teacher who takes up the role of verifying the translation is a means to compensate for this limitation. Nonetheless, the concern about Mavis' voice being submerged under my voices or my using Mavis' voice to speak for myself are justifiable. Hargreaves (1996) and Clark (1987 as cited in Elbaz, 1997) express similar worries when they observe that much of the narrative collaborative work "has tended to be with those well-meaning, successful and articulate middle-class teachers". It occurs that stories about competent teachers dominate the discourse whereas incompetent or deficient teachers are rarely reported and underrepresented. With respect to this phenomenon, Elbaz (1997) explains that opening up one's classroom is a courageous act and most likely successful teachers are more likely to do so than otherwise:

> choosing whom to work with and how to present the teachers' narratives raises the conflict between producing knowledge "about" teaching, and producing knowledge "with" teachers: We know that if you want to work with people and for change, you have to begin from their strengths, from a positive point of view. The researcher has to balance the desire for inclusiveness against complex pragmatic and interpersonal considerations. (p. 80)

This is exactly what happened in this case. The fact that Mavis is the only active respondent to my request is a practical consideration. We indeed share a lot of commonality in terms of education, class and social background. We have positive attitudes towards inclusion. Most importantly, we have established good rapport in the previous work relationship which then extends naturally into a research relationship. This kind of collaborative relationship may become a double sword in the crisis of representation.

The concern about the underlying motive of the researcher could be clarified by having my positionality acknowledged openly. I have worked for the government as a support agent. The fact that I work for the government does not necessarily mean that I am supportive about the inclusion policy. I have admitted honestly about my positive attitude towards inclusion, which may have caused bias in my selection of participant. Instead, I am attracted to the ideology of inclusive education and I support the idea of collaborative participation under the narrative inquiry framework. The government's commissioned study on inclusion (Commission, 2012) has portrayed a gloomy picture about the implementation of inclusion. Teachers believe that

they have used many strategies and measures to help SEN students, but 20% or more parents of SEN students are not satisfied with teachers' work. Personally, I believe that this kind of discrepancy in perception is worth studying. The findings should be more than statistical figures and fragmented statements. It is hoped that this study could provide a means to study the complexities inside an inclusive classroom; and, most importantly, to recognize that teachers are knowers of the known (Fenstermacher, 1994).

Part 2: Reflection on the Teacher Learning Theories

8.6 Teachers' Learning

There are many theories contributing to the understanding of teacher learning. One is the cognitive view that describes teacher learning as the acquisition of knowledge and skills in a context free setting. The underlying assumption is that teachers can transfer and apply them in other institutional settings. Shulman (1987) proposes that teachers' cognitive schemes include the following domains: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and finally, knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical ground. Evidence of certain domains is particularly obvious in the co-planning meeting between Mavis and I at the end of August, before the new academic year started. Without any knowledge about the student background, we talked about the overall

approach Mavis would use in the English lessons (with detailed description in Chapter 7 Section 7.1.1). In the conversation, Mavis has demonstrated rich knowledge in curriculum planning, the English curriculum, general pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. She has displayed the ability to discern that some of the general pedagogical theories are in conflict with the pedagogical theories related to second language learning. For example, the importance of comprehensible and meaningful input to students advocated by the learning theory can be in direct conflict with the second language learning theory which encourages the maximize use of target language in class, thus teaching learners to tolerate ambiguities (i.e. students do not need to understand every English word). Mavis, as an experienced teacher, learns to find a balance between these two theories. She is flexible enough to tolerate the existence of these two theories in her schema and to apply them in different contexts. Interestingly, in the end, when Mavis decided to give up the principle of using English, the target language, in class and switches back to Cantonese, the mother tongue, she has another important principle in mind – the need to instill in students a positive value and to satisfy their inquisitive minds about the outside world. This principle relates to the principle of educational ends, purposes, and values as proposed by Shulman (1987).

In the follow-up meeting, almost a month after the co-planning meeting, the complexities of the real world have been brought to the forefront. These

complexities are mostly related to the students and their background. These include low self-esteem, low learning motivation, lack of interest in English learning and no family support in learning. Their instant impacts on Mavis' rational planning are evidential. Mavis decides to give up her original plan. She tries her best to establish rapport with students and attends to their utmost need – the need to have successful learning experiences. To achieve that, she needs to give up some of her working principles to adapt to the current situations. Polkinghorne believes (1988) that:

> Experience is an integrated construction, produced by the realm of meaning, which interpretively links recollections, perceptions, and expectations. The structures of cognitive schemes are layered and can undergo modification in the interchange with the linguistic and natural environments. In place prior to any particular perception, these schemes are actively used to organize and interpret a person's encounter with the environment, both internal and external. (p. Chapter 2)

This upheaval certainly affects Mavis' thinking, but it is difficult to tell if it affects her cognitive schemes. Will this incident deepen Mavis' understanding of motivation theories? Does it make her adjust her priorities? These are questions with no answers, but one thing certain is that these cognitive schemes are not static. They are malleable which can be modified through interactions with human experiences and the outside world. The cognitive views of teacher learning are compatible with the narrative way of understanding teacher learning. Polkinghorne suggests that narrative can be

one of the cognitive schemes. It is an organizing system which is attuned to the human needs of making sense of personal experiences and the outside world. Meaning is attributed to happenings through narrative ordering. It forms a meaning structure of its own to organize individual events and actions into a unity of the whole.

Another alternative theory related to teacher learning is situated learning. It stresses that learning happens when teachers interact with the people, artifacts, documents, objects and environment in situations and reflect actively in the process. Learning can be further facilitated by social collaboration and close interaction. It is a process to acquire professional knowledge and skill. In the autobiographical account, I recalled when I first graduated, I taught without receiving any teachers' training. I relied on what Lortie (1975) called as long-term 'apprenticeship of observation' in the classroom. They are my learning experiences as student in the classroom. My teaching was an act of 'doing without knowing'. It was not supported by professional knowledge of any kind. I was more like a craftsman than a professional. It is grounded on intuitive theories referred by Bruner (1996) as 'folk pedagogy'. 'Folk pedagogy', which can be learned through imitation and modelling, consists of "talents, skills and abilities", but not knowledge and understanding (Bruner, 1996, p. 54). The powerful influence of this kind of personal experience in shaping teachers' beliefs and practices have long been researched (Raths, 2001; Richardson, 1996, 2003). Richardson (1996,

2003) believes that personal experience, experience with schooling and instruction, and experience with formal knowledge – both school subjects and pedagogical knowledge are the major sources for teacher beliefs. And among the three, experience with schooling and instruction is found to be the most important. In a comprehensive review conducted by Opfer and Pedder (2011) on teacher learning, teachers' past experience, both as students and teachers, together with their "teaching and learning attitudes, values, theories, and images in the guise of beliefs" are regarded as components of the "teachers' orientation to learning systems" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 387). This system is likely to determine what teachers accept or reject in their journey of professional life. 'Folk pedagogy', more likely a fixed entity, is distinct from knowledge that reflective teachers generated in the work process "knowing in action" and "reflection in action" (Schon, 1983, 1987). The constructive and interactive nature of such workplace learning makes knowledge tacit, dynamic and situational.

In this study, situated learning happens at two levels. At one level, it nested in me as a support agent and a researcher. As mentioned earlier, my role as a support agent in the research process is not static, it undergoes changes as well. There are times in the inquiry process when my role as a subject expert emerges. Once I mentioned about the strategy SWBST and conducted a workshop for the teachers. Other times my role is to facilitate reflection. In one interview that happened after the first term examination, Mavis was

frustrated because some students performed poorly. I suggested her trying e-learning to arouse student's interest in learning. Mavis replied by recalling an unsuccessful experience she had last year with another class of students. She used Quizlet on i-pad to help students learn target vocabulary. She did not consider this method effective as students failed to recall these words the next day. Gradually in the conversation, Mavis comes up with the idea of using pair work. She once asked students to do pairs-check. They worked on a set of problems in pairs. Mavis saw dynamic in the pairs (Doc 12) as a good means to help SEN students get emotional support from their peers. Clearly, without any practical inclusive experience to rely on, I make no attempt to convince Mavis to accept my suggestion or to give alternative suggestions to help Mavis solve her problem. This inquiry study has created a space, both spatial and temporal, to promote reflection. The interviews provide a means for Mavis to focus her thoughts on the topic and to 'hear' her own thoughts and feelings. It is arguable if Mavis and I shared the same understanding of the described situations in the classroom as I did not experience these incidents personally. Rather Mavis and I re-lived and re-constructed the experience in the interview and make a different sense of the situation.

At another level, reflection happens within the research participant Mavis. Schön (1987) describes two types of reflective thinking: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. The former refers to the teachers' ability to think on the spot when facing uncertainties and complex situations in daily

teaching; the latter occurs when teachers review and reflect their classroom practice. 'Reflection-in-action' happens when Mavis is conducting the listening activity and 'reflection-on-action' occurs when she reviews and think upon her teaching in the post-lesson interview (with detailed report in Section 7.2.2 In the post-lesson interview). In the study, this interview is conducted immediately after the lesson. It is one of the few occasions in the inquiry process when both the participant and the researcher undergo the same experience (i.e. teaching in the classroom). Most of the time, Mavis engages in a kind of self-reported reflection, recounting the happenings about the past few weeks. Temporality is significant in the 'reflection-in-action' moment. The 'past' time means an hour ago, it is a recent past instead of a distant past. The future is a definite future, it refers to the coming lesson tomorrow.

I have two observations regarding the nature of teachers' reflection in this interview. First, less time has been spent on describing the lesson in full details as compared with the other interviews. This is reasonable given that this is a shared experience. However, this does not mean that the participant and the researcher ought to perceive the lesson in the same way. We still allow each other to have our own interpretation of the event. Our interpretations are shared and are being shaped in the interview process. For instance, in terms of curriculum planning, initially I disagreed with the idea of spending so much time on a listening task. I did not think that Mavis

had done much to cater for the needs of the weak students. In the interview, through Mavis's reflection, I realize my initial thought was wrong. I learn the thinking behind the actions. The listening task is used as a way to scaffold students to do the coming writing task; and hints are given in the tape script to assist weak students to locate the answers. The interview helps Mavis reflect, it also helps us to communicate, to exchange thought and ideas. The achievement is more than an understanding of the situation. It is also a change of my past belief. I began to cast strong doubts about those classroom interaction studies or lesson observation checklists which focus merely on recording teachers' action in the classroom without taking into account teachers' thinking. In the world of complexities, I believe it is dangerous to separate action from mind in research studies.

Second, teachers' reflection is found to be distinctive. It is not logically sequenced. Elbaz (1991) points out that its non-linearity nature may be caused by the fact that teachers need to take heed of various contextual factors in the work process. Moreover, teachers' thinking stems from an "examination of the teaching situation itself, rather than from a theoretical position, this non-linear quality of teacher thought comes to the fore quickly" (Elbaz, 1991, p. 11). Another reason may be that teachers, unlike other professionals such as lawyers and police officers, are not trained to explain their thinking or experiences in a logical or sequential way. Teachers frequently need to solve problems instantly in the classroom. Working on the

solution is considered more important than explaining and presenting the problem.

Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) have identified three key elements in teachers' reflective thinking:

> The first is the cognitive element, which describes how teachers process information and make decisions. The second, the critical element, focuses on the substance that drives the thinking – experiences, goals, values, and social implications. The final element of reflection, teachers' narratives, refers to teacher's own interpretations of the events that occur within their particular contexts. (p. 37)

They believe that all three elements should be developed to help teachers work in situations full of uncertainties, problems, conflicts and alternatives. In the inquiry process, all these three elements can be found in Mavis' conversation. Interestingly, they rarely exist simultaneously in one setting. The first element, the cognitive element is overt in the co-planning meeting reported in Section 7.1.1. Mavis' schemata of the learning theories and second language learning principles and her knowledge in curriculum planning and the English curriculum are found to be rich and deeply connected. She is able to identify inconsistencies between theories and articulate them explicitly in the interview. Another element teachers' narratives are commonly found in Mavis' conversation. They are affective and cognitive accounts with settings, plots and characters. In one interview, Mavis recalled an "outside-the-classroom" conversation she had with her

student. The girl did not think she deserved to be awarded in class because the question was not that difficult. She was puzzled by the praise.

> *After school, the student who gets five marks comes up to me and asks why I give her five marks. I tell her because the question she answered is a cognitively demanding question. The girl disagrees saying that this is only a simple question. I answer back saying that to other Primary six students, this may be an easy question, but to her classmates, this is a tricky question. This girl has a puzzled expression on her face. I felt uneasy as my intention of saying that is class is to encourage those low ability students to participate in class. I worried that I may give the high ability students (about 5-6 students) a wrong impression and high ability students may be dragged by those low ability students in class.* (Doc 9)

In this narrative, the setting is important. It happens after class and outside the classroom. Maybe the girl does not raise this question in class because she does not want to embarrass the teacher or her classmates. Her question probes Mavis to think about the impact of her inclusive strategies on the high achievers. The impact of Mavis' reflection is likely to be technical and practical. Mavis may either adjust her award system or design more challenging questions for the high achievers.

The last, but not least, element is the critical element. Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) point out that "In critical reflection, the moral and ethical aspects of social compassion and justice are considered along the means and the ends. For instance, the teacher may choose a setting arrangement that facilitates cooperative learning in the hope of fostering a more equitable,

accepting society" (p. 39). Critical reflection is important for the promotion of inclusion as it can lead teachers to question current practice and make the school system more accommodating. In the study, whether this element exists or not is arguable. And even if it does exit in the conversation, it weaves into the narrative element seamlessly. When Mavis guides her students to think about their future 'what they want to be when they grow up?' (Doc 4), she wants to convey the moral message that every job is important, it is valuable to the community. However, Mavis fails to address the societal value of overemphasizing academic achievements or competition. And when she struggles about balancing the needs of SEN students and non-SEN students, she does not question the issue of equity and the principle of "one-size-fits-all" in inclusive practice.

8.7 Teachers' Personal Practical Knowledge

8.7.1 Nature of personal practical knowledge

Clandinin and Connelly (1987) use the term 'personal practical knowledge' to refer to the body of knowledge generated 'by' and 'in' teachers in the workplace. It is different from other codified teachers' professional knowledge composing mainly of facts, theories, principles or research studies which is public, explicit and expressive in nature. Teachers' personal knowledge is the opposite. It is private, tacit and deeply personal. It is practical as it helps teacher tackle day to day teaching and learning events.

Practical knowledge can be acquired through different forms of interactions. However, teachers' personal practical knowledge is different, it is an embodied individual experience. Individuals have to go through the experience himself or herself. It is a kind of experiential knowledge. It is nested with emotions and values as well. In other words, it derives from teachers' cognitive and affective engagement with milieus. Clandinin and Connelly (1987) argue that teachers' personal practical knowledge features a distinctive interaction between the mind and body, between the past and the present, and between the actions and the setting (including people, things, events and place); it is:

> a term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons. Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the person's practice. It is, for any one teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25)

Teachers' personal practical knowledge is embedded in teachers' narrative accounts. It weaves with details about people, things, objects and happenings. It connects the commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place. It is a narrative way of organizing knowledge and thinking about experiences. In addition, it is subjected to change and development. Its

tentative nature makes it susceptible to being constructed and re-constructed in the process of living, telling and retelling. Narrative inquiry provides a framework to understand the complexities of this kind of personal knowledge. It is:

> the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477)

Teachers who do not reflect upon their own experiences may not be able to derive personal practical knowledge. It is a knowing process laden with thinking and feelings, it needs to be acquired actively by personal reflection. It is also context-dependent and is not easy to be transferred to another context. Its personal and subjective nature makes it difficult to be assessed by the public. Since teachers' personal practical knowledge is opaque and inaccessible, it has long been undervalued in the teaching profession. It is only in recent years that its significance and the status of teachers as knower and owner of knowledge have been recognized (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988; Elbaz, 1981; Polkinghorne, 1988).

8.7.2 Mavis' personal practical knowledge in relation to inclusion

Connelly, Clandinin and Schön share the same interest in understanding the

epistemology of practical knowledge. They share the same theoretical belief that knowledge is not an entity out there to be acquired, rather it is an experiential process transcended through one's interaction with the milieus. Schön's (1983, 1987) theories on 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' have provided an epistemological understanding of Mavis' listening lesson, as described in Section 7.2.2 In the post-lesson interview. Mavis demonstrates to be a reflective practitioner who can make good use of the dialectical relationship to reflect and to improve her practice.

Schön's reflective theory has provided a detailed description of how practitioners improve professional work through 'reflection-in-action'. In most cases, reflection-in-action has been seen in teachers' teaching in the classroom, as demonstrated in Mavis' listening lesson. However, Schön's 'action-present' does not necessarily limit to the immediate present, it can be extended to include the time when further action can still make an impact to the situation. That means 'action-present' may include the whole academic year when teachers have the opportunities to try alternative strategies and actions to solve the problems in situations. In that sense, the concept of 'reflection-in-action' can be used to re-examine the reflective process Mavis engaged during the inquiry process. And 'reflection-on-action' can be applied to the situation when the whole academic year has come to an end.

In Schön's reflective theory, there are three points of significance which can shed light on Mavis' inclusive practice. Firstly, Schön points out that in the world full of complexity, uncertainty and instability; problems cannot be easily seen and clearly defined. Reflective practice involves two key process: problem setting and problem solving. Problem setting is a prior step before problem solving. Reflective professional practitioners set the problem by selecting and attending to the salient features or things in the situation. Then they discern the boundaries of the problem and think through the case by talking or thinking about what the problem is and what action can be taken. Secondly, problem setting is a recursive act. Professional practitioners engage in this framing and reframing process from time to time when additional information and considerations are taken in during the reflective process. Lastly, it is impossible to pin down one simple solution to the problematic situation. There are many possible alternatives to tackle the problem. These alternatives may suggest conflicting paradigms of professional practice which can cause conflicts, unease, puzzlement and surprise to professional practitioners.

When Mavis handles the students in inclusive practice, she has to reflect on the nature of their behaviors, their causes and possible solutions. In one particular case about an ADHD boy who caused disruption in class. Mavis recounts it narratively as follows:

> *I remember one time a boy runs around in class before lesson ends. I call him forward and ask him 'What do you want?'. The boy cries instantly. This boy's working mother has no time to discipline him and send him to a strict tutor at the tutorial center for long hours. He does not want to go. He has a lot of negative feelings. He refuses to go to the tutorial center any more. His results drop but he behaves properly now. Since he is enthusiastic about football and is a member of the football team, the bargain is that he must hand in homework. His results are still dropping but he is able to complete his assignment. (Doc 17)*

The above case can have multiple interpretations and possibilities. A boy runs around the classroom during the lesson. This disruptive behavior in class could be viewed as a learning problem caused by boredom. The teacher needs to design more engaging activities for learning. It could also be a SEN-related problem. This hyperactive student cannot control himself; he needs counselling and training on behavioral control. Soon Mavis discovers that the boy's mother is a working mom who does not have time to look after him. His mother sends him to a strict tutor at the tutorial center for long hours of studies after school. This boy does not want to go. He has a lot of negative feelings. This information adds more perspectives to the problem. This could be a family problem with a child's grievances bottled up against his mother. Mavis chooses not to talk with the mother, she knows that the boy's mother is a single mother, maybe she thinks that this mother does not have other alternatives but to send the boy to the tutorial center after school; maybe Mavis has positive thought about tutorial center. Soon Mavis learns that the boy is an enthusiastic football player and is a member of the school football team. She uses this as a bargain to encourage him to control himself in the

classroom and to hand in homework assignment on time. The boy's behavior has improved gradually.

When this incident – running around in the classroom - occurs, Mavis may have solutions to fix the problem instantly. With the termination of disruptive behavior on the spot, this becomes 'no problem' at all. However, Mavis does not perceive it as a one-off incident. She discerns this as the sign of a more complicated problem and will recur again if not handled properly. She chooses to confront the problem at a deeper level. This is a moral choice. In the process of handling the case, Mavis talks with the boy and other colleagues to collect information and appreciate the situation. She could have framed this problem as a learning problem, a family problem or a behavioral problem for counseling. Depending on the way she framed the situation, the problem could have different possibilities and consequences. Mavis has made the assumption that the boy is able to control himself; and he just needs someone to give him more attention and support. She talks to the boy and makes him understand that she cares about his feelings. She has established a rapport with him, then she uses negative reinforcement to help the boy stop disruptive behaviors and hand in homework assignment on time. Mavis never mentions about Skinner or other behavioral theories in the conversation. Her decision may be informed by her codified knowledge of the humanistic approach (talking with the boy) and the behavioral theories (negative reinforcement). Her own biographical experience of receiving

emotional support from her mother at the times of difficulties may have influenced her decision. Her past experiences of handling students with disruptive behaviors, her personal life as a working mother and the fact that her nephew gets help from the tutorial center may have influenced the way she views the situation. This unique experience has become part of Mavis' narrative. The promising end has enriched Mavis' personal knowledge. It is a result of the close interaction between professional knowledge, life histories and practical knowledge. Mavis' personal knowledge is tacit, moral, emotional and deeply personal, it is difficult for her to share it with others. It is a kind of knowing inherent in Mavis.

8.8 Teachers as Story Tellers

8.8.1 Narrative Unity

Clandinin and Connelly (1988) have borrowed the term 'narrative unity' from philosophy and give it a new interpretation in the context of narrative inquiry. It is defined as:

> a continuum within a person's experience which renders life experiences meaningful through the unity they achieve for the person. What we mean by unity is the union in a particular person in a particular time and place of all that he or she has been and undergone in the past and in the past of the tradition which helped to shape him or her. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988, p. 280)

This definition places great emphasis on 'particular time and place' which highlight the temporal and situational nature of a narrative account.

However, in the story itself, the time and place boundaries are unlimited. This has been elaborated in the chapter on the commonplace of temporality, sociality and place (Chapter 3 Section 3.1.1 Narrative inquiry and teachers' experiences, Chapter 5 Findings and Discussion I – the Story of Inclusion). Moreover, Clandinin and Connelly have placed a lot of importance on the meaning-making efforts shared between the participant and the researcher in the process of narrative inquiry.

The continuum in Mavis' narration has been created by a succession of people, events, things or feelings. They are segmented into different discursive parts in a series of interviews that last for one academic year. How do these segments of reported experiences achieve unity? Elbaz (1991) points out that narrative unity can be understood from the perspective of a speaker and a listener. From the perspective of a story teller, it is the teller's strong notion of story in mind that achieves wholeness. In other words, it is the strong will of the narrator that makes the story possible. From the perspective of a listener, it is the listener's interpretation that gives the story its unity. It is "the complicity of the listener which allows the story to repel the threat of meaninglessness" (p. 5). As such, narrative unity is the construction of intersubjectivity work by the story teller/participant and the listener/researcher. This kind of research relationship takes time, honesty and open-mindedness to develop. In the first interview meeting, when Mavis expresses worries that I may not be able to have any findings in the study

because she has been always very positive about inclusion (Doc 2). She is hesitant about the value of her stories in the inquiry. To a certain extent, the notion of intersubjectivity with respect to narrative unity has not yet been established between the researcher and the participant.

Moreover, in the above quotation about narrative unity "…a continuum within a person's experience which renders life experiences meaningful through the unity **they achieve for the person**" (my emphasis), Clandinin and Connelly (1988) suggest that not all experiences within the person's life are meaningful to the person. Some life experiences are more significant than the others. Life experiences have a power of their own which are united and can shape a person's understanding of the life events as a whole. In Mavis' interviews, she has recalled a few significant events that are related to SEN students. They include the story about the boy who is suspected to be a SEN student (reported in detail in Chapter 6 Section 6.2.2 Engaging in the research process), the girl with IQ below average who lost the learning motivation (reported in detail in Chapter 6 Section 6.2.3 Re-searching my participants' roles) and the ADHD boy who causes disruption in the classroom (reported in detail in Chapter 8 Section 8.7.2 Mavis' personal practical experience in relation to inclusion). Mavis also tells the story about a high ability student who questions about the award system (reported in Chapter 8 Section 8.6 Teachers' Learning). These are events that are loaded with feelings, thought and actions. They are individual cases but in one way

or another they are related and connected to inclusion. How far do they affect Mavis' understanding of the inclusive experiences? How important are these events in developing Mavis' personal knowledge in relation to inclusion? It is difficult to assess their impact on Mavis and their significance in the story weaving process. Nonetheless, Mavis' selection of events in the narration does tell us about her interpretation of inclusion. Mavis, as the teller of the story, achieves the unity of the stories by selecting and including both SEN-related and non-SEN related events, together with her life history such as her nephew's story and her personal life, and other happenings in the inquiry process. Her interpretation of inclusion is a story loaded with feelings, struggles, thought and actions. It centers on her struggles to engage all students in the learning process and to balance their needs in learning. She believes not participating is a kind of exclusion. It is a kind of intellectual engagement which is different from other narratives on emotional or social inclusion. Since inclusion is a fluid concept that is susceptible to a wide range of interpretations in different places, the story has provided a rich and detailed account of inclusive study in this context.

According to Polkinghorne (1995), emplotting is an important narrative analytic procedures. Clearly, Mavis, through selection and juxtaposition, has engaged in an emplotting process in the inquiry study. Telling the story in the interview is the first level of emplotment done by the speaker. The listener or researcher completes the second level by selecting and juxtapositioning

incidents or actions to produce a thread of themes. This happens in the process of complying the research text. This selection process has already been discussed in details in Chapter 7 Section 7.1.3 Reliving the story. Kyratzis and Green (1997) call this 'a double narrative process'. They believe the first process of retelling done by the participant is more powerful than the second narrative process, thus undermining the authoritative role of the researcher. I believe, to a certain extent, the hegemony of the participant's narrative process is achieved by the significance of the life experiences. As noted by Clandinin and Connelly (1988) in the quotation, the participant's life events have been thrusted into power, thus becoming the momentum of the narration to achieve narrative unity.

8.8.2 Types of Narrative

Clandinin and Connelly (1998) use a landscape metaphor to describe the complexity of teacher knowledge. The metaphor emphasizes on the vastness and multi-dimensional nature of teacher knowledge which can connect people, things and happenings narratively across time and space. Classroom is the line of demarcation which divides the landscape into the "in-classroom place" and the "out-of-classroom place"; and the landscape is described to be "narratively constructed, as having a history with moral, emotional, and aesthetic dimensions" (p. 151).

As I mentioned earlier in Chapter 3 Section 3.2.1 Methodology, there are at least two ways in which to categorize teachers' narratives on the professional

landscape. Clandinin and Connelly, (1988) proposed, based on the context and content of narratives, categorizing them into sacred stories, cover stories or secret stories. McEwan (1997) suggested appraising their influence on audience to classify them into coercive or emancipatory (1997).

What type of narrative are Mavis' stories? I believe the three-dimensional nature of Mavis' narratives which transcend time, place and setting, plus the inherent ambiguity woven into the plot, makes it hard, if not impossible, to be pinned down to a single category. When Mavis recalls her childhood memory of schools as a safe place, it is not clear whether she is referring to inside the classroom or outside the classroom, or the school as a whole. Most obviously, her view is from the perspective of a student, which is certainly different from that of a teacher. As for the nature of Mavis' narrative account, it is certainly not a sacred story about inclusive educational policy and theories. Neither can it be categorized as a secret story nor a cover story. This narrative is expected to be shared in public, it would certainly be different from those secret stories shared among teachers in the common room. There is a strong degree of honesty in the story that justifies it to be more than a cover story. Mavis experiences a lot of doubts, uncertainties, struggles and confusion. She is not portrayed as an inclusive specialist or a subject expert who can answer all questions related to inclusion. This lived story supports Mavis' reflection and enrichment of personal knowledge on inclusion but it does not end with a tidy note of resolution. It ends with many

problems hung and feelings unsettled.

The story told by a PE teacher about the exclusion of two disabled teenagers in the PE lessons (Berg Svendby (2016), as reported in Section 3.1.2 Narrative inquiry and inclusion, is clearly an emancipatory story that probes deep reflection and challenges conventional practice. Nonetheless, the messages conveyed by Mavis' story are too multi-layered and interwoven to be pinned down ideologically. It is not a story focusing particularly on SEN students. Even if it does, the story is too diverse to evoke particular feelings and thought. For example, the story about the SEN girl who refuses to bring her glasses back to school as a kind of 'silent protest', as told in Chapter 7 Section 7.2.3 Reliving the story, may highlight the frustration of SEN students in an inclusive classroom. This negative experience brings disappointment, frustration and puzzlement to the audience. Another story about the ADHD boy who learns to control himself in the course of his struggle, as told in Chapter 8 Section 8.7.2 Mavis' personal practical knowledge in relation to inclusion, may demonstrate the success of Mavis, as an inclusive teacher, in helping the SEN students. Which story can represent Mavis' inclusive experiences? What messages can the story convey? What conventional practice does it want to challenge? These diverse stories can probe deep reflection among audience, evoke ambivalent feelings and explain the complexities of the real world. However, they fail to convey a clear message or standpoint on inclusion.

8.9 Summary

This chapter summarizes my reflection on two important aspects: inclusion and narrative inquiry. Mavis' lived experiences have provided a situated account of inclusive education. Mavis' story sounds familiar, so familiar that the same story may happen in a non-inclusive setting as well. Ordinary teachers may face the same kind of dilemma, struggles and feelings experienced by Mavis. These emotions have not been associated solely with inclusion. They are related to students' family background, learning difficulties, attitudes, abilities and interests. In a classroom setting where problems are multi-faceted and complex, SEN-related problems are only one among many. If you use a microscope to study it, it magnifies and becomes the whole. Its underlying nature may be the same as other non-SEN related problems. The fact that narrative inquiry approach allows all contextual elements which include people, things, events and happenings to be captured in the research process helps provide a new perspective on the magnitude and complexities of this problem in its own place.

Chapter 9. Summary of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore and examine the lived experiences of a mainstream primary teacher in an inclusive setting in Hong Kong. There are two sub-themes:

- To explore how personal, sociocultural, curriculum and student factors affect an individual's perception in relation to the enactment of inclusive practices.
- To understand how those conflicting philosophies at the systemic level manifest themselves at the classroom level.

The study turns out to be something more than a teacher's story. It is the narrative of a primary teacher and a support agent. It started with a personal agenda and a desire: an agenda for self-learning and a desire to speak for others. Since the 1994 Salamanca Statement, inclusive education has been implemented for more than 26 years. Teachers in both developed countries as well as developing countries (Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson, & Gallannaugh, 2007; Saloviita & Consegnati, 2019; Teixeira, Correia, Monteiro, Kuok, & Forlin, 2018; Yada, Tolvanen, & Savolainen, 2018) have continued to express their need on inclusive training. As a support agent working closely with teachers, I share the same need. Since I had little knowledge about inclusion, I decided to enrich myself professionally in this aspect. I believe, by embarking on a research project, I could learn more about inclusion at the systemic level and the classroom level. In addition, when I worked with

teachers, I heard some teachers complain about not knowing how to handle SEN students in class. Interestingly, they are all teachers who have received inclusive training. At first, I thought there must be something wrong with these training courses, but I soon discovered that this was not the determining factor. I turned my interest to what teachers experienced in an inclusive classroom.

Another drive to the study is my desire to speak for teachers, primary teachers in particular. Compared with other stakeholders in the community, primary teachers in Hong Kong are the relatively silent ones in the development of inclusive education (Wong, Pearson & Lo, 2004). Inclusive policy is one of the many initiatives under the curriculum reform. It has been regarded as an important educational change globally (Lui, Sin, Yang, Forlin & Ho, 2015). In a study commissioned by the Hong Kong government, it reports that teachers believe they have used many strategies and measures to help SEN students, but parents of SEN students are not satisfied with teachers' work (reported in Section 1.1.1 From integration to inclusion). Clearly, there is a gap between what teachers have done and what other stakeholders perceive teachers have done. What has actually happened in the inclusive classrooms? What inclusive practice have the teachers done? Can these things be told? Underlying these questions is my faith, which has developed through working closely with teachers in job, in teachers' good intentions of helping SEN students. I hope the study could speak for teachers,

to tell the public their challenges and let the public understand the complexities of their experiences.

A narrative approach has been adopted to explore the topic in this thesis. This has proved to be an appropriate research design as the 'lived inclusive experiences' is found to be rich and connected. However, the setback is that it is difficult to generalize and transfer the findings to other contexts; and the representativeness of the participant is an unresolved issue. Most inclusive-related studies in Hong Kong, particularly in the first ten years of inclusion (roughly from 2004 to 2014), focused mainly on the policy level, about administrative support and funding to school, types of training teachers needed and received, impacts of inclusive training on teachers, teachers' attitudes and efficacy towards inclusion. Only a few qualitative studies have been done about inclusive experiences in the local classrooms. For example, one qualitative study (Pearson, Lo, Chui & Wong, 2003), reported in Section 1.1.1 From Integration to inclusion, was done before the inclusive policy, teachers were reported to have mixed attitudes towards SEN students. The "Yes Buts" discourse was found to be similar to the findings reported by Sikes, Lawson & Parker (2007) on attitudes of teachers and teaching assistants in various countries, they include Australia, Brandenburg, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Pakistan and Slovenia.(Emam & Mohamed, 2011; Engstrand & Roll-Pettersson, 2014; Moberg, Muta, Korenaga, Kuorelahti, & Savolainen, 2019; Saloviita, 2020; Saloviita & Consegnati, 2019; Saloviita &

Schaffus, 2016; Sharma, Aiello, Pace, Round, & Subban, 2018; Štemberger & Kiswarday, 2018; Teixeira et al., 2018; Yada & Savolainen, 2017). Another qualitative research is on the attitudes of Music teachers towards SEN students in Hong Kong, as reported by Wong & Chik (2016) in Section 2.2 Teachers' Experiences in Inclusive Settings. The findings have been found to be negative. The authors attributed that to the lack of teacher training to music teachers. So far there has been few narratives about inclusive teachers in Hong Kong, it is hoped that the study could fill up the research gap by providing a narrative which involves both cognitive and affective interpretations of the embodied inclusive experiences in a primary setting.

My role as a support agent has added some distinctiveness to the study. I have devoted Chapter 4 Researcher's Role as a Researcher and a Support Agent to deliberate on this topic. The dual roles of a support agent and a researcher are common in recent research. One reason may be that schools are becoming more and more receptive to external assistance; another reason may be that schools need some external force to initiate and carry out changes. Some of these support agents are from universities. They are likely to be qualified teachers who are pursuing higher academic credential. The support-oriented projects provided by universities have provided a feasible ground for research. Support agents as both 'insiders' (service providers) and 'outsiders' (researchers) has been found to have caused confusion and role conflicts, as reported by Breault (2010), LePage et al.

(2001), Grimes (2013). These studies have provided a strong motivation for my decision to end the support relationship with Mavis officially before starting a research relationship. In addition, planning the school-based curriculum, designing the modules, observing the lessons and talking about students' performance have always been in my work routine. The job nature requires me to listen to teachers' voices; and respect their choices and autonomy. I also need to ask critical questions to probe them to think deeply and reflectively. This work relationship has facilitated my transition from a supporter to a researcher. I have been able to extend my role as mediator in promoting teachers' reflection into the research work.

I have identified seven themes in Mavis' narrative. They are (i) catching in emotional struggle, balancing the needs of different groups of students; (ii) influence of life stories; (iii) language of imagery and metaphor; (iv) understanding SEN students as persons; (v) difficulties caused by poor learning attitudes, not purely ability problem; (vi) more than inclusive practice, create 'feel good' experiences; (vii) students need teachers to help them set goals. These themes, though presented as separate items, are connected and overlapped. Together they weave the story of inclusion, the story inundated with people, things, events and happenings. The narrative gives meanings to the inclusive experiences in a particular social, cultural, political and personal context.

Despite the uniqueness of the context, Mavis' story shares certain degree of similarities with other inclusive stories. In Section 2.3 Narrative and inclusion, I have cited four stories told by other inclusive teachers in different contexts. Sikes, Lawson & Parker's study (2007) is about stories told by six inclusive teachers and teaching assistants. They are stories loaded with mixed feelings and complexities. The participants believe that inclusive experiences cannot be concluded simply as good or bad, positive or negative. They are diverse and mixed. The "Yes Buts" discourse is a response of complicated feelings and thought. To a certain extent, it echoes with Mavis' emotional struggles and inner conflicts. Other stories reported by Altieri (2001) and Del Rosario (2006) focus on how positive attitudes, biographical histories and experiences affect inclusive teachers in a positive way. Adding another dimension, Burns and Bell (2010) narrated the stories of six teachers who were once SEN students themselves. They have overcome their limitations and worked in educational settings. Burns and Bell's study suggests that these teachers' personal disabilities and experience have influenced their professional beliefs, values and practice. However, it is difficult to establish any causal relationships in these studies. In Mavis' story, she does not have any deficiencies herself, her understanding of SEN students' needs and difficulties is not an embodied experience. However, she shares the same sympathetic attitude as these teachers. This may have been caused by Mavis' close connection with her nephew who is also a SEN student, her past learning difficulties, the good teachers she encountered in childhood.

Although the magnitude and dimensions of influence are different, these studies acknowledge the influence of biographical factors as an evidential force in shaping teachers' thought, actions and feelings.

As a novice researcher, I have been intensely affected by the power of qualitative data. Through transcribing, reading, re-reading and cross-referencing the data, themes began to emerge in the process. In fact, the process of interpretation does not start at the transcription stage, it starts as early as when the data is collected (i.e. during the interviews). When Mavis talked with me about her inclusive experiences, I listened attentively. Since the interaction process is free and has not been guided by any structure or questions, the message and feelings expressed in my speech and actions have already conveyed my understanding and interpretation of the events. This may affect Mavis' reactions and follow-up actions. The interconnectedness and interactive nature of the interview process has made me a significant part of the research process.

The causal interactive style, which is only different from normal conversation in terms of shared discussion topic, allows the hidden and private views of both the researcher and the participant to be expressed freely. This kind of shared understanding and interpretation has liberated both parties. It allows me to bring in the rich experiences I have learned in other inclusive settings to become part of the research data. I have always been surprised by the

diversity and possibilities of SEN students in the classrooms. The SEN label earns them more support in terms of after-school intervention programmes or help of teacher assistant, however, it can sabotage their individualities and possibilities. Underlying the label, SEN students are no different from non-SEN students. They have their strengths as well as difficulties, their stories are just like other children's stories in the classrooms which are full of complexities and uniqueness.

The story starts with a focus on inclusion. When the story unfolds, it becomes more than an inclusive story. It becomes the story about both SEN and non-SEN students. The story is loaded with unease and tension. There are unresolved hidden conflicts underneath the activities in everyday teaching and learning. Sometimes, Mavis has to make painstaking compromise at the expense of the others. For example, Mavis knows some students are bored with reading aloud, but she sees that SEN students need to practise a few more times. Mavis needs to make a quick decision whether to ignore the bored expressions of the high achievers or to think of a quick-fix solution to engage them in the task at another level. Mavis faces lots of difficulties and challenges. Some problems can be solved but some can't. Some problems may be solved with the passage of time; however, some are carried forward by individual students to the next stage of learning. For example, the ADHD boy has learned to control himself but he is still not interested in learning. The SEN girl who refuses to bring her glasses back to school is still not

attentive in class but she has regained some confidence by participating in a buddy scheme to help P. 1 and P. 2 students.

The story ends on a note of reflection. A reflection on the nature of inclusive stories. They should be stories with every individual included, both SEN and non-SEN students. Stories about children's physical, intellectual, emotional and social engagement and participation in educational settings. Inclusive stories need to include voices, actions, events and feelings of all individuals. The told stories, like this one, do not always end in harmony. This is the power of narratives. It appeals to human's needs to make sense of their experiences and the outside world. The strong sense of connectedness between the told story and the lives can evoke audience to re-examine their own situations and may inspire them to look at inclusion in a new way or from a new perspective.

9.1 Limitations

Adopting a narrative approach to research allows the interconnectedness of elements to be studied, and the richness and complexities of situations to be explored. However, its strength is a double-edged sword. Narrative approach involves data covering participants' feelings, actions, events, thought and biographical histories; its magnitude and complexities make it difficult, if not impossible, to involve a significant number of participants as post-positivist approach does. In the study, there is only one participant, Mavis, who is a

convenient sample. Her representativeness has become a concern. It has been discussed thoroughly in Section 8.5 Representativeness of Mavis' Story. I have discussed this issue at three levels: macro, meso and micro. The macro level questions the gaps between reality, experience and expressions, which theoretically appear in all qualitative studies about human activities. The meso level concerns giving rich and thick description of the context so that audience can use it to make sense of the research findings. The micro level concerns giving the voices and authority back to the participant and sharing my research intentions explicitly with the audience.

In connection with the problem of representativeness, another limitation is that findings in narrative inquiry are not generalizable either. Since the study aims at providing a rich description of an inclusive teacher's lived experiences in the primary setting; and, makes no attempt to generate theories or laws regarding inclusion, the notion of generalizability is not a serious consideration. Moreover, the theoretical underpinning of narrative inquiry, within the interpretive research paradigm, is that there are multiple realities and many dimensions in human world. Hence, there are more than one way of knowing and understanding the human world. In addition, the participant and the researcher are understood to be influenced by social, cultural, historical, and personal contexts. They are also affected by the mutual construction of dialectical research relationship. Hence research findings are understood to be situational and shared; and are regarded as

the interpretative work of both parties.

Another limitation of narrative inquiry is the possibility of teachers telling 'cover stories' (Clandinin, Connelly, & Bradley, 1999). They are stories that teachers want to tell in front of the public. In these stories, teachers are portrayed as righteous or professional figures that fit into the school setting or the social discourse of schooling. Sikes, Lawson and Parker (2007) use the expression "perceptions of 'legitimate' data" to express their concern. They argue that when the participant and the researcher interact in the research process, they are engaging in a social activity. It is likely that both parties are producing what is considered to be "appropriate, acceptable, allowable and proper data". This is particularly serious when:

> giving opinions on topics, like inclusion, that are socially, politically and ethically sensitive, people may be concerned to project, and be associated with, views which cast them in what they consider to be a favourable light. This may mean disguising or even denying what they really think. (Lawson, Parker & Sikes, 200, p. 60)

The "perceptions of 'legitimate' data" can undermine the trustworthiness of narrative inquiry. Nonetheless, this challenge is not restricted to narrative approach. It applies to all qualitative studies when participants have to express their opinions and belief in interviews. Why do participants have to worry about revealing their private self? Under what circumstances are the interviews conducted? What is the relationship between the participant and

the researcher? All these questions are related to the fundamental issues on research ethics, researchers' intentions, relationship between the participant and the researcher and finally, mechanism to safeguard research validity. These concerns need to be addressed in the research process. In the study, safeguard mechanisms such as seeking informed consent from the participant, protecting the identity of the school and the participant and keeping the research data confidential and accountable have been enforced to protect the participant's true identity from revealing to the public. The four research criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), have been examined in Section 3.3 Data Collection and Validation. As the researcher and writer of this social text, it is possible that I succumb to the social, political and ethic pressure and choose to express publicly accepted views by inviting people of like mind to be the participants. Hence my identity, background and intentions need to be revealed and scrutinized by the public. This has been done in Chapter 4: Researcher's Role as a Researcher and a Support Agent.

Other limitations are caused by the nature of the research topic: inclusion. The principle of inclusion, in accordance with the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994), is to ensure the right to education for all students regardless of individual differences. It is ethically and philosophically unchallengeable. They have become 'rhetoric of conclusions' (Clandinin and Connelly, 1996), educational policies with strong moral orientation. They are

‘sacred stories’ with strong public support. Starting with the inclusion of special needs children, the concept has extended to include children of various ethnicities, languages, disabilities and HIV etc. This has added further complexities to the issue. When implementing inclusion, countries are encouraged to take into considerations their own situations in terms of resources, history, cultural background and educational system. Hence most countries have their own understanding and interpretations of inclusion. Inclusion has become a fluid concept that is difficult to pin down. For example, in some places, inclusive practice involves adapting the curriculum to cater for the needs of the children. Whereas in Hong Kong and other places, it is the other way around. Children are expected to adapt to the central curriculum and sit for the same exit examination.

Apart from the fluidity of the term ‘inclusion’, its evolving nature also makes it difficult to be pinned down ideologically. When this research was completed two years ago, five categories of SEN students were included into the classrooms. They were students with attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorders, ‘mild grade’ intellectual disability, sensory impairment, physical disability and children with autism spectrum disorder with average intelligence. By the time the study has been completed, it has been regrouped into three main categories. These three main categories are: (i) cognition and learning needs (students with specific learning difficulties or intellectual disability); (ii) behavioural, emotional and social development

needs (students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders or attention deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder); (iii) sensory, communication and physical needs (students with physical disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment or speech or language impairment). Students with specific learning difficulties have been added to the list and sensory impairment has been further subcategorized into visual, auditory and speech. This kind of categorization is built on the medical model of subnormal versus normal dichotomy. It has been criticized as of little value and is strongly associated with developmental delay and medicine. Most importantly, they are of little help in terms of teaching and learning.

9.2 Directions for Future Research

There are three observations regarding inclusive studies in Hong Kong. First, most studies focus on a particular category of students within the SEN population, such as children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Forlin & Cooper, 2013), children with physical disabilities (Qi & Ha, 2012), children with autism spectrum disorder (Peters, & Forlin, 2011); and, other non-SEN groups such as immigrant students (Chee, 2015) and cross-boundary students from Mainland China (Yuen, 2011). Through categorizing these children into various labels, it is assumed that they share the same characteristics: their needs and concerns are the same and they are different from the others. However, the truth could be that, similar to Mavis' SEN students, their needs and concerns in terms of teaching and

learning are totally different; and that their differences override their commonalities. Hence these labels can cause bias and confusion. Similiar views have been expressed by Florian (2015) in the following quotation:

> a focus on learner types is problematic because of the many sources of variation within and between identified groups of learners that make educationally relevant distinctions between them difficult to observe and judge. Thus, whatever can be known about a particular category of learners will be limited in the educational purpose it can serve, because the variations between members of a group make it difficult to predict or evaluate provision for individuals in it. (p. 8)

Second, another observation is the dominant use of quantitative method to study teachers or other stakeholders' attitudes towards inclusion (Forlin, Loreman & Sharma, 2011; Lui, Sin, Yang, Forlin and Ho, 2015). A good example is the work done by Lui, Sin, Yang, Forlin and Ho (2015) on building a structural model in describing the relationship between attitude, knowledge, and perceived social norm among parents of SEN children and in using one variable to predict the others. This kind of post-positivist approach allows comparison to be made across countries, to make prediction and to generalize theories or laws. It assumes that individuals have more or less similar understanding towards the term 'inclusion' and have the same measurement scale when assigning numbers in response to statements or questions. However, the hegemony of these studies would be undermined if the above assumptions are violated.

Third, another common research topic is the perception study about the effectiveness of training courses in preparing teachers and teacher assistants (Rose & Forlin, 2010) for inclusion. The participants are pre-service teachers (Forli & Chambers, 2011) and in-service teachers (Forlin & Sin, 2010) who took part in the training courses commissioned by the government. The nature of these studies is not clear as they are done upon the completion of the training courses and the transfer of knowledge to the workplace is not the prime concern of these studies.

In most studies related to inclusion, teachers in Hong Kong are portrayed as barriers to inclusion, their attitudes are reported to be far from positive (Pearson, Lo, Chui & Wong, 2003: Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Forlin, Earle, Loreman & Sharma, 2011). Moreover, teachers are portrayed as incompetent. They are not able to handle SEN students because they are not trained (Wong & Chik, 2016). Teachers are reported to be resistant to change. In Forlin & Chambers' study (2011), pre-service teachers showed no positive attitude changes before and after inclusive training. Similar results were found among experienced teachers in another study (Forlin, Earle, Loreman & Sharma, 2011). These views are collected upon the completion of the training courses. These findings challenge the assumption that teachers' attitudes will become positive when they understand more about inclusion and when they are fully prepared for that.

Avramidis and Norwich (2002), in their review of the literature related to teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, concluded that:

> the great majority of the studies reviewed above employed traditional quantitative research designs (survey) and investigated 'individualistic' experiences of inclusion. However, as Eiser argues, there is an interdependence of the 'individual' and the 'social'; in other words, attitudes should not be viewed as solely personal, but as arising out of interactions with others in the system (e.g. school). Given this social constructivist view of attitude as context dependent and responsive to factors within a particular sociocultural environment, future research would benefit from employing alternative methods, such as life history, narrative or autobiography, to examine teachers' attitudes. **These methods focus on participants' own narratives (the so-called 'emic' perspective) and can lead to an improved understanding of the complex and interrelated processes of personal experiences, attitudes and practices.** (my emphasis p. 144)

Almost two decades have passed, a number of interpretative studies about teachers' inclusive experiences have emerged in other places. There are very few narrative inquiries about inclusion in Hong Kong. To understand more about the interactive relationship between personal experiences, attitudes and context, we need more personal stories to provide an insider perspective - stories that share commonalities in terms of social, cultural and political context. It is only when individuals have produced an array of stories that researchers may analyze these narratives and produce generalizable findings based on the collection (Polkinghorne, 1995).

9.3 Implications of the Research

9.3.1 Empirical implications

The present study provides an empirical narrative understanding of a teacher's inclusive experiences. Its implications will be discussed at two levels: the audience and the researcher. Eisner (1982) proposes that there are two ways of representing narrative data to audience: a demonstration mode and an inductive mode. In the demonstration mode, narrative data is used as evidence to support researchers' interpretations; whereas in the inductive mode, data is expressed in different literary forms to tell their own story. The poem written by Berg Svendby (2016) (reported in Section 3.1.2 Narrative inquiry and inclusion) has well demonstrated the power of the inductive mode in appealing to the audience's emotion for reflection and action. This mode is deemed appropriate for multi-dimensional concepts like inclusion, which is not simply educational in nature, but a social, political and cultural issue laden with values and ethnical reasoning, Nonetheless, I believe narrative data in its traditional demonstration mode does not serve entirely a supporting role. Researchers do not have to 'speak for' the data, narrative data has, to a certain extent, innate power to speak directly to the audience. This is particularly significant when the data is loaded with feelings and emotions. In Section 7.2.3 Reliving the story, I have cited the following interview data:

> *But daily incident tells you that she is weak in problem solving. Her behavior seems to get worse now that she grows older. She does not*

> *bring her glasses back to school. It is like a 'protest in silence'. I understand that if I treat that seriously, this may lead to open confrontation. I know that I need to use soft approach to handle misbehaviors. I do not want to affect the overall learning atmosphere. I need to treat kids differently; their needs are different.* (Doc 17)

This incident illustrates the suppressed emotions of the SEN student - 'protest in silence' and the inner struggles of Mavis in balancing the needs of SEN and non-SEN students. The richness of the data promotes deep understanding of the situation. Yet its intactness allows audience to have another level of understanding. The above interview data allows audience to see the exercise of "street-level bureaucracy" in which discretionary power is used in disciplining behaviors in the classroom. Clearly in this case, control is not the only consideration, other students' interest – their learning opportunities has taken precedent.

As a novice researcher, my empirical understanding of narrative inquiry is twofold. First, in narrative inquiry, the interview process between participant and researcher is interactive and dynamic. It is easy to conduct, yet difficult to sustain. This is particularly challenging when there is only one participant in the research. In the study, I met Mavis 8 times and interviewed her for about 15.25 hours. As a novice researcher, I was hesitant to take up a dominant role in leading the discussion. I knew if I did not handle the situation well, I may turn the interview into a question and answer session or an interrogation instead of a conversation or a discussion. One strategy I

used to make the interviews more interactive and substantial is to participate in lesson planning, classroom observation and post-observation reflection. The teaching content, students' needs and performance help make the conversation more substantial. Also, this kind of collaborative activities has become embodied experiences which are enriching and transforming, thus allowing more in-depth exchanges and reflection to be generated.

Second, narrative inquiry has created a good space for both the researcher and the participant to reflect. It is difficult to conclude how transformative the process is to individuals. Personally, reflection happens with various levels of nuance at different stages of the research. At the initial stage when I engaged in conversation with Mavis, the reflection was focus and practical. It mainly focuses on what happened in the classroom. At the later stage, speech was turned into written texts and my biography became part of the research work. Themes began to emerge and connections began to be identified. Reflection becomes more theoretical and critical, relating to theories about narrative inquiry and teachers' practical knowledge (Chapter 8 Discussion Part 2 Reflection on the Teacher Learning Theories).

9.3.2 Theoretical and methodological implications

According to Polkinghorne (1995), teachers' narratives can be categorized into two types based on the underlining plot of the story. This narrative is definitely not a tragic story in which teachers fail to have any

accomplishment; however, it is neither a comedy in which teachers overcome all challenges and live happily ever after. It is a live and lived story with ups and downs; and, positive and negative feelings. The 'refusal' to be categorized may reflect the complexities of the situations and cast doubts on the over-simplification of this kind of binary classification of life stories.

In addition, Polkinghorne (1995) proposes to categorize narrative research into two types: narrative analysis and analysis of narrative. The first type, narrative analysis is about individuals or groups giving meaningful accounts of their stories or experiences. The second type, analysis of narrative is about studying a number of narratives to look for common themes or patterns. The current study is a narrative analysis. It aims at providing a lived account of what happened in an inclusive setting. This represents the collaborative perspective of a teacher and a support agent. It excludes no one and includes every individual, thing, action and happening in the inclusive setting. It is a narrative about SEN and non-SEN students. This is different from other inclusive studies that focus mainly on the SEN students (Altieri, 2001; Berg Svendby, 2016; Savvidou, 2011). This difference should be taken into consideration when analyzing inclusive narrative. Clear distinction should be made between those stories that focus exclusively on SEN students and those that include both in the narrative research. Its alternative interpretation may challenge the moral underpinning of inclusive education, which is to provide an engaging and supportive learning environment to

every individual in the classroom.

In narrative inquiry, the value of teachers as a reflective practitioner with an emic perspective has been widely recognized. Researchers' roles are important too. Their understandings and interpretations of the situations weave together with the participant's and co-construct the experiences into one unity. Narrative inquiry encourages researchers to reveal their identity, intentions, values and background. Nonetheless, in other post-positivist studies, researchers have to downplay their own personal background and information in the research. Recently, the dual roles of researchers as program coordinators, coaches, consultants, advisory teachers, facilitators, liaison officers or support agents (as cited in Chapter 4 Researcher's Role as a Researcher and a Support Agent) have been emerged, they have been treated as a homogenous group in terms of job nature. A close examination shows that their job varies from co-planning and co-teaching lessons with teachers to organizing training workshops and supervising school-based programmes. These diversified work experiences have added much expectations and complexities to the research world. I believe acknowledging and reflecting on these roles is the first step, which has already been done in some studies; the next step is to explore their possibilities and to study their impact on research.

9.3.3 Policy implications

Currently, there are three types of SEN-related training courses offered to in-service teachers (Education Bureau, 2015). They are basic, advanced and thematic. The government stipulates that 15%-25% of teachers at school have to receive basic training. Six to nine teachers in each school have to receive advanced and thematic training. These thematic training programs have been designed to cater for a specific category of SEN students in learning English or Chinese. Mavis is one of the few who has received thematic training at school. She is regarded as expertise in this area. Clearly, Mavis' narrative shows that she has internalized her identity as a loving and caring teacher and an English teacher. Her identity as an inclusive teacher is not strong. She hardly perceives herself as an inclusive leader and has no strong will to share her SEN expertise with other English teachers. This may be caused by the lack of institutional support to establish such a leadership role and to promote interactions and sharing among teachers (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Ho (2012) believes that collaboration among teachers when facing difficulties or challenges in an inclusive workplace can help teachers build up their confidence in developing communities of practice. It has been found to be a good means to meet the needs of individual teachers (Forlin, 2007; Pellegrino, Weiss, & Regan, 2015). Facilitation of this kind provides opportunities for teachers to re-examine roles, promote reflection and challenge old assumptions.

Insufficient training has always been identified as a common problem in the implementation of inclusion in Hong Kong, Australia, Brandenburg, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Pakistan and Slovenia. Most commonly, the lack of sufficient inclusive training has been closely associated with teachers' negative attitudes towards inclusion (Emam & Mohamed, 2011; Engstrand & Roll-Pettersson, 2014; Moberg et al., 2019; Saloviita, 2020; Saloviita & Consegnati, 2019; Saloviita & Schaffus, 2016; Sharma et al., 2018; Štemberger & Kiswarday, 2018; Teixeira et al., 2018; Yada & Savolainen, 2017). Interestingly, even in Italy where the majority of teachers are reported to have positive attitude towards inclusion, teachers still ask for more in-service training (Saloviita & Consegnati, 2019). And it is fairly common for research to end with an appeal for more inclusive training. In this study, Mavis is a trained inclusive teacher. It is not the purpose of this research to establish a causal relationship between training and actual practice. Rather, the focus is on the co-construction of Mavis' practical personal knowledge in the research process. The observation is that there are no special strategies known as inclusive practice, they are all common strategies related to catering for learner diversity in teaching and learning. The application of these strategies is closely connected with content and contexts. They involve curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, subject knowledge, contextual knowledge and knowledge about students. This knowledge interacts with practical personal knowledge, which is experiential, situational and narrative in nature, to help Mavis handle her challenges. Although the

embodied practical personal knowledge is highly personal, it is worth sharing with other teachers in the same situations. However, the existing training courses provided by the tertiary institutions pay no attention to practical personal knowledge. The training course design involves in-service teachers working in groups and practise teaching SEN students in after-school lessons. Hands-on practice can enhance teachers' sensitivity to the needs of SEN students and allow teachers to co-construct knowledge through interacting with other in-service teachers. However, this kind of experiences are 'artificial' and limited because this kind of one-to-few interactions happen only in special schools. Mavis' narrative reveals that when teachers work alone in an inclusive setting, they face lots of challenges and difficulties. Catering for the needs of SEN students or balancing the needs of both SEN and non-SEN students are only one of the many causes. Other interfering and interacting factors includes students' family background, past learning experiences, learning motivation and needs. It is advisable to include teachers' personal knowledge in relation to inclusion to be acknowledged and conceptualized as part of the in-service training programmes.

9.4 Conclusion

The aim of this study is to explore and examine the lived experiences of a mainstream primary teacher learning to teach children with learning difficulties or additional needs in an inclusive classroom in Hong Kong. A narrative approach has been adopted to achieve this goal. Seven themes

have been identified in this narrative. They are: (i) catching in emotional struggle, balancing the needs of different groups of students; (ii) the influence of life stories; (iii) language of imagery and metaphor; (iv) SEN students not labels, understanding their needs as persons; (v) learning difficulties not purely ability issue, may cause by poor attitudes; (vi) more than inclusive practice, the need to create successful experiences; (vii) teachers communicate their expectations to students, help them set own targets. These themes are interconnected and woven into a narrative inundated with emotions, feelings and struggles. From the perspective of a teacher, the story has become more than an inclusive story about SEN students. It is a story about students' interests, learning needs, motivation, family support and personal background.

The findings reveal how a teacher's personal biography, experiences and values interact with the situations and affect her perception, understandings and interpretations of inclusive practice. This knowledge helps deepen the public's understanding about the complexities of the situations and give the voices and authority back to teachers. The study acknowledges the importance of "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action" in day to day teaching. It further reaffirms the epistemological value of teachers' personal practical knowledge in teacher development.

This story could enrich the collection of "narrative analysis" related to

inclusion, which is found to be limited in the local context. Further research relating to “analysis of narrative” is suggested to draw a distinction between those stories which focus mainly on SEN students and those which include both SEN and non-SEN students. It is hoped that this story could provide a new perspective to teachers, teacher educators and policy makers to look at the issue of inclusion. It could help them reflect on familiar thoughts or actions, reinterpret familiar experiences, reexamine hidden assumptions and unravel implicit personal knowledge (Jalongo et al., 1995). Suggestion has been given to recognize the value of teachers’ practical knowledge in promoting inclusion. The school authorities may promote professional exchanges to let private and personal knowledge go public; and teacher educators may incorporate teachers’ personal knowledge as a component of the teacher training programmes.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethnical approval provided by Durham University

The study was approved by the School of Education Ethics Sub-committee, Durham University in 2016. It was then continued at Newcastle University in 2017 and completed in 2020.

Durham University
School of Education

Shaped by the past, creating the future

28 September 2016

Judy Kwok W.K.
w.k.kwok@durham.ac.uk

Dear Judy

The story of a mainstream primary teacher's lived learning experiences in an inclusive classroom

I am pleased to inform you that your ethics application for the above research project has been approved by the School of Education Ethics Committee.

May we take this opportunity to wish you good luck with your research.

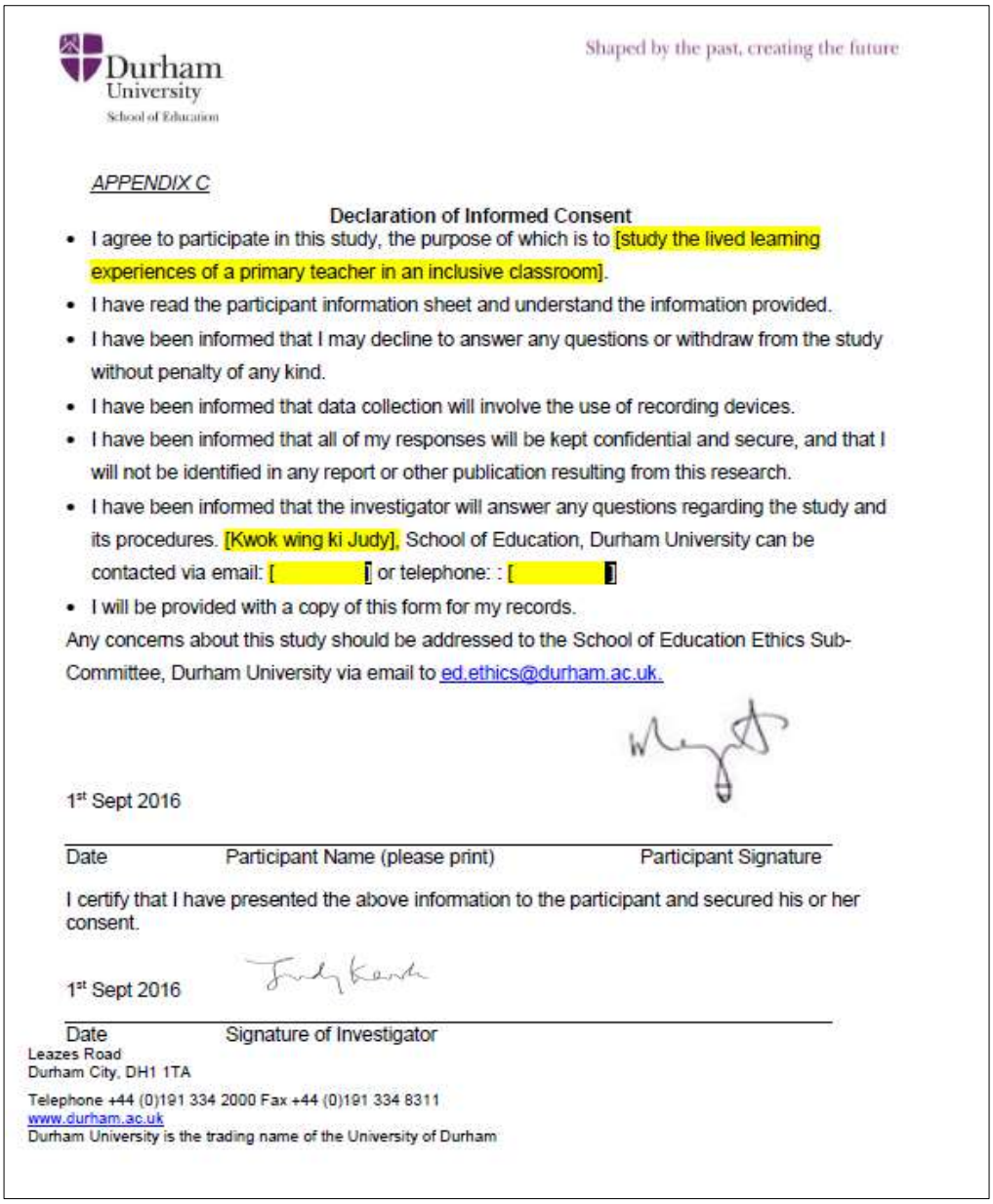
Yours sincerely,

Nadin Beckmann

Dr Nadin Beckmann
School of Education Ethics Committee Chair

Leazes Road
Durham, DH1 1TA

Appendix B: Consent form signed by the participant



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APPENDIX C

Declaration of Informed Consent

- I agree to participate in this study, the purpose of which is to [study the lived learning experiences of a primary teacher in an inclusive classroom].
- I have read the participant information sheet and understand the information provided.
- I have been informed that I may decline to answer any questions or withdraw from the study without penalty of any kind.
- I have been informed that data collection will involve the use of recording devices.
- I have been informed that all of my responses will be kept confidential and secure, and that I will not be identified in any report or other publication resulting from this research.
- I have been informed that the investigator will answer any questions regarding the study and its procedures. [Kwok wing ki Judy], School of Education, Durham University can be contacted via email: [ ] or telephone: : [ ]
- I will be provided with a copy of this form for my records.

Any concerns about this study should be addressed to the School of Education Ethics Sub-Committee, Durham University via email to ed.ethics@durham.ac.uk.

1st Sept 2016

Date Participant Name (please print) Participant Signature

I certify that I have presented the above information to the participant and secured his or her consent.

1st Sept 2016

Date Signature of Investigator

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Durham City, DH1 1TA

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Durham University is the trading name of the University of Durham

Appendix C: An interview between the research and the participant

This interview was conducted in November 2016 between the researcher and the participant Mavis. It is marked as *Document 12*.

Interview Date: 28th Nov 2016

Time: 3:30 – 5:30

Venue: Classroom

Participants: Researcher and the participant Mavis

Discussion focus: Students' performance in the First Term Exam

Mavis commented on her students' performance in the First Term Exam. At first she sounded disappointing as 12 students failed. But then she pointed out that students had progressed slightly as compared with the quiz/test. And when compared with other classes, her class' performance was comparatively better.

There was great diversity in class, about 4 students scored ten something. When Mavis asked the students for an explanation, they were not able to explain properly. Some said that they did not know the answers. They just guessed blindly, choosing an option randomly in MC questions. Some students got marks by merely copying the basic verb form in the part on tenses. Some said honestly that they did not even read the paper during the test. One student even left two parts blank. They didn't care about marks.

They were highly demotivated.

As for the rest of the students, most of them benefitted from revision and got their marks in parts such as preposition, vocabulary and tense. When it came to the reading part, Mavis focused on teaching them answering techniques. She asked them to circle key words but some still failed to grasp that in the exam. Most indirect questions were too challenging for her students, they failed to get any marks.

Mavis felt she was teaching her students more than English; she needed to teach them thinking. She recalled teaching one textbook passage about fund-raising competition; students did not have the idea that the one who raised the highest amount won the competition. So when the comprehension question asked who the winner was, students failed to get the answer. In one listening passage, students did not understand the word 'decorate', when the tape said "tell me something about the", students were distracted by the word "notebook", they could not associate that with the answer 'book'.

The same thing happened in the writing lesson. When Mavis prompted them 'why they are poor', students' answer became circular. They answered people didn't have money because they were poor. They failed to answer because the land was poor (based on information in the textbook).

I suggested introducing e-element into the lesson. The purpose is to arouse students' interest in learning. Mavis recalled past unsuccessful experience of using e-learning. Last year she tried using Quizlet on i-pad. Students were highly motivated in lesson. They were able to read aloud key words in

isolation. But then the next day, when she asked them again, students failed to recognize these words. She could not understand those students who got only ten something marks. Students seemed to remember at that moment, but they didn't make the effort to memorize, to turn from short-term memory to long-term memory. When there was slight variation, students failed to recognize. Mavis tried to help by constant repetition and revision. She shared her practice of giving students five minutes to do revision before dictation. Students did quite well on the spot, but the next day, they forget about that. Mavis could only focus on the successful experience.

Mavis recalled one interesting incident. She taught students to remember long words by cutting them into 2 or 3 syllables. She saw one student dictate that words into separate parts. She didn't know why but she's going to ask him why.

Mavis found that pair work was a good means to make students on-task. In the past students may disregard others even when she asked them to work with partners. Now there is dynamic in pairs. One student has to do singular (1,3,5..) and one does even (2,4,6…). But there is only one student in class that she singles out because he is too dependent on others, he has to work alone. When this student asked why he had to work alone, Mavis told him he could learn more. Mavis reflected that some tasks needed to be done alone and some in pairs.

Among students who gain ten something marks, only 2 out of 5 are SENs. They have different problems. Mavis observed that their problems were more

related to their attitudes and low English standards than to their learning difficulties. She explained that when she supplemented the explanation with L1 (mother tongue), they were able to understand. But they lose interest in learning and have poor attitudes, that explain why they still do not do their homework well. It seems that they have switched off their learning mode for a long time, they just drift away. Mavis used the metaphor of swimming, students refuse to get wet because they have stranded onshore for a long time, they observe in a distance, thinking that they could get on the boat anytime they want. But the 'learning' boat has sailed away slowly.

One student who performed badly has a high achieving brother and sister. Maybe the pressure is too much on him, he may have some kind of psychological needs. When Mavis shows attention and asks him to do again, he is able to perform. But in the test he chose to leave the task blank rather than making any attempt. He is not attentive in class. Mavis talked to his mum but she failed to understand him as well.

Mavis thinks that assignments and exam are means to drag students close to learning mode. Other means such as pair work, role play and drama are used to motivate students with ten something scores to learn in class.

She has a general impression that when students have lessons in the English Room, they have fun. High achievers are able to transfer what they learn there to the classroom; whereas low achievers are unable to do so, they have fun and forget about everything. Learning in these two sites seems not connected. Mavis cited an example when she had to force students to use

language targets learned in the textbook in writing tasks as a means to make reading related to writing.

Mavis and I reflected together. Our reflection seems to be echoing each other when we come up with the same observation that most high achievers have family support, parents who care about their learning in every subject. These significant adults help kids connect things learn in different subjects whenever possible, they also help kids connect things learn outside the classroom with that learn inside the classroom, connect learning with living experiences. Family support may not directly link with socio-economic background but strongly associate with social and cultural capital.

Mavis recalled one SEN who comes from a family with educated parents, both are teachers who can help this student override learning challenges.

As for those students who scored ten something, their parents said they had asked their kids to revise or sent their kids to tutorial centres, but they rarely took any concrete actions themselves. They always said they were busy. This may reveal their views on learning and family values.

When asked if Mavis could communicate with those students with ten something scores, Mavis mentioned one individual who tried very hard to live up to her expectations, he cried when asked why failed the dictation/test. He is able to follow suit when extra help and step by step instruction are given. This is not a SEN case, but a suspected one when he was younger. I suggested pressing school/psychologist to recheck him again as he may be a 'missed case. If proved, he can entitle to have more support in the future.

I mentioned that this type of 'suspected case' may cause distress to kids' relationship with their parents as both sides don't understand the problem. Each may fail to live up to one another's expectations and may end up harming one another. Mavis then told me the story about her nephew. When she was promoted to P.1, she failed in all subjects. That put much pressure on the family. The kid had emotional outburst from time to time and her school performance fluctuated. When the family asked for help from the school social worker, the school sent the kid to a centre. One social worker in the centre suspected that the kid has learning difficulties and used special ways to help her. The school did nothing. It was only in P.2 that she was sent to IRTP (Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme). The relationship between the girl and her mum affected because of her school results, but has improved a lot after getting help from the centre. When I asked if the family pressed the school for a diagnosis, the answer is: the school is not supportive, the family is afraid that this may affect their relationship with the school. Now the girl has passed all subjects except one.

Mavis said this experience has nothing to do with her receiving SEN training, she was sent by school to do so. But with this kind of knowledge, she is able to spot out her nephew's problem.

Appendix D: The researcher's self-reflection

This is one of the researcher's self-reflections. It is marked as *Document 8*.

Date: 12 Oct 2016

Time: 9:30 – 11:00

Venue: Room 101 (near Staff room)

Self-reflection after lesson observation

Before I walked into the classroom, Mavis expressed her worries about students' performance. She worried if students may have progress at the end of the term. She worried about their slow learning pace. I explained to her once again that the focus of this research is on her growth, development and struggles, it has nothing to do with students' progress. I may research on/with her for 1 year, but may extend for another year with another cohort of students (of course if she agrees and if needed). I believe that we need to build up closer rapport in the coming future. I plan to insist on her reading the interview record and my reflection every time when we meet. In this way, I can do members check and promote understanding and reflection. Most importantly, I need to involve her more closely in the research. She needs to be drawn into the process. I can't speak for her. She needs to speak for herself.

I agreed that students are very weak as one girl I approached in class struggled with the word 'comfortable'. This word is a key word taught in P.5.

The word 'tiny' had been explained in the PowerPoint in context and in isolation, but she still failed to get the meaning.

In this interview, Mavis asked more questions than answers. She couldn't figure out why students chose to think or behave that way. There were some assumptions she had about students that were wrong, she found out that herself and was surprised by that.

Mavis is an experienced teacher, she is able to do reflection at the technical level. Reflection like she could further promote cooperation by giving 1 worksheet per pairs instead of giving each student a worksheet. I gave Mavis a few suggestions. They were mainly technical. I suggested further explanation assisted by L1 in the PowerPoint, hoping that this could help the weak ones. Another suggestion is giving students chances to move around physically. Students seemed to be 'trapped', in their physical seating and in their mind. Mavis may consider appointing 'group leader' from each group to come out and get the worksheet. And other simple moves such as asking students to come out and locate words in the text (check if they could recognize the key words they just read loud in the PowerPoint) would be a good way to promote physical movement. I hope this could wake them up a bit. Interestingly, Mavis shared an episode when she used similar strategy: asking students to stand up and 'earn' their right to sit down only when they have answered questions. Students responded positively but moaned 'not again' when they thought she was going to do so again. That discouraged her from trying this strategy too often.

I have a strong feeling that students are not quite themselves when I am in the classroom. They are strongly aware that there is a stranger in the classroom observing them. My effect tends to fade off a bit in the middle of the lesson but comes back again when I walk around during pair work. I try to help a bit. I propose coming every Wednesday (same lesson). I want to be 'a fly on the wall'. Students will be so get used to me that they could just be themselves. In this way, I could see the 'reality' more. I get the seating plan of the class but I still insist on not wanting to know who the SENs are in class. I try to avoid the labelling effect and treat everyone as individual with various needs.