

**EQUITY IN EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATION FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL
NEEDS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI**

Master of Education (Sociology of Education) Thesis

By

**FLOSSIE KAMULAGA
Bachelor of Education (Humanities) - University of Malawi**

Thesis submitted to the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education (Sociology of Education)

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

JUNE 2011

DECLARATION

I the undersigned hereby declare that this thesis/dissertation is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used acknowledgements have been made.

Flossie Kamulaga

Certificate of Approval/Certification

The undersigned certify that this thesis represents the student's own work and effort and has been submitted with our approval.

Signature:_____Date:_____

SAMSON MACJESSIE-MBEWE, ED.D. (Senior Lecturer)

Main Supervisor

Signature:_____Date:_____

RICHARD NYIRONGO, ED.D. (Senior Lecturer)

Head, Department of Educational Foundations

Dedication

To my late father Albert Webster and my mother Juliana who encouraged me to come this far
and beyond.

To my niece Carol.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following people who supported and guided me during the entire process of this study:

Firstly, my main supervisor Dr Samson MacJessie-Mbewe and my core supervisor, Mr. Antoine Chigeda for their endless support, patience, guidance and encouragement. Thank you and God Bless.

Many thanks to my family: Mom and my lovely sisters, for their financial, spiritual and moral support. My brother, nieces and nephews who drive me to always do well. My Uncle and Aunt, Mr and Mrs Gobede and family, for accommodating and supporting me during my years of study. Thank you. I love you all.

I would also like to thank Maurice, for sacrificing his time to read through my thesis and make effective contributions. God Bless You.

Finally, I would like to thank all the participants for sparing me their time to make this study possible. May the almighty God be with you always.

ABSTRACT

The early missionaries introduced formal education in Malawi in 1875 and formal education for learners with special needs (LSNs) began years later in the early 1950's. The focus since has been on education for learners with sensory disabilities at primary and secondary levels of education which offers both segregated special education (in special schools) and inclusive education (in regular schools) at primary level and inclusive education (IE) through resource centres at secondary level. At tertiary level, the education offered is inclusive of learners with special needs. However, recent research has shown that Malawi has a challenge to make inclusive education a reality due to limited resources, insufficient funding, environmental and attitudinal barriers (Chavuta et al, 2008, Chimutu and Makoko, 2007, Soko, 2004).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate whether learners with special needs are equitably treated as they participate in education in the five constituent colleges of the University of Malawi (UNIMA) (Chancellor College (Chanco), Malawi Polytechnic (POLY), Kamuzu College of Nursing (KCN), College of Medicine (COM) and Bunda College (BUNDA)).

Qualitative data was obtained by the study through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Additionally, the environment of the respondents was explored and published data on Special Needs Education (SNE) in Malawi was reviewed to provide a clear background on the current situation of SNE in Malawi. The interview guides were administered to one administrator from each college, six learners with special needs (one from Poly, one from KCN, and four from Chanco), two lecturers from each of the three colleges, three special needs

assistants from Chanco and two officials from the Ministry of Education (Special Needs Department). The focus group discussions involved four learners with visual impairments from Chanco.

The study revealed a number of challenges faced by learners with special needs (LSNs) in the constituent colleges of the UNIMA such as lack of teaching and learning resources, purposely built resource rooms, inaccessible college infrastructure for learners with mobility problems, lack of specialist teachers and special needs assistants to aid the LSNs.

The colleges should employ special needs assistants and specialist lectures or train the available lecturers in handling LSNs during the lecture process. Further, the colleges should have purposely built resource rooms where teaching and learning materials such as books in Braille or Audio Books should be made available for the learners with special needs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	vi
LIST OF APPENDICES	xi
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 Chapter Overview	1
1.2 Background to the Study	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem	4
1.4 Purpose of the Study	6
1.5 Research Questions	6
1.6 Significance of the Study	6
1.7 Chapter Summary	7
1.8 Operational Definitions	8
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1 Chapter Overview	10
2.1.1 Theoretical Framework	10
2.2 Equity and Participation in Special Needs Education.....	11
2.3 Special Needs Education.....	15
2.4 Special Needs Education In Malawi	16
2.5 Inclusive Education	20
2.6 Inclusive Education In Malawi.....	22

2.7	Inclusive Education in Tertiary Institutions.....	26
2.8	Inclusive Education in Tertiary Institutions in Africa.....	30
2.9	Chapter Summary.....	32
CHAPTER 3: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY		34
3.1	Chapter Overview	34
3.1.1	Theoretical Framework for Methodology	34
3.2	Overall Approach and Rationale	35
3.3	Setting and Population of Interest	37
3.4	Sample and Sampling Procedure.....	37
3.5	Data Collection Procedures	39
3.5.1	Interviews	40
3.5.2	Focus Group Discussions	41
3.5.3	Observation	43
3.6	Data Analysis	43
3.7	Ethics and Trustworthiness of the Study	46
3.8	Limitations of Study	48
3.9	Chapter Summary	49
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS		50
4.1	Chapter Overview	50
4.2	Respondents Attributes	50
4.3	Guidance of LSNs in Course Selection	52
4.4	Recognition of LSNs in Classroom Activities	57
4.5	Recognition of LSNs during Assessment Activities	63

4.6	Provision Of Resources(Infrastructure, Personnel and Materials) for the LSNs	65
4.7	Educational Participation of LSNs in University Education In Malawi.....	74
4.8	General Discussion.....	80
4.9	Chapter Summary	82
	CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	84
5.1	Chapter Overview	84
5.2	Main Conclusions	85
5.2.1	Guidance of LSNs in Course Selection.....	85
5.2.2	Recognition of LSNs in Classroom Activities.....	86
5.2.3	Recognition of LSNs in Assessment Activities.....	86
5.2.4	Provision of Resources for LSNs.....	86
5.2.5	Educational Participation of LSNs in University Education in Malawi.....	87
5.3	Recommendations	89
5.3.1	Recommendations to the University of Malawi	89
5.3.2	Recommendations to the Constituent Colleges of The University of Malawi	90
5.3.3	Recommendations to Malawi Government	91
5.4	Further Research	92
5.5	Chapter Summary	92
	REFERENCES	93

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Introductory Letter To Every Participant.....	102
APPENDIX 2: List of Participants and Month of Interview.....	103
APPENDIX 3: Interview Guide For Learners With Special Needs.....	104
APPENDIX 4: Interview Guide For College Administrators.....	107
APPENDIX 5: Interview Guide For Lecturers.....	109
APPENDIX 6: Interview Guides For Special Needs Assistants.....	111
APPENDIX 7: Interview Guide For Ministry Of Education Officials (Special Needs Department)	113
APPENDIX 8: Focus Group Discussions Guidelines.....	114
APPENDIX 9: Observation Guides.....	115
APPENDIX 10: Introductory Letter.....	116

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Distribution of Participants per College and Their Characteristics.....	51
Table 2: Number of Learners With Special Needs per Participating College and Their Characteristics.....	52

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BUNDA	Bunda College
CHANCO	Chancellor College
COM	College of Medicine
EFA	Education For All
HI	Hearing Impaired
IE	Inclusive Education
JCE	Junior Certificate of Education
KCN	Kamuzu College of Nursing
LSNs	Learners with Special Needs
MoE	Ministry of Education
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
PIF	Policy Investment Framework
POLY	Malawi Polytechnic
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education
SNA	Special Needs Assistants
SNE	Special Needs Education
UEE	University Entrance Examinations
UNIMA	University of Malawi
VI	Visually Impaired
CWD	Children With Disabilities
CERT	Centre For Education Research and Training

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides the introduction to the study on equity in educational participation of learners with special needs (LSNs) in the five constituent colleges of the University of Malawi. Specifically, the chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions and the conceptual framework guiding the study, significance of the study and operational definitions of the key terms used in the study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Formal education in Malawi began in 1875, however provision for special needs education was only formalised seventy five years later (Soko, 2004). The provision is mainly implemented in the form of both special segregated education provided in special schools across the country, and inclusive education provided in selected regular schools at primary level of education. At secondary level of education, although some learners with special needs attend schools which do not have resource centres, the provision is implemented only through resource centres set up in selected regular schools that offer inclusive education (IE). However, this support is restricted to the visually impaired (VI), hearing impaired (HI) and children with mental challenges (Ngosi, 1997).

Malawi is signatory to a number of global declarations, that aim to provide equal educational opportunities to all learners. One such declaration is the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994) which promotes the approach of inclusive education aimed at enabling schools to serve all children especially those with special needs in order to achieve education for all. Nationally, to ensure the growth of special needs education (SNE) , a SNE Unit was introduced under the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 1994 (MoE, 2008). The main aim of introducing the unit was to oversee the implementation of a policy emphasizing the integration of physically challenged persons into the mainstream (MoE, 2008). In 2005, the SNE Unit was upgraded to a full department in the MoE in an effort to strengthen the support system of special needs education in accord with the Malawi Policy Investment Framework (PIF) (MoE, 2000), the Education for All (EFA) strategy (2004) and the National Policy on the Equalization of Opportunities for People with Disabilities (MoE, 2008).

Further, a national policy on SNE was established in Malawi. The overall goal of the policy is to develop the personal, social and academic competences of learners with special educational needs (Makoko and Chimutu, 2007). One of the broad policy areas covers the issue of equity, with the objective of eliminating the gap between LSNs and other learners by, among other things, ensuring equitable distribution of teaching and learning and assessment resources for learners, teachers and support staff in the field of SNE (Makoko and Chimutu, 2007).

However, despite government's efforts to promote SNE , studies conducted on the current status of SNE at primary and secondary levels of education in Malawi indicate, as one of the main challenges to SNE in the country, that few teachers are trained to provide additional support to LSNs in regular schools, and that there is lack of adequate teaching and learning resources and other assistive devices for LSNs (Makoko and Chimutu, 2007, Chavuta et al, 2008). This reveals lack of expertise to provide appropriate support and lack of resources for the LSNs expected to excel in regular schools against some global expectations of inclusive education.

Most of government's efforts to implement SNE are focused on the lower levels of education. At tertiary level of education in Malawi, most of the vocational training centres, teacher training colleges and universities integrate LSNs. However, it is not known how accessible education at this level is to the LSNs and how they are included in the general learning environment and the curriculum in the colleges.

The University Of Malawi (UNIMA) is one institution that includes LSNs. It is the largest and oldest university in Malawi and comprises five constituent Colleges namely the Malawi Polytechnic (Poly) , Chancellor College (Chanco) , Kamuzu College of Nursing (KCN) , Bunda College of Agriculture (Bunda) and the College of Medicine (COM) . Entry into the University is based on an aggregate score of the learner's mark at the MSCE and University Entrance Examinations (UEE). Candidates must obtain a minimum of 6 credits (including English) at MSCE to qualify for the UEE. However, in order to promote access to higher education for LSNs, the Special Needs Education Department and the University agreed to exempt learners with special needs from the UEE and admit them based on their MSCE mark only (University of Malawi 2007- 2009). However, studies have not been carried out

to explore the success of IE beyond the affirmative action taken at entry level into the university.

Additionally, the Malawian literature on SNE has focussed primarily on primary and secondary levels of education (Msowoya, 1999; Makoko and Chimutu, 2007; Kaliwa, 2007; Chavuta et al , 2008; Zimpita, 2008). There is therefore lack of information on LSNs at tertiary levels of education in Malawi in general and this prompted this study on equity in educational participation of LSNs at tertiary level of education in Malawi.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The importance of knowledge as a critical element of sustainable development in today's competitive global economy is no longer debatable (CERT, 2005). This growing importance of knowledge makes education, especially at tertiary level, more important than ever. Globally, education is recognised as a means to develop human capital, to improve economic performance and to enhance people's capabilities and choices (Peters, 2004). Exclusion from education can result in a staggering of freedom and productivity in the labour market whilst a successfully IE set up would help minimise the inequalities that exist in education which could reflect in the job market (Peters, 2004).

In Malawi, most LSNs are educated in regular schools and institutions at all levels of education. At primary level LSNs are either educated in segregated schools or in regular schools. However, the very few who have access to formal education rarely progress beyond primary school level and even those who aspire to a higher education and possess the level of intelligence to do so face many obstacles such as lack of access to schools and training institutions, and, for those who successfully

enrol into institutions of higher learning, discriminatory practices within the institutions (CERT report, 2005). The University of Malawi adopted affirmative action to promote access for LSNs into its constituent colleges. Once enrolled, as with most institutions of higher learning, these learners are exposed to the same curricula, resources, teaching strategies and organizational arrangements as the other learners which could promote inequalities in education and discriminatory practices within the institutions. It should not be overlooked that to overcome the inequalities in education, educational treatments, like medical treatments, must be appropriate to the condition and characteristics of the person being treated and sufficient to their support and correction (Gordon and Bonilla-Bowman, 1994).

The form of integration practiced in the institutions does not reflect the conditions required of the IE approach. This approach obliges educational institutions to acknowledge that all people can learn, respect the differences in children in terms of their age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV and TB status e.t.c, enable education structures, systems and methodologies to meet the need of all children and promotes an inclusive society by assuring all appropriate networks of support (Rustemier, 2003; Pinnock and Lewis, 2008).

Therefore, this study intends to fill the gap in knowledge on how fairly the learners are treated as they participate in education at tertiary level, using the case of the participation of learners with special needs in the five constituent colleges of the University of Malawi.

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the education system at tertiary level for the successful inclusion and participation of learners with special needs in the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi. The study was designed to expose the strengths and challenges that the learners with special needs encounter in the University and to expose any factors that could improve their educational participation further.

1.5 Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

- 1) What resources are provided (such as infrastructure, personnel, and materials) for the LSNs at the University of Malawi?
- 2) How are the LSNs guided in their selection of courses?
- 3) How are LSNs handled during classroom and assessment activities?
- 4) What factors can improve the educational participation of LSNs in university education in Malawi?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The dearth of literature in the field of SNE in Malawi remains a challenge (Ngosi, 1997). This study therefore contributes to the existing literature in the area at tertiary level of education. Additionally, most of the institutions at tertiary level of education do not have deliberate policies on disability (MSDPWD, 2006). This study therefore provides useful information and exposes the areas that need improvement to the

planners and policy makers in government especially those from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly towards the planning and implementation of a more inclusive education system in the country.

This study on the equity of educational participation for learners with special needs in the University of Malawi is vital because it is by looking at equality and understanding the reasons behind inequalities, that schools, courses, and our mindsets can be adjusted to create equity and move towards a world where equality in the aggregate is a true creator of justice (Hill, 2008). Moreover, the issue of equity in participation is a constitutional right for every human being regardless of their status (Malawi Government, 2000). Therefore, this study will help to promote equitable practices for LSNs at tertiary level.

1.7 Chapter Summary

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether LSN are equitably treated as they participate in education in the University of Malawi. This chapter presented the background of the study and the statement of problem that prompted the study, its purpose as well as the research questions the study answered. Further, this chapter includes the theoretical framework that will guide the study and presents the significance of the study.

1.8 Operational Definitions of Terms

Special Needs Education: a specially designed instruction that meets the unusual needs of an exceptional child (Hallahan & Kauffman 1991). Similarly, it is used in this study to mean, the provision of the appropriate learning environment, with adequate infrastructure, teaching and learning resources as well as curriculum content for LSN.

Visually Impaired: learners with partial or complete blindness. Children with sight problems that rely on touch and hearing senses as major avenues of learning or may have partial vision aided by large print and magnification (Suran and Rizzo, 1979).

Hearing Impaired: learners with minor or severe hearing loss as well as those with residual hearing. Learners with a defect in one or more parts of the ear and its associated pathways leading from the ear to the brain preventing them from adequately hearing, perceiving or attaining faint speech, ordinary conversational speech and loud speech (McConnell, 1973 in Dunn, 1973).

Disability/ physically challenged: an individual who is (severely) restricted in his/her daily life activities due to a mismatch between functional abilities and demands of society (Loeb and Eide, 2004).

Equity: Oxford Dictionary defines it simply as fairness. It is about fairness, equality of access, recognising inequalities and taking steps to address them. Equity in education requires that the exceptional learners should be fairly treated in terms of access to, participation in and achievement of the education on offer (Adams, 1993).

Participation in Schools: an illustration of how schools now include LSNs in the general learning environment and curriculum (Thurnbull, et al, 1999).

Accessibility: the ability to enter and navigate through a building or environment and to use all its facilities or services (Sardengna and Otis, 1991).

Inclusive Education: A process where all children and young people with and without disability or difficulties, learn together in ordinary pre- school provision, schools, colleges and universities with appropriate networks of support (Rustemier, 2003).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses related literature to the study so as to present a basis for the study. The chapter is divided into the following sections: special needs education, special education provisions, and the history of special needs in Malawi, inclusive education, inclusive education in Malawi and finally higher education for learners with special needs (LSNs).

2.1.1 Theoretical Framework

The main theory governing this study is the Theory of Equity, which attempts to explain relational satisfaction in terms of perceptions of fair or unfair distributions of resources within interpersonal relationships (Adams, 1965). Proposed in 1963 by J.S Adams, the Equity Theory model extends beyond the individual self, and incorporates influence and comparison of other people's situations in forming a comparative view and awareness of Equity, which commonly manifests as a sense of what is fair (Linden, 2006) . Basically, the theory relates an individual's input into a work situation and the output from the same situation with reference or in comparison to the experiences of other people in a similar situation.

The theory was initially put forward to explain job motivation amongst employees but application of the theory of equity in education requires that the every individual, in

our case the learners with special needs, must be fairly treated in terms of access to, participation in, and achievement of the education on offer (Adam, 1993). This is achieved by providing the appropriate and adequate resources to accommodate the learner's needs, modifying the teaching methodologies and making the physical environment accessible to learners with special needs. Therefore, the theory of equity is the guiding theory in this study as the equity in educational participation for learners with special needs was investigated in the five constituent colleges of the University of Malawi. This study unveiled the fair or unfair distribution and provision of resources and services amongst students within the university with a focus on the learners with special needs. Equity in educational participation is important as access to and success in higher education should not be determined by class, ethnicity, geographical locations and other personal characteristics such as physical challenges (Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne, 2008).

2.2 Equity and Participation in Special Needs Education

World Bank report on Equity and Development (2006) defines equity in terms of two basic principles; *Equal Opportunity* and *Avoidance of Absolute Deprivation*. The principle of *Equal Opportunity*, conceptually, states that circumstances at birth should not matter for a person's chances in life. The factors that determine a person's chances in life include the access to health and educational opportunities, the ability to connect to the rest of the world, the quality of the services available and the way institutions treat them (World Bank, 2006). This means that there should not be disparities in the opportunities people face regardless of their financial, racial, ethnic and religious background as well as any disabilities they were born with. Such disparities in opportunity, translate into different abilities to contribute to a nation's

development (World Bank, 2006). The principle of *Avoidance of Absolute Deprivation* suggests that societies may decide to intervene to protect the livelihoods of its most needy members even if the equal opportunity principle has been upheld. Therefore, each society decides what is equitable for its members belonging to minority groups through decision-making processes they regard as fair. However, it is necessary to consider individuals' perspective of what is fair in terms of their participation or involvement in social structures.

Equity does not mean treating everybody the same. Rather, It means using extra and different means to bring about the condition of the same status- the status of equality amongst individuals (World Bank, 2006). In the school setting, individuals should be given equal opportunities to participate in the learning environment. This requires that the school as a social structure should be responsible for the provision of 'extra and different means' to ensure equality between the learners with special needs and the other learners.

Demeuse (2001) in an article by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2003) suggested four basic interpretations of equity which can be applied to Educational Policy and Practice and are applicable to this study. The first interpretation is equity of access or equality of opportunity where it should be asked if all individuals (or groups of individuals) have the same chance of progressing to a particular level in the education system.

Secondly, Demeuse (2001) interprets equity in terms of the learning environment or equality of means. Where we can ask if all individuals enjoy equivalent learning conditions with a focus on whether disadvantaged individuals or groups benefit from a learning environment equivalent to advantaged individuals or groups in terms of the

level of training of their teachers and other staff, and the quantity and quality of teaching resources and approaches.

He further interprets Equity in terms of production or equality of achievement (or results): the focus should be on whether all students master, with the same degree of expertise, skills or knowledge designated as goals of the education system. Most particularly, do individuals from different backgrounds achieve, over the period of education or training, equivalent outcomes? We can further ask if all individuals have the same chance of earning the same qualifications when they leave, and can they do so, independent of their circumstances of origin?

Finally, Equity has been interpreted in terms of using the results of education by checking if after their education, individuals or groups of individuals have the same chances of using their acquired knowledge and skills in employment and wider community life.

Of relevance to this study are Demeuse's first three interpretations of Equity. The University of Malawi (UNIMA) and the Special Needs Education department of the Ministry of Education put in place a policy that exempts all learners with special needs from sitting for the University Entrance Examination (UNIMA Calendar 2007-2009). This was done to ensure that the learners with special needs who qualify for entry into the University benefit from this arrangement in order to make higher education accessible to that group of individuals. This fulfils the first interpretation of Equity exposed above. However, accessibility and equal opportunity go beyond entering into the University.

Therefore, the institutions have to put extra measures in place to guarantee equality between all the learners in the learning environment in line with the second interpretation of Equity. In this regard, the learners with special needs enrolled in the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi have to enjoy equivalent learning conditions with a focus on whether they benefit from a learning environment equivalent to the other learners in terms of the level of training of their lecturers and other staff, and the quantity and quality of teaching resources and approaches. This study therefore explored the measures that were put in place to enforce equality between the learners with special needs and the other learners with a focus on the training level of the lecturers and special needs assistants and the resources provided.

Further, this study investigated if the learners with special needs are exposed to the same chances of earning the same qualifications as the other learners. This is in line with the third interpretation of Equity which places its focus on whether all students master, with the same degree of expertise, skills or knowledge designated as goals of the education system. It is important to certify equal opportunities for learners with special needs as they participate in the learning environment as this can translate into their performance and achievement in the wider community life.

Rifkin and Kangere (2002) define participation as a complex and challenging approach to improving the lives of people, but particularly the poor and disadvantaged. It involves developing attitudes and behaviours that support intended beneficiaries, in their search to gain control over their own lives. In Special Needs Education, participation refers to an illustration of how the school includes learners

with special needs in the general learning environment and the curriculum (Thurnbull, et al, 1979). The school needs to provide the learners with special needs the special resources and services to grant them an appropriate range of experience in the general learning environment and the curriculum.

2.3 Special Needs Education (SNE)

Special Education is a form of intervention which involves the planning of instructional and learning environments designed to meet the unique needs of special children (Suran and Rizzo, 1979). Watson (2003) similarly defined special education as ‘specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with disability.’ SNE is designed to ensure that students with disabilities are provided with an environment that allows them to be educated effectively.

However, special education is not a total program which is entirely different from the education of ordinary students; rather, its nature is to provide exceptional children with services not available to them in the regular education program (Kar, 1992, Kirk et al, 1993). Its major aspect focuses on the appropriate placement of the child within the educational system (e.g., regular classroom vs. Special classroom) and the attempt to construct placements and strategies that are responsive to the child’s needs (Suran and Rizzo, 1979). Hence, Special education provides additional services, support, programs, specialised placements or environments to ensure that all students’ educational needs are provided for. The range of Special education support varies based on the need or educational jurisdiction as each country, state or education jurisdiction has different policies, rules, regulations and legislation that govern what special education is (Watson, 2003).

Special Needs Education can be segregated, whereby the learners with special needs enrol into special schools or inclusive whereby they attend regular schools with other learners but are provided with special educational support to meet their needs.

2.4 Special Needs Education in Malawi

There are over 150 million disabled children in developing countries, of whom, only 2% attend school (Albert, 2005). In Malawi, 4.2% of the population is disabled and within the group the majority is under 15 thereby creating a big demand for special needs education (SNE) in the country (Salmonsson , 2006). In Malawi, Special Needs Education refers to a system for providing a conducive environment for learners who may not benefit much from the regular education system (MSDPWD, 2006). The strategic objectives of SNE in Malawi include the provision of quality education and vocational training for learners with special needs (LSNs), the provision of special educational facilities to assist in the education of LSNs, provision of a supportive learning environment by all education institutions and finally, education stakeholders support towards the up scale of SNE services (MoE, 2008).

Historically, the provisions for special needs education were created and taken care of by missionaries. In 1950, the Church of Scotland established the first residential primary school for visually impaired children at Chilanga in Kasungu district and later the same year, the South African Evangelical church established another school at Lulwe in Nsanje district (Hauya and Mukuwira, 1996, Makoko and Chimutu, 2007, Zimpita, 2008). Today, SNE in the country is largely supported by the government through the Ministry of Education which works with the Montfort Education Centre

for the Visually Impaired and the Blind, Hearing Impaired and the Deaf and the Montfort Teacher Training College (Hauya and Makuwira, 1996). The Montfort Teacher Training College was replaced by the Catholic University in 2004.

The Malawi Government's involvement in providing SNE can be traced back to 1965 when a consultant from the royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind (RCSB), Mr Tooze, was invited to conduct training for specialist teachers. Following his success, the first blind students were incorporated into regular schools in 1967 (Hauya and Mukuwira, 1996, Msowoya, 1999). Subsequently, in 1967, the Malawi Government officially started assisting SNE institutions with grants towards the implementation of a free education program for blind students, and the provision of training for specialist teachers. The government also paid grants for children in resource centres, met the cost of training and learning materials and covered students' travel expenses to and from residential school (Ngosi, 1997). Learners with sensory disabilities are the main beneficiaries of SNE in the country. The education for the hearing impaired in Malawi can be traced back to 1968 at Mary View in Chiradzulu.

Currently in the country, there are four special schools for the deaf namely Mua in Dedza, Embangweni school for the deaf in Mzimba, Mountain View school in Bvumbwe, Mary View school for the Deaf in Chiradzulu and Malawi Total Communication School (MATOCO) in Blantyre. There are also two special schools for the blind Chilanga in Kasungu and Lulwe school in Nsanje and one private school for those with mental disabilities (MoE, 2008). Additionally, there are 18 resource centres catering for learners with special needs in the following secondary schools ; Lisumbwi, Balaka, Masongola, Bangula, Blantyre, Stella Marris, Phalombe,

Providence, Mulanje, and Thyolo in the Southern region, Ntcheu, Lilongwe Girls, Namitete, Salima, and Chayamba in the Central region, and finally Mzimba, Ekwendeni Girls, and Chilumba in the Northern region. (Ngosi, 1996, Msowoya, 1999, SNE, 2008). Government's main responsibility to date in promoting special needs education (SNE) is teacher training, employment of specialist teachers and providing for the recurrent budget for the special needs schools/ institutions mentioned above (MoE, 2008).

According to a Ministry of Education report on the enrolment of learners with special needs in schools across the country, there are 67725 LSNs enrolled in government primary schools, and 5414 in national secondary schools (MoE, 2008). In 2005, more than 60 LSNs were reportedly enrolled at tertiary level institutions in the country (MoE, 2008). However, the lack of updated, nation wide figures on disabilities or disabled people in the country makes it difficult to estimate the potential LSNs who do not have access to formal education (Makoko and Chimutu, 2007)

The first draft of a National Policy on SNE was submitted in May 2007. The overall goal of the draft policy is to develop the personal, social and academic competences of LSNs in the country. Essentially, SNE in Malawi is delivered through special schools and resources centres at primary and secondary levels of education (Msowoya, 1999, Makoko and Chimutu, 2007, Zimpita, 2008). At tertiary level, learners with special needs are included in regular classes with the other learners. An inclusive environment is one that provides access, accommodation and support to all learners (Chavuta et al, 2008).

Malawi is signatory to the Salamanca Statement, a world declaration committed to achieving Education for All. The Statement advocates that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. Further, the statement alludes that schools have to find a way of educating all children including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities (UNESCO, 1994). This leads us to Inclusive Education (IE) which according to the statement, can be successful if education institutions adopted child centred pedagogy whereby learning adapts to the needs of the child rather than the child adapting to 'preordained assumptions regarding the pace and nature of the learning process.'

Therefore, the learning environment at tertiary institutions in the country should be conducive to all learners including those with special needs by accommodating them as much as possible through the provision of special instruction, special services and suitable resources to ensure equality in their learning experience with other learners. The current population of LSNs in the University of Malawi includes the visually impaired, the partially visually impaired and the hearing impaired.

All in all, very few studies have been carried out on Special Needs Education in Malawi with a primary focus on primary and secondary levels of education (Hauya and Makuwira, 1996 , Msowoya, 1999 , CERT, 2005, Makoko and Chimutu 2007 , Chavuta et al , 2008 ,Kaliwa , 2008 , Zimpita , 2008). The common challenges exposed by the studies as regards Special Needs Education in Malawi at primary and secondary levels of education include, lack of specialist teachers, lack of adequate

infrastructure purposely built to accommodate learners with special needs, and lack of adequate teaching and learning resources.

2.5 Inclusive Education (IE)

Inclusive education is not merely about providing access into mainstream schools for learners who have previously been excluded but rather about overcoming the barriers to participation of learners and the removal of all forms of exclusionary practice from the learning environment. Of all the groups that face such discrimination, disabled learners are by far the largest of groups excluded and marginalised from equality and quality education today (UNESCO, 2005 in McLaren and Kearny, 2009).

McCarthy (1998) defined the term inclusion to mean bringing support services to the child rather than moving the child to a segregated setting to receive special services. In her article 'Inclusion of Children with Disabilities: Seeking the Appropriate Balance,' McCarthy (1998) discusses the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which, in the 1990's, the courts in America interpreted as entailing a strong preference for inclusion. IDEA is a federal funding law that guarantees all children with disabilities a free appropriate education at public expense with its key requirement being that children with special needs be placed in the least restrictive environment. The article further discussed the law to interpret that children with special needs be educated with children who are not disabled to the maximum extent possible. However, an exception was made of children with severe disabilities which education in regular classes, with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Subsequently, the basic tenet of IDEA is that learners with special needs must be educated in regular education classroom and environment with the relevant support services (McCarthy, 1998). Providing the relevant support for LSNs is a positive step towards equity in educational institutions. The provision of special support and services to LSNs in the learning environment would facilitate fairness in terms of what the institution is offering to both the LSNs and the other learners. In most institutions that offer tertiary education in Malawi, the learners that require special education are educated in regular classrooms and they are accommodated in the same social and learning environment as the other learners. Therefore, education provision at this level should be about the learners' right to participate and the school's duty to accept and ensure this right. This prompted the study which investigated if the learners at tertiary level of education in Malawi are provided with relevant support services such as specialist teachers, special needs assistants and supplementary teaching and learning aids which are necessary to ensure equality between the learners with special needs and the other learners.

Conversely, Wendell (2000) stated that one of the major obstacles to Inclusive Education in the system in Britain is that it is not geared to meeting the diversity of children's learning needs. He referred to the teacher, pupil ratio as an example stating that currently, one teacher stands in front of a class of 30 or more students of a similar age and recognising pupil's individualities in this circumstance is extremely problematic. The situation in government primary schools in Malawi is even worse with a reported pupil trained teacher ratio in 2008 of about 90:1 (MoE, 2008). These high ratios spread over to secondary and tertiary levels of education in the country making it difficult for the teachers in inclusive schools to recognise and address each

student's individualities. Therefore, learners with special needs are bound to be at a greater disadvantage in inclusive classrooms in Malawi because they come to the learning environment with a special need requiring special education. Moreover, studies have shown that one of the biggest drawbacks to successful implementation of Special Needs Education in regular schools in Malawi is the lack of trained teachers (Makoko and Chimutu 2007, Chavuta et al, 2008, Zimpita, 2008). Due to the high pupil teacher ratios and the lack of teachers trained in special education, it would be impossible for the teachers in regular schools in the country to address each learners need adequately.

Additionally, in an inclusive educational system, it is important to consider that the barriers to learning learners with special needs might face are not always the result of their personal deficits. Some scholars in the area of special educational needs discussed an alternative 'interactive' model of difficulties. Wendell (2000) briefly discussed this model, and concluded that the difficulties arise as a result of the interaction between what the child brings to her or his learning environment and what is offered to him or her through the method of teaching, the content of the particular activity, and the supporting resources. This study placed greater emphasis on the learning environment at tertiary level to explore the possible barriers to learning that LSNs face as they participate in education within the colleges.

2.6 Inclusive Education (IE) in Malawi

Stubbs (1997) in Soko (2004) refers to IE as an evolving concept that develops differently in different cultures with the common aim of providing equal access to education for children with disabilities. With many countries in the world advocating

for Inclusive education (IE) over special segregated education, Malawi is not lagging behind. As stated earlier, the first attempt to IE in the country was in 1967 when the first blind students were incorporated into regular schools. Further, in the 2006 academic year, other learners were enrolled in what were previously totally segregated and special primary schools like Mary view in Chiradzulu (Kaliwa, 2008). Governments' educational institutions at secondary and tertiary levels of education enrol learners with special needs (LSNs) for regular classes. However, not all schools at primary and secondary levels of education have been provided with adequate special resources and specialist teachers who can better teach children with impairment (Ngosi, 1997, Salmonsson, 2006, Makoko and Chimutu, 2007, Cahvuta et al, 2008, Zimpita, 2008).

The society in Malawi is looking for other possibilities to include the disabled children and youths in learning activities (Soko, 2004, Salmonsson, 2006). To date, certain key factors to meet the urge have been implemented namely; the upgrading of the Special Needs Education department in the Ministry of Education, the approval of the National Policy on the Equalisation of opportunities of the Ministry of Social Development and Persons with Disabilities, the capacity building and awareness campaigns of the disabled persons organisations and the parent awareness and struggle for the rights of their children (Salmonsson, 2006). However, inclusion goes beyond the disabled merely having access to the same facilities and services as any other non-disabled member. Rather, people with disabilities need to be provided with equal opportunities to access educational, health as well as social services and facilities to ensure maximum participation. This involves making all the appropriate

adjustments in various social institutions like the school, by enabling all the structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.

In an inclusive environment, inclusion becomes entangled and infected with barriers that affect the process of learning and participation of learners with special needs in various activities. Soko (2004) carried out an investigation on the implementation and promotion of Inclusive Education (IE) in majority world countries to inform an effective practice of IE in Malawi. The study exposed that many of the barriers reported in neighbouring African countries are attitudinal such as the labelling of People Living with Disabilities (PWDs) as ‘unproductive’ and ‘incapable’ of contributing anything to society as nobody would like to employ them. Despite all the challenges outlined in the study, Malawi has adopted the IE path as a preferred option LSNs by conceptually educating them in regular institutions at all levels. Despite the policy documentations and set up in the Ministry of Education in support of Special Needs Education, research has shown that there is still lack of basic and adequate support for LSNs at primary and secondary levels (Hauya and Makuwira, 1996 , Msowoya, 1999 , CERT, 2005, Makoko and Chimutu 2007 , Chavuta et al , 2008 ,Kaliwa , 2008 , Zimpita , 2008). This lack of support at lower levels of education largely contributes to the low enrolment rates of LSNs in institutions of tertiary level as most of them drop out due to the unequal practices that hinder them from receiving an education tailored to their needs.

In addition, the study revealed that in Malawi, there are negative attitudes towards Children With Disabilities (CWDs) among members of the community at large and professionals. The lack of policy documentation on special education and IE in

particular has been the reason for these negative attitudes. Further the study stated the inaccessibility of schools by CWDs to be another issue of concern and added that in order to improve access of education by CWDs, there should be a change in attitude of the teachers, community members and CWDs themselves.

Similarly, Salmonsson (2006) carried out a baseline study of steps taken towards Inclusive Education in Blantyre, Balaka and Machinga districts in Malawi. The study focused on inclusion in Community Based Rehabilitation Programs and Education at Primary level. The study reported that Malawi has adopted the paradigm of an inclusive society as is evident in the way the Community Based Rehabilitation programs (CBRs) in the country are integrated in the administrative structures of the districts and education is facing higher enrolment rates in primary schools. Additionally, the study established that although there are constraints and limits in the schools as regards inclusion, children and young persons with disabilities in Blantyre, Machinga and Balaka are faced, assessed and transferred to regular schools within and out of their communities.

Chavuta et al (2008) conducted a baseline study on Inclusive Education in Malawi. The main aim of the study was to conduct a situational analysis of mainstream education system for the inclusion of learners with Special Educational Needs in 20 selected primary schools in Shire Highlands Education Division. The study revealed that Malawi has a challenge to make inclusive education a reality due to limited resources such as inadequate teaching and learning resources, inaccessible school infrastructure and lack of assistive devices. In addition, the report states that

Insufficient funding, environmental and attitudinal barriers are some of the other major challenges to implementing Inclusive education in schools in the country.

However, despite all the challenges to providing IE in Malawi exposed by the studies outlined above, the education system continues to educate LSNs in regular schools and classrooms at all levels of education.

The challenge of having a very small amount of literature in the area of Special Needs Education remains justifying this study as it will narrow down the gap in literature. Further, the studies that have been carried out on Special Education in the country focus on lower levels of education such that there has been no study on Inclusive Education at tertiary level of education. This study therefore, explores equity in educational participation for learners with special needs at tertiary educational institutions.

2.7 Inclusive Education (IE) in Tertiary Institutions

The whole thrust of the inclusive education (IE) model emphasises that candidates with Impairments must not be expected to fit in or adapt to existing modes of education which are unsuitable for them (McLaren and Kearny, 2009) . Rather, they must have equal opportunities to be able to learn in a mode that they can manage and this means providing a level of support for them and around their learning environment.

However, the implications of this for many tertiary institutions are enormous. McLaren and Kearny (2009) carried out an investigation on whether the tertiary

institutions in New Zealand are suitable for learners with significant impairments' after the governments enactment and dissemination of wide reaching policies and codes of practice towards improving the educational opportunities for New Zealanders with Impairments.

While not supported by any research, the sketchy picture presented by the authors from their own experience and interaction with fellow academics from tertiary institutions in New Zealand , despite the recommendations and standard set for a good IE practice, universities have clung to inflexible and inefficient procedures and appear reluctant to investigate, trial and implement more flexible and innovative alternatives. One cited inefficient procedure is the minimal efforts made by some universities towards academic staff development in special needs which is done through seminars that do not offer any incentives.

One of the positive moves by some tertiary institutions is the employment of disability support co-coordinators who are generally dedicated employees, who do the best despite the issue of scarce resources. However, some of these personnel informally reported that in sometimes as they do not have knowledge in the areas the LSNs are being examined.

The implications of IE for many tertiary institutions in New Zealand are vast as its major thrust is that LSNs must not be expected to fit into a mode of education that is not suitable to them. They should rather have equal opportunities to be able to learn in a mode that they can manage and this could mean a level of support of them and around their learning (McLaren and Kearny, 2009). Following this, academic staff

will have to expect to have LSNs in their learners groups. The situation however is that most academic staff are not trained in handling LSNs mostly because they are employed on their competence in the discipline they teach, and not in the discipline of teaching. There is still need therefore for Lecturers at tertiary level to be trained and spend adequate time preparing resources and learning new methods of delivery. Government too reportedly has the duty of providing additional funding, resources and support to the universities to make IE a reality in New Zealand.

Therefore, New Zealand is reportedly behind some other developed countries in terms of IE at tertiary level and if not improved, the current situation will lead to the the country being challenged for failre to provide equal educational opportunities for all and breaches of the relevant legislation (McLaren and Kearny, 2009).

The OECD also carried out a project in various developed countries called Pathway for Students with Disabilities to Tertiary Educaton and Employment. Ireland and Norway are some of the countries that participated. The aim of the project is to identify high quality transition programmes with regard to the effectiveness of progression policies and support provided for people with disabilities in transition to post-secondary education, during tertiary education and through to employment. The project is based on three inputs: a country report identifying transition policies; a country research visit; and, a number of case studies delivering good examples of successful pathways for transition (Phillips and Clarke, 2010).

In the last ten years In Ireland, considerable progress has clearly been made in making further and higher education more accessible to people with disabilities.

Reportedly, statistics gathered show that students with disabilities now account for approximately 4% of the undergraduate population participating in higher education in Ireland (Phillips and Clarke, 2010).

Challenges remain, however. The rate of progression through higher education is significantly lower for people with disabilities as compared to their peers. An evaluation of access programmes in higher education prepared for the Higher Education Association found that while equality and diversity policies and principles are evolving rapidly in Ireland, few institutions are in the position of reporting that they have adequate resources to fully implement their access policy (Phillips and Clarke, 2010).

In Norway, all the universities and university colleges have contact, counseling, or accommodation services for students with Impairments which vary according to the size and priorities of each institution (Legard and Terjesen, 2010). This resulted in mixed experiences reported by the students with impairments mainly because their impairments vary and they attended different universities.

Although this was the case, their general perception of tertiary education is that of contentment despite reported scarcity in accommodations. This scarcity of accommodation includes the lack of resources and support in the universities which, according to the students with impairments did not affect their education as the few resources and support provided had been efficient.

One of the better IE scenarios exists in the state of Alberta in Canada where a number of tertiary institutions offer tertiary inclusive education for students with disabilities (McLaren and Kearny, 2009). These students are fully integrated in the range of programmes and courses offered. Further, funding is provided for each initiative to allow a small complement of staff to facilitate inclusion on campus. Students are supported by their peers (peer tutoring) and taught by class lecturers and instructors. They complete as much of the programme as they are able to do and also participate in other non-academic campus activities (McLaren and Kearny, 2009).

Generally, the situation of access to institutions of higher learning in developed countries is relatively positive with most of the universities implementing various forms of disability support and abiding to the governments policies and legislature against few but efficient resources. However, in other countries, barriers that learners with disabilities face are not due to the learning environment but rather the impairment they have. The learners face inability to mix with their peers because of their impairment but learners have a choice of college, course, are encouraged by their family, friends or former schools and find the environment welcoming (Jacklin et al, 2007).

2.8 Inclusive Education in Tertiary Institutions in Africa

As is the case with most African countries, In South Africa, inequalities in higher education for learners with special needs begin with inequalities that have shaped the whole education system (Howell, 2000). These inequalities are caused by barriers that arise from the way in which higher education institutions are structured and function,

the dominant attitudes that inform and shape the institutions, as well as the role that higher education plays within society as a whole (Howell, 2000).

Research carried out on the participation of learners with special needs in higher education in South Africa reveals that apart from going through a fairly rigidly defined process of filtering the eligible few from the ineligible many for higher education selection, the learners with special needs have more hardships to face. Their enrollment is determined by the perceptions of their capabilities as some students reportedly have been denied access to certain courses because they are believed to be unable to meet the course requirements (Odendaal-Magwaza and Farman, 1997).

Howell (2000) reporting on a study titled 'Disabled students and education in South Africa' stated that the problems faced by learners with special needs in the classroom are purely ascribed to lack of assistive and special devices. Whilst these are an important part of the learning process for the learners, the teaching and learning process itself excludes learners with special needs. A cited example is a situation where a lecturer uses an overhead projector in the lecture room, assuming that everyone has access to the visual material when there are visually impaired learners in the classroom.

Apart from the lack of inclusive teaching, institutions of higher learning in South Africa also experience resource constraints that limit the nature and extent of support systems within the universities. The constraints arise due to the structural separation of learning support for disabled students from other teaching and learning support

initiatives aimed at facilitating access to the curriculum. Additionally, the campuses of most educational institutions of higher learning in South Africa are inaccessible for learners with mobility problems and visual impairments.

All in all, the challenges in the creation of equity in participation for learners with special needs in institutions of higher learning in South Africa remain, ensuring access into the institutions, ensuring them a fair chance of receiving the education and training required for the job market, develop institutional capacity to address the learners diverse needs and address their barriers to learning and development (Howell, 2000). However, to address these challenges at tertiary level, Howell (2000) suggests the need to address them at lower levels of education first.

In Malawi, studies have been carried out to determine the participation of LSNs at lower levels of education and recommendations towards a more equitable education set up at those levels were made (Hauya and Makuwira, 1996 , Msowoya, 1999 , CERT, 2005, Makoko and Chimutu 2007 , Chavuta et al , 2008 ,Kaliwa , 2008 , Zimpita , 2008).This then provides a basis for the study to expose the inequalities LSNs face in their learning environment at tertiary level towards a more equitable and fair experience that can contribute to their success in tertiary education which leads to an individual's competitiveness on the job market.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This literature review discussed some related literature on Special and Inclusive education in Malawi and other countries. The discussions included literature on special needs education to provide an overview of the situation at primary and

secondary levels as well as provide a basis for this study. Further, the discussion reviewed some interpretations of equity and participation in relation to learners with special needs in an inclusive education setting.

The chapter exposed that there is a small number of learners with special needs who actually make it to institutions of higher learning where they access special education. Special education can either be segregated (provided in special schools) or inclusive as is the case with many countries in the world including Malawi. Whatever the case, special education involves providing specially designed instruction adapted to the special needs of the individual (Hallahan and Kauffman, 1991). Additionally, the chapter revealed that educational institutions need to ensure that there is equality of opportunity between learners with special needs and other learners to enable them benefit from an inclusive education setting. Therefore, this study explored how equitable educational participation is to learners with special needs enrolled in the University of Malawi.

CHAPTER 3

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the design and methodology that were used to collect data for the study. The chapter begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework that guided the Methodology. This will be followed by a discussion of the overall approach and rationale of the study, the setting and population of interest, sample and sampling procedures that were used, the data collection methods, data analysis procedures, as well as ethical considerations that were made and limitations of the study.

3.1.1 Theoretical Framework for Methodology

Constructivism is concerned with what individuals make of the circumstance in which they find themselves and their own position in relation to it. In the area of special needs the current emphasis on eliciting learners' views on their own behaviour and learning can be seen, in part, as a reflection of a constructivist approach (Wearmoth 2000).

The Social Constructivism perspective shaped the methodology for this study. The main assumptions of Social Constructivism can be summarised as follows; that firstly, human beings construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Secondly, humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspective (Crotty, 1998 in Creswell, 2003). Finally, that

the basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community. This concept of Constructivism guided the study in exploring and investigating from the learners with special needs, college administrators, lecturers, special needs assistants and education officials the reality and their perception about how equitably students with special needs are treated as they participate in education in the University of Malawi.

3.2 Overall Approach and Rationale

The study adopted a qualitative approach in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on the constructivist perspective (Creswell, 2003).

Qualitative research can be defined as a process of inquiry conducted in a natural setting with the aim of exploring a social or human problem where the researcher analyses words and then writes a report on the views of people thereby building a complex and holistic picture of an issue (Creswell, 1998). The main advantage of qualitative approach is that it offers vivid vignettes and accounts of real individuals, and these can bring home to the people the human meaning of the study (Weiss, 1998).

Chadwick et al (1984) state that it is important for us to remember that neither the qualitative nor quantitative method is good in itself rather, the researcher should use methods appropriate to the topic at hand. This study required the participants to talk about their experiences and situations in depth in order to provide a holistic picture of the way learners with special needs are included as they participate in tertiary education in Malawi. Further, in the study of human experience, it is essential to

know how people define their situations (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). The qualitative research approach was chosen because it enabled the researcher to use methods that allow the participants to discuss their situations in depth from their own perspective.

Additionally, the qualitative research methods make it easier to reach difficult to access populations such as the minorities, squatters and women and that research methods can be adapted to the culture of the respondents as both verbal and non verbal responses are possible (Bamberger, 2000). The primary respondents for this study were the learners with special needs who are a minority group in the University of Malawi (UNIMA) and society in general. Verbal data were collected through semi structured, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions in the learning environment for the learners with special needs and the work environment for the other participants.

The researcher took the emic approach to gain additional insights into the phenomena under study. The emic approach to research focuses on the insider's views such as actions and explanations that are distinctive to their setting (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997). The purpose of this study was to explore the education system at tertiary level for the successful inclusion and participation of learners with special needs in the constituent colleges of the UNIMA. The study was designed to expose the strengths and challenges that the learners with special needs encounter in the UNIMA and to expose any factors that can improve their educational participation further. This study therefore reveals the insiders' perceptions and explanations about

the current inclusive education (IE) situation in the constituent colleges of the UNIMA.

3.3 Setting and Population of Interest

The study was conducted at the five constituent colleges of the UNIMA namely the Bunda College of Agriculture (Bunda), Chancellor College (Chanco), The Malawi Polytechnic (Poly), Kamuzu College of Nursing (KCN) and The College of Medicine (COM). All the five constituent colleges were initially chosen to target or include learners with special needs in different possible settings as the 5 colleges differ in program and curriculum design as well as physical setting. However, only Chanco, KCN and Poly had Learners with special needs (LSNs) enrolled at the time of the study.

The study included participants belonging to three groups of interest. As stated by Haddad (1995) these are, consumers of education (in this case the LSNs), the providers of education (the lecturers and special needs assistants) and the administrators of education (the college administrators and officials from the Special Needs Education Department in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology).

3.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The qualitative approach has no single defining sampling procedure; rather, the choice of sampling method is determined by the purpose of the study (Bamberger, 2000). Thus, the study used a kind of non- probability sampling technique called Purposive Sampling. This is where the researcher ‘handpicks the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality. In this way, they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs’ (Cohen and Manion,

1994). Furthermore, this technique allows the researcher to choose a sample that can maximise what we can learn (Stake 1995, in MacJessie Mbewe, 2004, and Patton, 1990).

The primary respondents for the study were the LSNs especially those with visual and hearing impairments as these were the only categories of LSNs enrolled with the University of Malawi at the time of the study. At the time of the study, Poly had one LSN with hearing impairment (HI) and KCN also had one LSN with visual impairment (VI). Both of them were included in the study. Chanco had four LSNs with HI and ten learners with VI. From this population, nine respondents, three HI and six VI were purposively selected and interviewed as the ‘consumers of education’. Although the population size of LSN was very small at the time of the study, some LSN did not participate in the study as they were still in their first year of study and it was felt that they had not engaged much with their learning environment to provide the required data.

Firstly, Information on the enrolment records of LSNs by gender, number and college was obtained from the University Office in Zomba. Then each college was visited and interviews were carried out with the selected respondents.

However, at the time of the study, only Chanco, Poly and KCN had LSNs enrolled. Through purposive sampling, the learners with visual and hearing impairments were selected from the different colleges in line with a strategy of Purposive sampling called multiple variations. Creswell (1998) states that multiple variations aim at representing diverse cases so as to fully display multiple perspectives of the case.

Six lecturers (four female and two male) from the three colleges with LSNs were selected as the ‘providers of education’ or those who interact directly with the LSNs in their classes. Two lecturers from each college, who lecture in the courses that all the selected learners’ study, were purposively selected. Before selecting the lecturers, information on the courses that LSNs commonly study was collected and the lecturers for the most common courses were identified and selected as they have engaged more with the LSNs.

Chanco was the only college that employed special needs assistants to help learners with Visual and Hearing impairments. There are three special needs assistants (one for the HI learners and two for VI learners), as such, all the assistants participated in the study. An administrator from each of the five colleges was also selected.

Finally, two officials from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology specifically from the department of Special Needs Education (SNE) were selected as the ‘administrators of education.’ The officials were selected purposively in order to target specialists in the area of SNE in Malawi. It is important to have respondents from different groups in special education research because ‘the concept of multiple realities and social construction of reality also mean that the perceptions of a variety of types of persons must be sought’ (Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004).

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

In order to obtain in-depth, holistic qualitative data, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and observation were used in this study.

3.5.1 Interviews

The interview as a qualitative method of data collection is ‘a presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and reply in terms of verbal responses. An interview is a useful way of getting a large amount of data quickly’ (Kothari, 2004).

The study used in-depth, semi structured interviews to obtain qualitative data. These have an advantage of offering respondents freedom to talk about what is of central significance to them while maintaining a loose structure to ensure that all important topics are covered (Bell, 1993). Five sets of semi structured interview guides were constructed for each group of respondents (see Appendices 3,4,5,6, for Interview Guides).

Rossmann and Rallis (2003) state that to enhance credibility and rigorousness with which you conduct a qualitative study you must ensure triangulation of the data by collecting similar data from multiple sources, multiple points in time, or a variety of methods to build the picture that you are investigating. In this study, some of the questions in all the interview guides were similar although they were presented in a different way according to the group of respondents. Similar data was collected from multiple sources to ensure triangulation.

The interview questions covered the areas of resources available at the Colleges for learners with special needs, the support learners with special needs get at the University, the mode of instruction lecturer’s use in classes with learners who have special needs, guidance learners with special needs get when selecting courses, the

examination process and also the general challenges faced by learners with special needs at the University. The researcher took down notes and tape recorded all the interviews.

The data collected through interviews answered the following research questions; What resources are provided (such as infrastructure, personnel, and materials) for the Learners with Special Needs (LSNs) at the University of Malawi, how are the learners with special needs guided in their selection of courses ,how are learners with special needs handled during classroom and assessment activities and finally, what factors can improve the educational participation of learners with special needs in University education in Malawi?

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus Group Discussions are guided or unguided discussions addressing a particular topic of interest or relevance to the group or the researcher (Berg, 1998). Krueger (1994) in Berg (1998) suggested that FGDs size should be kept small with no more than 7 participants per group to ensure that the discussions are easily managed by the facilitator. In that light, the FGDs carried out for the study consisted of 4 participants with the researcher facilitating the discussions. This was so because the topic under discussion is very sensitive to the participants as it directly impacts them and so it was felt that if the group is smaller, the researcher can have more time to focus on each participant during the discussion for maximum participation and allocation of adequate time to exhaust the phenomenon under discussion. One set of FGDs was conducted at Chanco as this was the only college that had more than one LSNs. The participants for the FGDs were learners with Visual Impairments (VI) as it was simpler for the researcher to facilitate and lead the verbal discussions accordingly.

Focus group discussions were carried out with the visually impaired learners from Chancellor College (see Appendices 7 for FGDs Guide). The discussions were recorded and the facilitator took field notes (especially noting mannerisms and other forms of non-verbal communication) to try and get the accurate response from the group members.

Focus group discussions were used as a data collection method because they present ‘a potential for discussions to develop, thus yielding a wide range of responses’ (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Realizing that there are some people who are generally shy and cannot contribute much when placed in a group and also that they are others who are likely to dominate the group discussions, I was observant of this and directed some probing questions towards the shy ones. I capitalized on the responses from the dominating respondents because they provided more information as regards the phenomena being researched without neglecting the other participants.

The Focus Group Discussions helped to answer the following research questions; what resources are provided (such as infrastructure, personnel, and materials) for the Learners with Special Needs (LSNs) at the University of Malawi, how are the LSNs guided in their selection of courses, how are LSNs handled during classroom and assessment activities, what factors can improve the educational participation of LSNs in University education in Malawi?

3.5.3 Observation

Observation as a tool of data collection was used in the study concurrently with interviewing to ensure methodological triangulation. Observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours, and artefacts in a social setting chosen for study (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Observation allows the description of behaviour as it appears in its natural setting. Observation of behaviour in its natural setting allows for the researcher to take into account important contextual factors that may influence the interpretation and use of results (Millan, 1996).

Observation enabled the researcher to obtain a rich understanding of the phenomenon under study, as I observed behaviour taking place directly in its natural setting. I carried out my study at the University of Malawi allowing me to observe directly for any useful data that is largely non- verbal or visual. In this study, observation took a more holistic description of events, behaviour of learners out of class and during the interviews and focus group discussions and the infrastructure within the Colleges.

The observation guide provided answers to the following research question; what resources are provided (such as infrastructure, personnel, and materials) for the Learners with Special Needs (LSNs) at the University of Malawi?

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (Marshall and Rossman, 2005). The study collected qualitative data which was analysed following Rossman and Rallis' (2003) guidelines for managing and analyzing data.

The preliminary step of this data analysis was *organizing the data*. The collected data were edited which involved cleaning up the unmanageable and overwhelming data to make the field notes and transcribed data more retrievable. At this stage, also made sure that all the field notes were dated, the exact setting of data collection enclosed, and all the participants' particulars included. This was important because the study targeted different groups of respondents from different settings which needed to be incorporated in the discussion as the participants' environment and other attributes could have an impact on the data.

Then the data were read again and reviewed to *become familiar* with it. As the interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were tape recorded, the tapes were played over and over to make sure all the important and relevant data for the study was picked out. The data collected as field notes were read over and over until those that had an impact were noted. After this process, all the data collected through interviews and FGDs with the visually impaired and hearing impaired learners, their lecturers and assistants, the college administrators and the officials from the Ministry of Education as well as the data from the FGDs with visually impaired learners were transcribed.

Following this step is what Rossman and Rallis (2003) called '*Generating Categories and Themes*.' Categories of the key areas explored in the study were generated. The categories included:

- Classroom Activities (classroom)
- Examination Process (examination)

- Provision of Resources (resource)
- Course Selection (courses)
- Educational Participation (education)

To ease interpretation the categories were coded as shown above to provide the relevant information needed to determine the issue of equity in educational participation of LSN in the Colleges. Generating categories and themes lead to another step of data analysis known as *Coding*.

Rossmann and Rallis (2003) defined coding as ‘the formal representation of analytic thinking’. This step involved thinking through the evidence of the themes and categories generated earlier. Relevant data from the structured part of the interviews and FGDs was coded. To achieve this, the hard copies of all the data were produced and the data was coded by hand. Each category generated had a word representing it as shown above. The word was written next to the line with the related categories and each different word had a different colour to avoid confusion.

After this, the data were grouped according to the similarities in the response by listing the evidence of each category under the data collection method on a clearly organised and well spaced data summary form. The evidence was listed in the form of interviewee work/college environment and sex for the other participants. For the learners, Interviewee College, sex and impairment was used as well as date for the interviews and FGDs for all the participants. This was done to ease the process of representing the data to give a meaningful summary of the data collected for easy interpretation.

3.7 Ethics and Trustworthiness of the Study

Realising that this study dealt with real people in real situations and has real consequences, there were certain ethical issues to consider. To begin with, after introducing myself, all the participants were told the purpose of the research and its potential consequences to enable them decide if they want to participate in the study or not.

The participants were also told that the interviews and Focus group discussions will be tape recorded and then they gave their full consent to participate in the study. The participants were ensured of confidentiality in the course of the study and anonymity to overcome what Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) stated that in all research that involves students, there are concerns about privacy and revealing personal identifiable information.

There was a hierarchy of consent to be considered before carrying out the study as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). Firstly, I got permission to conduct the study in the University of Malawi through the University Office in Zomba by submitting a letter introducing me from our Head of Department and another one clearly explaining the purpose of my study.

A similar procedure was followed at all the colleges as letters were submitted to the college administrators before meeting with any of the respondents. This was done following Creswell's (2003) recommendation that other ethical procedures during

data collection is to gain the permission of individuals in authority (e.g. gatekeepers) to provide access to study participants at the research site.

Ethical issues stretch beyond getting consent, confidentiality and whatever comes during or before data collection to the actual writing process. Creswell (2003) states that ethical issues in writing the research will involve the potential of suppressing, falsifying, or inventing findings to meet a researcher's or an audience's needs. In order to ensure honesty and trust in the presentation of the research findings, the actual setting in which the data was collected, the position of the person from whom the data was obtained, and pseudo names, year and course of study as well as type of impairment of the learners with special needs were indicated. The results of the study will be accessible to the participants through the Education Foundations Department at Chancellor College as most of them suggested the same out of interest in the study

Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggest several strategies that help enhance the credibility and rigorousness of a qualitative study. Some of the strategies included in this study are as follows:

Triangulation: which they have defined as multiple sources of data, multiple points in time, or a variety of methods used to build a picture of what you are investigating. The variety in the instruments to be used for data collection in my study is deliberate to ensure trustworthiness in the data collected about the phenomenon and context under study.

Using a critical friend: according to Rossman and Rallis (2003), this person serves as an academic watchdog for you as you modify design decisions, develop possible analytic categories, and build an explanation for the phenomenon of interest. I have worked with a senior member of staff from Chancellor College to shape up my study.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

One of the major limitations of the study is that not all the colleges of the University of Malawi had learners with special needs enrolled at the time of the study. Additionally, the learners available were from 2 categories (VI and HI) but the perspective of the physically challenged would have enriched the data for the study. Regardless of this, in depth data was collected and a lot of probing questions used so as to gain as much information as possible from the available categories.

Another limitation of the study is in relation to collecting data from learners with disabilities. It was quite challenging to collect data and probe from the HI learners as they rely on non verbal communication and sign language. To overcome this, the researcher conducted the interviews with the HI learners in the presence of the HI special need assistant from Chancellor College. However, the HI learner from Polytechnic lost his hearing ability at a later age and could respond to the interviews questions orally as well as lip read the researchers questions without difficulty.

Another possible limitation is that the learners from Chancellor College and Polytechnic were preparing for their end of semester examinations at the time the study was carried out. To ensure maximum participation, I clearly explained to them

the importance of the study and how their views or perception can help make a difference for future learners.

Additionally, I was flexible and agreed to conduct the interviews and focus group discussions at a time and place that best suited all the participants so that they were not disturbed or inconvenienced by my study.

3 .9 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the design and methodology that was used in the study. The chapter particularly discussed the overall approach and rationale of the study, the setting and population of interest, the sample and sampling procedures that were used, the data collection methods, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations and finally the limitations the study faced. The following chapter will present the analysis and discussion of results.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter analyses and discusses the results from in-depth interviews, FGDs and observations. The chapter begins with a description of the attributes of the respondents. Thereafter, a discussion of responses from the in-depth interviews, FGDs and observations are presented thematically in response to the research questions and other emerging themes. For the sake of confidentiality, the names used in the data presentation are not the real names of the participants.

4.2 Respondents' Attributes

Six lecturers from Chanco, Poly and KCN (Table 1) participated in this study as these were the only colleges that had LSNs at the time of the study. Five administrators, one from each constituent college of the UNIMA (Chanco, Poly, KCN, COM, Bunda), and two top officials from the Ministry of Education (Special Needs Department) also participated in the study. Further, three Special Needs assistants from Chanco were also interviewed (Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of Participants per College and Their Characteristics

	POSITION								
	Administrator		Lecturer		Special Needs Assistant				
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total	VI	HI
Chanco	1	0	2	0	3	0	6	2	1
Poly	0	1	0	2	0	0	3	0	0
KCN	1	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0
COM	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Bunda	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Total	3	2	2	4	3	0	14	2	1

A total of nine visually and hearing impaired learners from the colleges with LSNs (Chanco, Poly, and KCN) formed another group of respondents for the study. The distribution of numbers of learners with special needs respondents and their characteristics is summarized in Table 2. In order to ensure the confidentiality of respondents, pseudo names are used through out the discussion. The HI respondents included Madalo (Poly), Tadala and Chimwemwe (Chanco), and the VI included Peter, Zikomo, James, Dalitso, Paul (Chanco) and Mercy (KCN). James and Mercy are partially VI, but are included in the VI group of respondents, for purposes of this study.

Table 2: Number of Learners with Special Needs (Respondents) per Participating College and their Characteristics

COLLEGE	SEX		IMPAIREMENT		YEAR OF STUDY				AGE RANGE	
	Male	Female	Low/ Visually Impaired	Hearing Impaired	1	2	3	4	19– 24 years	25– 30 Years
Poly	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Chanco	6	1	5	2	0	2	3	2	3	4
KCN	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Total	7	2	6	3	1	3	3	2	5	4

4.3 Guidance of Learners with Special Needs in Course Selection

This section discusses the process of course selection. The LSNs themselves, as well as the Special Needs Assistants, college administrators and the officials from the Special Needs Department of the Ministry of Education were asked to comment on the university course selection process.

The learners with special needs were asked to explain if the college courses and procedures were clear and well explained to them before enrollment. Information on the courses offered, the college rules and procedures are provided in print by the University Office for all learners. However, of all the VI participants for this study, James was the only one who had access to the information about the courses offered, college procedures, rules and regulations, before his enrollment at Chanco. This is because he

took the initiative to write to the University Registrar (UR) asking for information about the university entry procedures, rules and regulations and the courses offered. The other participants claimed to have never had access to such information. Their claims were corroborated by the Administrator from Chanco who admitted having a problem at his college as they do not have materials with such information printed in Braille for the VI learners due to funding. The study therefore reveals that the VI learners join the UNIMA without full knowledge of the courses offered and other college procedures

Contrary to this, the National Union of Students working across the United Kingdom (2009) states that disabled students in higher education should receive impartial information and advice by institutions and other responsible agencies to help them in making learning choices. Based on this recommendation, the UNIMA needs to ensure that all the vital information is accessible by all potential learners, including minority groups such as the LSNs, before they apply for the UEE so that they can make informed choices as regards the college they wish to attend and the courses they want to pursue.

The colleges of the UNIMA conduct orientation seminars for the first year students before the beginning of their first semester, where Heads of Department and Deans of Faculty explain the courses that are offered in their respective Departments and Faculties. Since these are conducted orally, without any sign language interpreters, the hearing impaired learners do not really benefit from these sessions. Madalo expressed his disappointment with this sort of arrangement:

When I came here, I was not recognized. It seemed like they did not know there was a hearing impaired student. So I had to start all over again informing them that I was hearing impaired and needed some special help. Therefore, I did not really benefit from the orientations as they were presented orally (Interviews, January, 2009).

The Administrator from Poly attributed this problem to the selection process which happens centrally at the University Office. The college Administrators and lecturers are not aware if any learners with special needs have registered with their college, until the learners have arrived. She said,

These people come from different secondary schools and we do not know in the college who is actually coming and what special need they have. It would have been possible for us to try and organize a suitable orientation, appropriate counseling and materials for the learners if they applied directly to the colleges (Oral Interviews, November, 2008).

What can be noted is that the college administrators are not proactive enough in terms of finding out if any learners with special needs have been selected to join their colleges before the beginning of a new academic year. Although the selection process happens centrally at the University Office, the colleges should take the responsibility of finding out before the first semester begins which learners with special are enrolled with them, the programme they have been selected to study and the nature of their disabilities to enable them to set up a more inclusive environment. KCN, one of the constituent colleges of the UNIMA manages to access such information and conduct oral interviews with the selected students before every new academic year. The other colleges can do the same in order to plan and prepare for a more accommodative learning environment for all their learners.

In terms of programme selection, most of the learners are enrolled into programmes they did not want to pursue. Mostly, LSNs (especially those with VI) at Chanco are enrolled into Humanities courses due to the nature of the pre requisite subjects from secondary school as Dalitso explained during the FGDs:

We already know that everything purely scientific or with a combination of Mathematics is not for us.... In secondary schools in Malawi, visually impaired learners do not study Mathematics because they say it cannot be done in Braille although other countries have achieved this. They also do not have the materials for us to study other Science subjects. With that background, we can not enroll for a Bachelor of Science degree (Oral Interviews, January, 2009)

Chisomo added that ‘here in college, we are naturally restricted from Geography, maybe because of the maps and lack of other materials. So with that background, our choices are limited to Bachelor of Arts Humanities or Bachelor of Education Humanities.’ The College Administrator commented similarly that:

LSNs commonly study Humanities not much out of choice but the current infrastructure from secondary school does not support learning of Science for them, like going to the Lab. So their combinations at O levels do not include science subjects. Currently, they do not have technology in the countries secondary schools to help them learn science subjects because it involves diagrams, symbols and experiments. So those same combinations take them into Humanities in the College. But even if they had a science background, the College does not have the technology to teach them science subjects at College level. To teach Mathematics or Chemistry which involves a lot of experiments to a blind student is difficult (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

A similar situation exists at the Poly in that some courses are assumed to be too technical for LSNs. The administrator mentioned of a hearing impaired young man who was enrolled in the Engineering Department but was withdrawn to enable him to enroll for a ‘less technical course’. KCN goes as far as not accepting learners with severe physical challenges. Their college administrator explained that after the selection process at the University Office has been completed, they further conduct oral

interviews at college level to assess the learners. He added that although completion of the theoretical part of the courses offered is achievable, learners with severe special needs would not be able to handle the physical parts of the courses:

The medical profession is not friendly to LSNs (Learners with Special Needs) because they need to be on their feet to help the patients. We had a physically challenged student and the argument was that she could not manage to do side nursing or carry a patient and the like, same applies to visually and hearing impaired learners as you need to use all your senses to be a nurse. So much as we would like to support LSNs, the truth is they would not manage to cope with the demands of the profession just as they would not join the army or police (Oral Interviews, December, 2008).

French (1986) in Shah (2008) stated that the socially approved image of health professionals can be a barrier for disabled people who are generally considered as too weak and inefficient to succeed as health and caring professionals. Shah (2008) points out the possibility that these negative perceptions of disabled people may color professional attitudes, and cause aspirations of young people with special needs to be rejected. In the UNIMA, the practice of excluding LSNs from attending the KCN ,as exposed by the study, can be largely based on the attitude of society towards professionals in that field of study. This attitude gets in the way of providing equal access and opportunities to learners with special needs who aspire to, and have the academic requirements and potential to excel in Nursing.

It has therefore been noted that the colleges are not accommodative of LSNs as the college administrators are not aware of the LSNs enrolled with them until after the semester is in session. This does not give them adequate time to prepare a suitable learning environment that accommodates the LSNs. Additionally, there is a stereotype

as to which courses LSNs can successfully complete in the colleges due to the nature of their need and their prerequisite knowledge in science subjects. The school as a social structure plays a role in shaping individuals aspirations and choices in life. For instance, if LSNs are not expected to become doctors and nurses, they are not taught the relevant subjects in the school, or see disabled doctors in the media, or be able to access necessary qualifications and buildings where work experience is located (Shah, 2008).

The interpretation of Equity in terms of productions and equality of achievement requires that individuals should have the same chance of earning the same qualifications independent of their circumstances of origin (Demeuse, 2001). Therefore, we can conclude that the practice of labeling some courses to be achievable and other too technical for LSNs in the UNIMA as presented in the above discussion is contrary to this level of equity as there is no equality in terms of the chances offered to the LSNs and other learners towards the attainment of certain qualifications.

4.4 Recognition of Learners with Special Needs (LSNs) in Classroom Activities

This section discusses how the lecturers become aware of the presence of LSNs in their classrooms and how they are accommodated to make sure they benefit equally during lectures. Specifically, the lecturers were asked to explain how they found out they had learners with special needs in their classrooms.

The first step in ensuring that LSNs equitably participate in classroom activities is making sure that the lecturers are aware of their student's abilities and individual needs. The lecturers can then plan their lectures in such a way that each student is

accommodated and given full access to the curriculum. However, when the lecturers were asked how they found out that they had LSNs in their classroom, it was revealed that most of them did not receive any formal communication from the college administration in the concerned colleges. One lecturer from Chanco said that he had lectured about seven LSNs (at least to his knowledge) throughout his stay in the UNIMA but has never been formally communicated to about them by the college administration, saying:

Interestingly, here on campus, there is no formal communication from administration saying that you have a blind person in your class and the like. Rather, we just meet them in class and then we realize that we've got LSNs . Although they have registration forms, their registration numbers don't have anything to show that this is a blind person or anything. We only discover when they approach us or unless we discover that they are using the Braille machine during lectures (Oral Interviews, January, 2009)

Similarly, another lecturer from the same College said he was not formally informed by the administration. As a result, he did not notice he had a learner with partial VI until he was administering an exam and she complained to him about the small font on the paper. Commenting on the LSNs he is currently lecturing, he said:

We are not formally informed about LSNs . Actually, I have two groups; two of them are completely VI and the other one is partially VI. She simply needs a large font when giving notes and exams. The other two, I noticed myself when I got into class because they were aided by people so I knew they were VI. But this other one, I came to know that when I administered the exams. She couldn't write the exam using the ordinary font. But I was not told in advance. I was actually surprised to find that I have blind students in my class (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

On the other hand, the administrator from Chanco explained that:

On registration, because their selection is not normal as they are selected by the University Office without the UEE (University Entrance Examination), the Executive Officer writes the Departments notifying them of the LSNs they will have and their needs. Once they register, the people in the Special Needs Office record the course combinations and get in touch with the course lecturers so that they share notes on what these students need (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

However, all the Special Needs Assistants (Chanco) mentioned that they are not informed of the LSNs enrolled by the college prior to meeting them in the Special Needs Resource Room.

The Chanco situation is similar to that at KCN, as both lecturers from KCN claimed that they discovered on their own that they had a learner with partial VI in their class as one of them responded:

It was easy for me to notice her because she is an albino and I know that they usually have a problem with sight. I lectured one with a similar problem before so we learnt a lot from that experience and handling the lectures to accommodate her was not very difficult. But the administration did not formally communicate to me (Oral Interviews, December, 2009).

However, both lecturers from Poly mentioned that the Assistant Registrar at their college sent a memo to their Head of Department who later communicated to them about the LSNs in their student groups. However, the communication was late since the lecturers had already discovered that there was a learner with a hearing impairment in their student group.

By the time the administration sent the memo through the head of department, I had already discovered that I had a HI learner in my class. He sat in front and usually asked me to repeat what I was saying. Then his friends alerted me one day that he was HI. I asked to meet him after class... we agreed that I would produce handouts based on the lectures for him to read in his spare time (Oral Interviews, November, 2008).

The administrator explained that the delay was that she was also unaware of the HI learners until they went to her office to complain that they are having difficulties coping during lectures because the lecturers do not recognize their needs.

We can note that the lecturers who are directly responsible for imparting the curriculum content to the learners are not formally informed of the learners with special needs in their groups. The importance of formal communication from administrators to the lecturers should not be overlooked. If the lecturers are aware before the semester begins that they will have LSNs in their group of learners, they can plan and prepare for their lectures to be effective to each and every learner as is required of inclusive education.

Moreover, educational opportunities for LSNs are maximized when they receive classroom support and their teachers have the relevant skills among other things (Farell, P et al, 2007 in Chavuta et al, 2008). Additionally, the teaching methods, teaching and learning materials that are used, the manner in which classes and learning have been managed and organized, and the nature of assessment practices, if not adjusted accordingly, become barriers to equitable participation of LSNs (Howell, 2000). However, this study has shown that the colleges of the UNIMA overlook some of these necessary adjustments and provisions. For instance, none of the lecturers interviewed have ever been trained in teaching LSNs. According to the respondents, the colleges have never organized such trainings and they complained that this brings problems for them as lecturers as well as the LSNs. The most they can do to assist the LSNs is to provide them with handouts containing the day's lecture notes so that the LSNs can go

over them in their spare time whilst others prefer to offer private tutorials to make sure the lecture objectives are achieved.

One lecturer from Chanco said that he allows the visually impaired learners to audio tape his lectures for their convenience whilst another one from the same college said he had a discussion with the LSNs in his class on how he could best assist them and they asked him to speak slower during lectures, use a lot of signaling devices and emphasize more on the main points. The lecturer admitted that it is not easy for him as he has to consider the other learners as well.

The administrators from Poly, Chanco and KCN (the colleges with LSNs) also admitted that the colleges have never arranged training for the lecturers on how to lecture learners with special needs or anything related to that. The administrator from KCN commented that if at all the lecturers at the college have received such training, 'it was part of their Master or PhD studies but the college cannot take any credit for this.' The UNIMA or its colleges need to take this up and send the lecturers for training on how to handle LSNs during lectures as the administrator from Chanco stated:

..they really need to be trained (funds permitting) because this special needs education is growing at Chanco. Every time there is a learner with special needs, they prefer to send them here because we have experience so we cannot avoid it but accommodate them (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

If the LSNs are to have access to and full participation in education, they need to be accommodated right from the classroom and this involves being handled by trained personnel or specialist lecturers.

Nevertheless, to overcome this problem of lack of specialist lecturers, all the LSNs responding to this study reported that they largely rely on their fellow classmates to help them catch up on their lecture notes (which only works if the other learners are willing or have time to help). However, the HI learners acknowledged that their lecturers do put in some effort to assist them by writing the main points on the board and sometimes giving them handouts. Other lecturers keep asking the VI learners questions to make sure that they are on the same page with them during lectures. Though this is not an obligation on the part of the lecturers and fellow students, the learners do not take such gestures for granted and seem to be very appreciative as Chimwemwe explained that:

I am very grateful to my friends who are familiar with what I am doing because they assist me with my work a lot such that I do not have to go for further assistance (Interviews, January, 2009).

Although the lecturers recognize the presence of LSNs in their student groups, the effectiveness of classroom delivery is compromised in the colleges. This is mainly due to the fact that the lecturers in the colleges are not trained or skilled in handling learners with visual or hearing impairments. Additionally, the lecturers are not formally communicated to, before the semester begins, about the LSNs they have in their student groups. Knowing in advance would allow the lecturers to plan for a more inclusive environment in the classroom.

4.5 Recognition of Learners with Special Needs (LSNs) during Assessment Activities

This section explores whether there are any special arrangements made for LSNs during assessment activities in the colleges. The learners themselves, their lecturers and the college administrators were asked to comment on whether there are any special arrangements for LSNs during the end of semester/year examinations or classroom assignments. Generally, there are no special arrangements or special mode of assessment in black and white for LSNs in the colleges. Although this is the case, some lecturers try to create some flexibility to assist the LSNs.

All the hearing impaired (HI) learners responded that they do not have many problems during examinations as they can read and write just like the other learners. For examples, Chimwemwe explained:

I do not really need any special arrangements during examinations; however, if the lecturer is announcing any changes to be made to the examination paper whilst the examination is in progress, they approach my desk and explain to me clearly to make sure I do not miss the point (Interviews, January, 2009).

The visually impaired (VI) learners are the ones who experience problems as they either cannot read at all or have difficulties reading normal print. However, almost all of the VI respondents said that there are no special arrangements made for them during continuous assessment or the end of semester examinations. For example, James said:

Although it takes me longer to read or research for continuous assessment especially when it comes to books, I still have to meet the same deadlines as the others. Even during exams, there are no special arrangements (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

However, during continuous assessment, some of the lecturers make their own considerations at departmental level as one lecturer from Chanco explained:

During tests, we give the visually impaired learners a few more minutes because they are slow in writing. That is the one I think is worth mentioning. Otherwise, we do not have a special arrangement. When it comes to assessment I think it is just the same as normal students. When administering the exams, for us, internally in the department, we isolate them from the rest and put them in the offices because the rest of the students complain that their machines make noise. Even the administration I think they put them in special rooms such that when we are asked to answer queries we move from a bigger room where the rest are to a small room allocated to the VI (Visually Impaired) learners. But sometimes in the Great Hall, everyone is there despite the noise (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

However, during the FGDs, some of the respondents disclosed that they are sometimes given an extra 15 minutes to complete their paper during examinations as Zikomo explained:

We have the same exams with our friends, same hours but sometimes we get an extra 15 minutes for each and every 3 hour paper. But if it is continuous assessment, if the lecturer says we write it within one hour and a half, that is it (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

The American Disabilities Act of 1990 legally requires colleges to provide reasonable accommodation to enable LSNs to obtain an education equal to that of their peers (Zuriff, 2000). One of the aspects of ensuring that LSNs obtain as equal education as their peers in the learning environment is varying the instruction and curriculum without losing the integrity of the content or scope of the sequence (Price et al , 2000). Price et al (2000) suggested some variations to the instruction and curriculum that can ensure fairness in the assessment of LSNs. One of the variations is that colleges should implement alternative ways of completing assignments for the learners with special needs such as oral or tape recorded presentations over the traditional assignments and tests, time extensions for assignments and tests and examination modifications where

different types of examinations can be geared to the student's needs and limitations. However, this study revealed that the colleges of the UNIMA do not have any special arrangements for LSNs as discussed above which would potentially impair their successful accommodation in the university.

4.6 Provision of Resources (infrastructure, personnel, and materials) for the Learners with Special Needs (LSNs)

This section looks at the types of resources provided to the learners and issues of adequacy. All the participants were asked to comment on the provision of resources for the LSNs in their colleges. Firstly, the LSNs interviewed were asked to recall how their first days at their colleges were. Peter described his first day at Chanco as

Solemn, because I did not think I would be able to put the Chanco map in my head. So walking around was a problem as I always needed someone to escort me around the campus...it appeared horrible to be here at that time (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

Like Peter, the other LSNs recalled to have been scared or sad in one way or another. Having attended regular secondary schools, it was not long for most of them to meet someone they had been to school with who helped them around the campus. Looking beyond to the rest of the semester, the main problem was with the lecture process as Chimwemwe, explained that 'the first semester was hectic, as I was learning new things and meeting new people. It was the time I began to get frustrated as classroom dynamics were not that accommodating.' For all the learners who responded to this study, the first days in class were the most difficult, as some of them went unnoticed during lectures. The situation was unlike their experience in secondary school where

their teachers gave them special attention. James, recalling his first learning days at Chanco had this to say:

In class the type of learning which I found here at college was different compared to secondary school. The difference was that at secondary school, the teachers used to give us detailed notes when they were teaching just like the rest of the class. Here, the lecture method was quite challenging at first (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

Madalo and Tadala both made a note of the increasing academic demand at this level of education and how they initially found it difficult to cope. Tadala explained that:

The first semester was full of difficulties as I had to cope with the increasing academic demands. It took me a long time to adjust to the environment academically and physically. The major problem was that I could not hear what the lecturers were saying and unlike in secondary school, they did not pay me any attention as they considered me to be like the other learners. It was tough and I ended up getting a serious warning for performing poorly (Interviews, January, 2009).

The learners were further asked to comment on how accessible they think the college buildings are. For the HI learners, moving around the colleges is not a problem but for the VI learners, their first days in a new environment can be challenging as they depend on other people to help them get around until they are used to the place. During FGDs, the respondents seemed to slightly disagree on the accessibility of the college buildings.

Dalitso commented that:

In my case, I would actually say that all the places are somehow complicated but at the end of the day in areas that we feel they are too complicated, that's where we depend on our friends. That is however dependent on how one is oriented to the place. Otherwise they are not so accessible (January, 2009).

Whilst, Paul, another visually impaired learner from Chanco said he finds the college generally accessible to him as he does not have 'mobility problems.' Peter, commented that although for VI people things become better once they are used to the environment,

others like those who use wheel chairs would certainly have difficulties visiting the library and departments which are located on top floors. He said:

At some point there was a student using a wheel chair, he had problems to go into the library because of steps such that some people had to carry him. So I wouldn't imagine it would be very accessible for people like him. And even imagine those other departments that are on the second floor like Law or Sociology even English, I wouldn't imagine they would have easy access meeting their departmental Heads or Lecturers (January, 2009).

Tadala also said that although the college buildings are not a problem to her, key buildings like the library need to be renovated and have lifts replacing the steps as it is currently disadvantageous to those learners with mobility problems.

The structures in the constituent colleges of the UNIMA are not friendly to learners with special needs especially those with mobility problems as they were built with stairs to get around. Chanco is the only college that has made an effort towards a more accommodative physical environment for LSNs as they have flattened most areas in the corridors where there were steps into ramps. The college administrator was pleased to comment on these modifications made in the corridors adding that apart from the ramps, the learners are usually given rooms on the ground floor near the common rooms so that they do not have to use steps to go to their rooms.

To ensure an inclusive learning environment for LSNs, the colleges should provide them with special learning support and services. Chanco is the only college of the UNIMA that has a special needs resource room and special needs assistants. The room has 3 computers and according to an administrator from the college, one of the computers is called a wonder computer because it has special soft ware (Jaws). JAWS (an acronym for *Job Access With Speech*) is a screen reader, a software program for

visually impaired users which provides the user with access to the information displayed on the screen via text-to-speech or by means of a Braille display and allows for comprehensive keyboard interaction with the computer.¹ There is also an embosser and a scanner used for transcription and translation of print material to Braille and vice versa. The equipment was a donation from the Strathclyde University and Beit Trust to the Ministry of Education who further donated it to the college. Additionally, the room is furnished with two office desks, chairs, a chest of drawers and a book shelf which they use to keep books and materials like hand frames and abacus. It is also used as an office for the special needs assistants employed by the college.

The college temporarily employs three special needs assistants: two of whom assist the VI learners by translating print papers (handouts, assignment question papers and exams) to Braille and transcribing Braille work to print for the lecturers. They also train the learners to be able to use the computers independently, read out texts to individual students and help them type their assignments. Additionally, the assistants carry out library search for the learners and escort them to town, hospital or around the campus. The HI assistant attends lectures with the learners and takes down notes for them. He also interprets what the lecturer is saying to the students in sign language when the learner fails to lip read and asks for clarification. Each assistant separately said they assist an average of four students in a day. Despite being few, these assistants can help in planning and tailoring the best practices for learners with special needs in the UNIMA. In most cases, special needs assistants who take on the responsibility of accommodating LSNs look more like social workers trying to assist and support LSNs

than skilled professionals who can plan how best to tailor practices to students needs (OECD, 2003). This alone contributes largely to the challenges that LSNs face in the learning environment.

All the participants of the study were asked if their college or UNIMA provides the learners with special needs adequate special learning aids. Madalo, an HI respondent from Poly acknowledged to have received a computer from the college:

I do not receive anything special apart from computers. They just lent me an ordinary computer which I am free to use in my own time. That is one of the best offers they have made me really. It is just an ordinary computer but I find it very useful as computers nowadays are a very important commodity. I can use it during the day or night for example when testing programs, browsing the internet and anything like that. That makes me very grateful (Oral Interviews, November, 2008).

The administrator from the College explained that they received a special wonder computer donated by Strathclyde University through the Ministry of Education. She explained that:

although the equipment is meant for VI learners, we found a way to make it useful to the HI learner we have so that he can benefit from E- libraries as well as access information through the internet from other HI learners especially from Strathclyde as he largely depends on reading (Oral Interviews, November, 2008).

She further said that the issue of resources could be handled well if the college is made aware of the learners with special needs they will have well in advance so that they can make better arrangements for them.

The other hearing impaired respondents from Chanco said that they are not provided with any special learning aids by the colleges. Chimwemwe from Chanco said that he

was not bothered to enquire in the semester of this study because there was always a ready answer of ‘we don’t have resources’ or ‘go and check with the special needs section.’ Mercy, from KCN also responded that she is not provided with any special resources by the college. However, Paul mentioned during the FGDs that the HI learners are provided with hearing aids to the benefit of those with partial HI. The special needs section at Chanco stocks hearing aids for the HI learners and guiding sticks for the VI learners which are given to the learners for free. Unfortunately, all the HI learners who participated in the study do not benefit from this as they are all totally hearing impaired.

All the visually impaired respondents from Chanco acknowledged that they are provided with special learning aids but they are not adequate and do not meet their expectations. Chisomo responding to this during the FDGs said the college assists them only to a certain extent:

[For example] I would cite a certain time they had to purchase some recorders for us. Though they did not actually meet our expectations, we would say that it was a very nice initiative, only that they were some complications like lack of consultation on which ones to purchase so they ended up getting recorders which were not as effective. There are some other times that we may need things like Braille paper....the college provides the transport to go to the place where the paper can be collected that is the Centre for Education of The Blind at Montfort (January, 2009).

In addition to this, Peter explained during the FDG’s that the main problem is that when the college is informed of what is needed in the special needs resource room, they do not purchase the things in time. He specifically mentions that ‘it took us time, maybe a year without recorders being purchased. And even for this whole semester, we haven’t had tapes or batteries to use with the recorders. If we try to consult, they always say the

procurement committee this, or the department that. So by the end of the day things take a lot of time.’ Similarly, Zikomo explained that:

...the resources are being provided after we have sweated for them... If we have not established a rapport, we have a problem. I think there are no concrete steps which are followed. Maybe it can start at the beginning of the semester to say how many LSNs do we have and how many recorders do we need, how many recording cassettes or tapes do we use. Those kinds of things are not stipulated before the semester starts but it’s something that needs to be done yearly. Things only happen after pressurizing somebody which to me is not correct because our friends who are sighted don’t bother meeting someone about what they need for their lessons. It’s like everybody is sure that if I go to the library, I will find this kind of book and the college itself looks at say, Sociology, what books do they need? What books do they need at Philosophy and they have already bought those books. For us there is nothing like that. There is no one who follows up on such kind of things (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

When asked if the College provides adequate special learning aids for the learners, the assistant for the hearing impaired learners and one of the other assistants recognized the Colleges’ efforts and disclosed that the college provides the resources they can afford such as tape recorders, tapes, batteries and hearing aids and the very expensive ones like the Perkins Braillers, Computer Braille papers, styluses and hand frames are mainly just donated through the government to the college. However, the other assistant for visually impaired learners said he does not think the college provides adequate materials as they have to ‘beg from Montfort College for things like Braille paper which the college can try to provide.’ He added that lack of materials such as Braille paper, is detrimental to their work as they are forced to improvise with other less efficient means like using the Perkins Braille machine over the Embosser.

The Special Needs Education officials from the Ministry of Education both confirmed that their Department provides support for learners with special needs in the University of Malawi. One of them confidently said that:

The Ministry provides a lot of support and resources such as Specialist teachers to assist the LSNs and assisting devices like Braille paper and computers for the visually impaired and hearing aids for the hearing impaired so that LSNs access information (Oral Interviews, November, 2008).

The other official similarly mentioned of devices like Braille Machines, computers, typewriters and hearing aids as well as learning support such as braillists, specialist teachers, note takers and revealed future plans of providing sign language interpreters. The respondents both stated that these resources are provided through the Special Needs Unit of the UNIMA and later dispatch into the various colleges. However, the UNIMA does not have a Special Needs Unit and Chanco is the only constituent college with a Special Needs Resource Room.

Acknowledging that the resources provided for LSNs are not adequate, the college administrator from Chanco commented that the limiting factor to providing more resources and a bigger resource room for the learners is funds. He gave an example of an individual who was willing to donate two more wonder computers on condition that the college expands the special needs resource room which at that time seemed impractical saying:

Although the college is willing to provide a more conducive learning environment for LSNs, there are already problems of lecturers sharing offices and the need for more lecture rooms. The college wants to achieve all this but funds are not permitting. Funds can be found if the University of Malawi takes a more pro active lead in lobbying for assistance towards Special Needs Education (Oral Interviews, December, 2008).

The administrators from Bunda, COM and KCN, commented that their colleges do not have any special learning aids and that the infrastructure in their colleges are not purposely built to aid LSNs although they acknowledged the importance. However, the administrator from COM said with enthusiasm:

Having discussed that issue in several forums, the college has decided that in future, the infrastructure should be built to accommodate LSNs as it is our hope that we will take them in (Oral Interviews, November, 2008).

The fundamental principle of inclusive education (IE) is that all children should have the opportunity to learn together. This principle is well achieved in the colleges of the UNIMA where LSNs are enrolled and educate in the same learning environment as their peers but not much is done beyond this. The motives for IE derive from dissatisfaction with such a system, from economic or resource allocation concerns, or from a vision of educational reform (Peters, 2004). IE should therefore serve as a solution to the dramatic difference in educational opportunities provided for LSNs and those without. However, this study revealed that despite educating all learners together, there are still some major resource allocation concerns which need to be addressed to achieve equality in education between the LSNs and the other learners in the UNIMA. The study revealed the current situation in the UNIMA to be very far from the desired and recommended learning environment for IE where measures are set up to ensure equality amongst learners. For example, due to the lack of special resources, the LSNs

have to rely on their friends to get around the college and access some fundamental resources for college education such as books. The dependence of LSNs on their peers drastically reduces their independence and ability to support themselves. At college level, this observation highly reflects their participation in the workplace and the university has to make sure that they reduce their dependence on their peers as much as possible.

4.7 Educational Participation of LSNs in University Education in Malawi

This section discusses, from the participants point of view, the support the constituent colleges of the UNIMA should offer to LSNs in order to enhance their education. All the participants were asked to express their views on this as they were asked to comment on the sort of support they feel the college should offer LSNs in order to enhance their educational participation. The most common response from all the respondents was that the LSNs should have a purposely built resource room where key texts should be made available and that the colleges should also provide the special equipment that the learners need to maximize their learning.

During the FGD's, the VI learners suggested that the special needs resource room at Chanco needs to be renovated and should be given authority to handle issues concerning LSNs. With this done, copies of the key books should be made available to the learners both in Braille and large font to benefit the visually impaired learners accordingly. Dalitso, one of the participants of the FDGs explained:

Currently, the university does not make any plans or budget for resources that can benefit us. We are directly linked to the Ministry of Education (Special Needs Department) which is severely under funded. To solve the issue of resources, we need to have a unit or hierarchy within the University so that when they are making plans to buy books, they can also consider buying books in Braille or large font to our benefit.... That has to be done within the university such that when the university is presenting their budget proposal to the Ministry of Finance, there can be a component for Special Needs (January, 2009).

Similarly, the administrator from Chanco expressed his views saying:

The students do pass with credits but I consider their learning hard because they survive at the mercy of their friends who give up an hour or so to read to them. If we had funds, I think that one of the things we need most is a structure in place modeled after universities where SNE is formalized and have the right kind of equipment with well trained people. In a more ideal situation we can even have people who act as their personal assistants because we never know how far the friends go to assist them behind closed doors. It would be better if we had people to look into their well fare, structures where they could go to study because the current library is not ideal for them. If we were to wait for an ideal situation, we would bar these people from getting an education so it does make sense that we still admit them even though structure wise we are not yet there as regards SNE (January,2009).

The special needs assistants for the VI learners and the lecturers from Chanco made similar recommendations as one assistant stated that ‘our room is very small considering the number of students who use it. We use this as a resource room and an office so when we are transcribing exams, we lock the door and do not allow anyone to enter. So the time we are telling them to go out, we are disturbing them as others are working on the computers. We really need two separate rooms or a bigger room.’ Additionally, one of the lecturers from Chanco commented that the LSNs deserve to have the required special resources readily available in purposely built resource rooms. He added that the colleges need to consult the course lecturers on the key texts for their courses and try to provide them in Braille and large print for the VI learners.

Another VI respondent, Paul, emotionally charged, said that they get resources only if non-governmental organizations donate to the University:

... Special Needs really has to be taken as an independent office within the UNIMA or at college level so that we can have an officer who can be at par with other administrators. As it is right now, the assistants are not at par with the administrators and cannot influence policy. They are lower in the hierarchy and I think that affects the rate at which their suggestions are implemented. This needs to be effected other wise, we will keep relying on donations, and I just fear for what will happen when people or organizations decide to stop donating things (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

He added that a student representative should be involved in the procurement process of special aids for the learners with special needs to ensure that the correct and adequate resources are purchased on time so that the learners can benefit fully from them.

During the FGDs the participants further suggested that the college should try to purchase computers with Braille displays so that they can type their own assignments.

Zikomo, one of the participants complained that:

The college has to make an extra effort to make sure we have the materials that our friends have so that we should be on equal footing...The constitution (section 25) clearly states that everyone should have the right to an education and for that to work there has to be equality.... Right now, it is like we are expected to run the same race with others whilst they are wearing lighter clothes and boots and we are bare footed wearing heavy armor .How fair is that? (January, 2009)

Furthermore, one lecturer from Chanco stated that one of the factors that should not be overlooked is counseling provisions for LSNs:

These learners are psychological beings and competing with people with whom they are not on the same footing with can be frustrating. I remember in a certain exam, one of the LSNs was very frustrated because he only managed to answer two questions within the given time as he could not keep up with the speed. He was very angry and it is at such times that they need to be counseled because life in college is very fast (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

Children and adults with special needs often lack self esteem and face many other difficulties in developing their full human potential (Khatleli, P et al, 1995). The need of counseling provisions to help them overcome or minimize such drawbacks as they participate in the colleges with other learners is imperative.

In addition, two of the three HI participants responded that the colleges need to employ lecturers who know sign language as Tadala sadly expressed:

I have come to understand that the college is very incapable of helping or accommodating me with my need. It is therefore up to me to depend on myself...it would be better though if they employed lecturers who know sign language or trained the available ones and assigned us our own academic resources. Those are the essentials (January, 2009).

Mercy from KCN suggested that if the lecturers explained the main points in detail as they write them on the board and expanded appropriately when using power point presentations then there would not really be a problem during the teaching process:

For me, apart from providing me with books printed in a larger font, the lecturers need to explain clearly when they are projecting notes to make it easier for me to keep up and take down effective notes. That way I will not have to turn to my neighbor to ask what has been said, disturbing them in the process (Oral Interviews, December, 2008).

Peter had a similar suggestion to Mercy and further commented on the importance of informing lecturers of the learners with special needs enrolled to study their course, before the semester begins. He said,

There should be sessions where the lecturers are informed of the learners in their group and what needs they have as well as the things they should consider when lecturing. Some of the challenges we face in the classroom come about because they do not know they have learners with special needs and when they find out, they do not know how to handle us or the type of help to offer. Imagine, someone born to a family without a VI member, goes through school without dealing with someone in that situation and ends up lecturing someone with VI, they cannot be expected to assist that person accordingly. The colleges need to orient the lecturers so that they are aware of the assistance which should be offered to LSNs (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

One lecturer from KCN similarly suggested that they should be oriented on how to handle LSNs during lectures:

More people are being motivated and sending their children with special needs to school. The population of LSNs in the colleges is therefore likely to grow with time. So, to be able to respond to the needs of the society, our education should be tailored towards meeting the needs of these learners and this includes orienting lecturers (Oral Interviews, December, 2008).

She further said that during orientation, the lecturers should be enlightened on how to handle the curriculum and assessment modes to best accommodate LSNs. She concurs with the other lecturer from KCN that it is just a matter of amending the policy and the reviewing the curriculum to also put the interest of LSNs into consideration.

Another factor that should be considered is the sensitization and awareness among university academic and administrative staff. For the colleges that do not have learners with special needs like Bunda, the administrator recommended that staff and management awareness of the ‘void’ of not having LSNs is important. Discussions need to follow on how they can bring in the students into their college and how they can be accommodated. Following this, the potential students need to be aware of the

programs offered because not all programs offered at Bunda are Physical. She added that:

We see or hear of blind, deaf and physically challenged farmers in our communities through the radio and television and their disability does not get in the way of their crop productivity. As a nation, we need and would benefit more from professional farmers who would understand the challenges better. The starting point is directing people with special needs to attain higher education in Agriculture so that they can be equipped theoretically as well and gain exposure. As a college, we really need to move on and include these people (Oral Interviews, December, 2008).

Chisomo, one of the visually impaired participants mentioned during the focus group discussions that the first move towards maximizing their educational participation is for the learners with special needs to be recognized saying:

At the moment, there is no official recognition of LSNs in the university system. The university staff.. have to recognize that there are some other people who will need special attention. We also have to show interest on our part by using and coping with whatever resources are made available to us. I believe that one of the strategies to problem solving is not being a part of the problem yourself but rather on the solution side. So although the challenge of resources is major, we should use the few resources to the maximum as it is only in the process of exercising our abilities that people can be aware of us. We also need to create a rapport so that people can be willing to help us (Oral Interviews, January, 2009).

Further, an administrator from Poly suggested that if the LSNs applied directly to the colleges, the administration would be aware of the number of LSNs enrolling with them and the type of need they have. This would enable them to plan the academic year in a way that they are accommodated in the lessons and other college activities. They would also make sure that by the time the learners arrive at the campus, there are facilities and the appropriate people are trained and sensitized on how to handle LSNs.

However, one official from the Ministry of Education was optimistic about the accommodation of learners with special needs in higher education and said that people in the country were initially myopic and did not see these learners making it as far as the University. He added that:

as the nation is working towards having a more inclusive society, things are also moving in higher education for example, the National Education Sector Plan on the area of higher education has covered issues of infrastructure versus LSNs and achieving a more inclusive environment giving us hope that improvements of infrastructure to accommodate LSNs are on the way. The plans for the university are also moving as they have introduced a module in Special Needs Education offered to Education students at Chanco and they have employed specialist lecturers (Oral Interviews, November, 2008).

In order to welcome LSNs into colleges, special resources are needed and a funding council should be made available to source money to provide resources as necessary (Walcott, 2002). As has been established by this study, one of the major problems affecting the participation of LSNs in the UNIMA is the lack of adequate resources. This does not require any change in the university regime, but rather some commitment which could play a noticeable role towards creating a fair and accessible learning environment between the LSNs and their peers.

4.8 General Discussion

In Malawi, LSNs rarely progress to higher level of education. The very few that do are educated in the same institutions as their peers and reportedly face a lot of discriminatory practices within their learning environment (CERT report, 2005). Research has been carried out extensively on the position of LSNs in primary and secondary levels of education but scholars have not researched much on what happens

to LSNs who find themselves in college and other institutions of higher learning. The result of the study above expose issues of equity in the participation of LSNs in colleges of the UNIMA by exploring human perceptions in terms of the input of LSNs and what their output from the learning environment.

The ‘right’ to educating every child by including LSNs in the same institutions as their peer has to be superseded by the ‘right’ to providing LSNs with an education that meets their needs (Ellis et al, 2008). Some of the challenges faced by LSNs in the colleges of the UNIMA and suggestions from the participants on how the education participation of LSNs can be improved were raised in the study. Eliminating these challenges faced by LSNs at tertiary level of education, entails promoting fairness and equality amongst LSNs and their peers in the learning environment and supporting their ‘right’ to an education that meets their needs. This can be achieved by, among other things, ensuring the quality provision of special support, services and adequate resources. Further, the quality provision for LSNs at tertiary level goes beyond their rights as their access to the labour market depends on it. A few studies on the labour force status of learners with special needs (LSNs) in various countries have shown that unemployment is much lower among the LSNs with university degrees than those without (Danmark, 1999).

Some major barriers to inclusion were exposed such as the lecturers’ lack of knowledge and skill in handling LSNs during lectures. This hinders fairness in the classroom because the teacher does not relate the same to LSNs and their peers as the former usually require a suitable adjustment in the content delivery techniques. The lecturers’

lack of skill and knowledge in handling LSNs has a notable impact on the attitude of the teacher towards such learners. There is support of the view that teachers attitude can be positively influenced through the increasing confidence that comes from combining substantial training and experience in handling inclusive classes (Ellis et al, 2008).

The barriers to equity exposed by the study were largely to do with structural and financial matters and others constraints were linked to the ‘colouring of professions’ an attitude of viewing LSNs as not capable in excelling in other areas of study such as Nursing and Engineering. This reportedly stems from the lack of prerequisite knowledge in Science subjects.

All in all these barriers and challenges to a fair inclusive education setup come about because the colleges of the UNIMA and the UNIMA itself do not have a comprehensive strategy or structure for the LSNs. The dynamics of governing the admission of and support for learners with special needs is far more achievable when institutions have drawn up an explicit disability statement and defined how it will be implemented (OECD, 2003).

4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed participants’ responses to the following themes; Classroom Activities, Examinations, Provision of Resources, Course selection, and Educational Participation in relation to the research questions introduced before each theme. In the

process, challenges faced by the LSNs enrolled in the constituent colleges of the UNIMA were exposed.

To make University Education more accessible to learners with special needs, those learners who have the required grades for entry into the UNIMA are exempted from sitting for the University Entrance Examinations. However, this is only the first step towards equity in education. All in all, the study showed that the learning and physical environment in the constituent colleges of the UNIMA is not conducive for LSNs as there is no fairness in the construction of the main structures, methods of delivering the curriculum content, exposure to appropriate and adequate teaching and learning resources and socialization within the learning environment.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether Learners with Special Needs (LSNs) are equitably treated as they participate in education in the University of Malawi (UNIMA). The study answered the following research questions;

- 1) What resources are provided (such as infrastructure, personnel, and materials) for the LSNs at the UNIMA?
- 2) How are the LSNs guided in their selection of courses?
- 3) How are LSNs handled during classroom and assessment activities?
- 4) What factors can improve the educational participation of LSNs in UNIMA?

The study yielded qualitative data obtained from the learners with visual and hearing impairments, their lecturers, college administrators, special needs assistants and officials from the Ministry of Education. The data were collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observation.

This chapter therefore presents the main conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further studies based on the results analyzed and discussed in Chapter 4.

5.2 Main Conclusions

5.2.1 Guidance of Learners with Special Needs (LSNs) in Course Selection

The study revealed that mostly, LSNs are selected to study less technical courses due to the nature of the subjects they study at secondary level. The participants revealed that at Chancellor College (Chanco), LSNs are selected to study Humanities courses whilst at Polytechnic (Poly); they are enrolled in the Department of Information and Technology. This could be attributed to attitudinal issues right from the lower levels of education whereby the LSNs are believed to not be able to meet certain course requirements due to their impairment. The courses they are excluded from usually require extensive use of graphic materials or the use of particular types of equipment.

Kamuzu College of Nursing (KCN) is rather selective of the LSNs it enrolls as it is assumed that the learners with physical disabilities, severe visual and hearing impairments would have difficulties in completing the practical parts of the courses offered. However, Equity considerations lead to the position that LSNs should have a chance of earning the same qualifications as the other learners (OECD, 2003). The attitudinal and environmental barriers in the colleges of the UNIMA prevent some LSNs from attaining their career aspirations as the courses they can enroll for are predetermined.

5.2.2 Recognition of Learners with Special Needs in Classroom Activities

The study has shown that there is need for disability support both in the classroom and outside. The current setup at Chanco, in which 3 special needs assistants help the VI and HI learners is not adequate as the assistants themselves lack basic training, at tertiary level, in the courses taken by the learners. Therefore, the sort of support the learners benefit from the assistants is not directly linked to the knowledge the lecturers impart to them.

5.2.3. Recognition of Learners with Special Needs during Assessment Activities

The study has revealed that there are no special considerations for LSNs during the end of semester examinations and assessments. This translates to inequitable assessment practices for learners with special needs who may benefit from various modifications. The purpose of modification in assessment is to enable an individual to compensate for intellectual their, behavioural or physical disabilities (Alenyo, 2009).

5.2.4. Provision of Resources for Learners with Special Needs

The main structures in the constituent colleges of the UNIMA were not purposely built or renovated to accommodate LSNs, especially those with mobility problems. Chanco is the only college that made the efforts to flatten most of the steps around the teaching area and hostels into ramps.

Much of the efforts to provide the LSNs with learning aids are made by Chanco perhaps because they enroll a larger number of learners with special needs as compared to the other colleges. However, the process of purchasing these aids excludes the learners with special needs which results in the process or the purchase of non effective learning aids thereby affecting their participation in the learning environment.

Further, the study has shown that Chanco is the only college that has a special needs resource room. Still, the room leaves a lot to be desired as it is very small and fails to serve its purpose as a resource room and an office for the special needs assistants.

5.2.5 Educational Participation of Learners with Special Needs in University Education in Malawi

The study revealed that there is need to construct special needs resource rooms in all the colleges of the university. Participants revealed that the special needs resource room at Chanco needs to be renovated and made into an independent unit to strengthen the coordination of special needs activities and resources within the colleges. Furthermore, participants suggested that the head of the Special Needs Unit should be at par with the college administrators so that they can influence policy.

The study has also shown that the direct link the special needs resource room has to the Special Needs Unit (SNU) in the Ministry of Education is limiting in terms of provision of resources as the SNU itself is severely under funded. Therefore, if a special need is turned into an independent unit within the University, the beneficiaries can take part in

making purchase plans and their budget can be presented separately to the Ministry of Finance. Moreover, a body of research has shown that in most social structures like the school, children and young people with special needs are cosigned a passive role rather than being seen as active subjects who should be fully included in processes which have a bearing in their lives (Peters, 2004) . This practice leads to inequalities of opportunity between the learners with special needs and the other learners as they are considered only in terms of what society views as fair.

Furthermore, the study revealed that to enhance the educational participation of LSNs, the colleges need to provide the key texts in Braille and larger print as well as ordinary print. The texts should be placed in the special needs resource room for easy access for the learners with visual impairments. The learners also indicated that to put them on equal footing with the other learners, all the materials they ask for should be made available at the resource room in good time.

The study has also shown that there is need for the colleges to employ specialist lecturers as the learners depend on their friends and assistants to go over the lecture again with them in their spare time. The hearing impaired learners would benefit if the lecturers use sign language to expand on the main points during lectures.

Moreover, the teaching strategies the lecturers sometimes employ bring about inequalities in the classroom. Participants pointed out that currently, the lecturers like to

use power point during lesson delivery and this works to the disadvantage of the VI learners who rely on oral presentations.

It was also revealed by the study that the colleges need to orient the lectures on how they can handle LSNs during lectures and the sort of assistance they need to offer them to eliminate the challenges faced by both the learners and the lecturers.

The study also exposed the need for sensitization and awareness among the university academic and administrative staff on the importance of enrolling LSNs into their colleges and how best they can be accommodated. The study also revealed that not all the colleges of the UNIMA have LSNs thus presenting the need to expose the various courses offered by the constituent colleges to potential students with special needs.

Finally, the study revealed the need to provide counseling to the LSNs to help them adjust to the inclusive learning environment at tertiary level.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations to the University of Malawi

- A special needs unit to oversee all the special needs departments in the colleges should be set up. Among other things, the unit should be responsible for communicating to each college the number of learners with special needs selected to go there, their type of special need and the course they have been selected to study before the semester begins. The unit can also be responsible for sourcing

funds and special materials to enhance the education of learners with special needs. The unit should also be responsible for ensuring equality of access to the curriculum and learning environment in general.

- There is need to be proactive about the LSNs by disclosing their status on application forms as this provides the university a chance to organise appropriate and adequate support services and resources for the LSNs (Marriot , 2008).

5.3.2 Recommendations to the Constituent Colleges of the University of Malawi

- Each college should make an effort to find out if any LSNs have been selected by the University Office to study there before the beginning of the first semester just as KCN makes an effort to conduct second screening in order to assess the type of learners that have been selected to study there in terms of disabilities.
- Training of academic members of staff on how they can create a conducive learning environment for LSNs is required. To bridge the gap between schools and institutions of higher learning, professionals working with learners with special needs have to be informed about the support they can offer, how they can offer it and the support available to learners with special needs in higher education (Marriot, 2008).
- It is important for the colleges to employ specialist lecturers especially in the faculties that usually enroll LSNs to work with this population.
- Special needs assistants should be employed to help the learners with special needs.

- Affirmative action should be taken to ensure that ramps or lifts are added to the college structures to make them more accommodative of LSNs.
- Purposely built special needs resource rooms should be constructed in all the colleges.
- Each college should have a special needs unit responsible for the provision and storage of teaching and learning resources (such as audio books or books written in Braille and large font) and the affairs of LSNs.
- The LSNs should also be consulted and included in the purchase of their teaching and learning aids as they are the main consumers.
- Resources should be purchased and given to the beneficiaries early in the semester.

5.3.3 Recommendation to the Malawi Government

- The Malawi Government through the Ministry of Education (Special Needs Department) should introduce awareness programs for LSNs in secondary schools informing them of their chances of getting into the constituent colleges of the UNIMA and the courses offered at each college. Through the same programs, learners should also be exposed to the benefits of attaining higher education.
- Government needs to show commitment towards the provision of teaching and learning resources for the LSNs in colleges.

5.4 Further Research

- As the study revealed that lack of training presents the lecturers with problems in handling LSNs during lectures, a study could be conducted to find out what impact this has on the achievement of the learners.
- At the time of the study, there were no learners with physical disabilities enrolled in any of the colleges; a similar study could be carried out on such learners to get their perceptions on the phenomenon studied.
- When the study was carried out, some of the colleges did not have any LSNs, it is therefore important that a similar study is carried out to explore the perception of the LSNs in those colleges from their natural setting.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the main conclusions of the study and recommendations to the UNIMA, the colleges of the University and the Ministry of Education on the measures they can take to ensure equity in the participation of learners with special needs in the UNIMA were presented.

Finally, as this study is the first of its kind to be carried out in Malawi, the chapter presented possible areas for further research.

REFERENCES

- Adams, D. (1993) *Defining Education Quality: Improving for Educational Quality Project*. Washington, D.C: Institution for international Research.
- Adams, J.S. (1965). Inequality in Social Change in Berkowitz, L (Ed), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, (pp 267-299).New York: Academic Press.
- Albert, B. (2003- 2005). *Lesson from the disability Knowledge and Research Program*. Accessed on 26th June, 2010 from: www.disabilitykar.net
- Alenyo, D. (2009).*Policy and Practice: A Gateway to Successful Equity and Fairness in Assessment in Special Needs Education*. Accessed on 26th June, 2010 from: http://curriculum.wcape.school.za/resources_files/22145901_10.doc
- Bamberger, M. (Ed.). (2000). *Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Research in Development Projects*. Washington DC: the World Bank.
- Barton, L (1998). Markets, Managerialism and Inclusive Education. In Clough, P (Ed.), *Managing Inclusive Education from Policy to Experience*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd:
- Barton, L. (2003). *Inclusive Education and Teacher Education. A Basis for Hopes or Discourse of Delusion*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.
- Bell, J. (1993). *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First Time Researchers in Education and Social Sciences*. Barckingham: Open University Press.
- Berg, B. (1998). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (3rd ed). Massacheusetes: Allyn & Bacon.

Berk, R. (2002). *Publishing Evaluation Research*. Retrieved on 16th June, 2009 from:
<http://www.jstor.org/view/00943061/di9743061/di974033/97p10081/0>.

Centre for Educational Research and Training (2005). *Issues in Education System of Malawi: Evidence from research*. Zomba: Chancellor College.

Centre for the Study of Higher Education (2008). University of Melbourne

Chadwick, B.A et al. (1984). *Social Science Research Methods*. USA: Prentice-Hall

Chavuta, A., Itimu-Phiri, A.N, Chiwaya, S., Sikero, N and Alindiamo, G. (2008).
Montfort Special Needs Education College and Leonard Cheshire Disability International Inclusive Education Project Shire Highlands Education Division – Malawi. Baseline Study Report. Accessed on 18th October 2009 from:
http://www.eenet.org.uk/theory_practice/Malawi%20baseline%20study.pdf.

Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (1994). *Research Methods in Education*. (3rd ed). London: Routledge.

Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research Design*. (2nd ed). United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

Creswell, W.J (1998). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. London: Sage publications.

Demeuse, M., Crahay, M. and Monseur, C. (2001), “Efficiency and Equity”, in W. Hutmacher, D. Cochrane and N. Bottani (Eds.), *In Pursuit of Equity in Education – Using International Indicators to Compare Equity Policies*, Kluwer, Dordrecht.

Dunn, L.M. Ed. (1973). *Exceptional Children in Schools: Special Education In Transition*. New York: Winston Inc.

- Ellis, S., Tod, J. and Graham-Matheson, L. (2008) *Special Educational Needs and Inclusion: Reflection and Renewal*: Nasuwt. Accessed on 10th May, 2011 from: www.teachersunion.org.uk.
- Haddad, W.D. (1995). *Education Policy Planning Process: An Applied Framework*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Hallahan, D. P. and Kaufman, J.M (1991). *Exceptional Children: Introduction to Special Education*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Hauya, R. and Makuwira, J.J (1996). *Basic Education in Malawi: Objectives, Problems and Perspectives*. Blantyre: Dzuka Publishing Ltd.
- Hill, J. (2008). Equity Versus Equality? Accessed on 11th June , 2009 from: <http://mste.uiuc.edu/hill/papers/equity.html>.
- Howell, C. (2000). *Disability Students and Higher Education in South Africa*. Accessed on 26th June, 2010 from: www.hsrbpress.ac.za/downloadpdf.php?...%20Disabled%20Students%20and%20higher%20education%20in%20Sout...
- Jacklin,A., Robinson,C., O'Meara,L., and Harris,A. (2007). *Improving the Experience Of Disabled Students in Higher Education*. Accessed on 2nd June, 2011 from: www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/...jacklin.pdf
- Kaliwa, G. (2007). *Visually Impaired Children's Experiences With Special Segregated Schools In Malawi: A Case Of Chilanga School For The Blind*. Unpublished masters thesis Submitted to Bodø University College: Norway.
- Kar, C. (1992). *Exceptional Children: Their Psychology & Education*. Sterling Publications Ltd

- Kathleli, P., Marings, L., Phachaka, L. and Stubbs, S. (1995). Schools for all: National Planning in Lesotho. In O'Toole, B. and McConkey, R. (Eds), *Innovations in Developing Countries for People with Disabilities*. (pp 140 – 147). Lancashire: Lisieux Hall Publications.
- Kirk, S., Gallagher, J., and Anastasiow, N. (1993). *Educating Exceptional Children*. (7th ed). U.S.A: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Kothari, C.R. (2004). *Research Methodology, Methods and Techniques*. (2nd ed). New Delhi: New Age International Publishers.
- Kruguer, R.A. (1994). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Legard, S., and Tergesen, H, C, A. (2010). *Pathway for Disabled Students to Tertiary Education and Employment: Case Studies from Norway*. Accessed on 26th May, 2011 from: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/23/47469286.pdf>.
- Linden, L.P. (2006). *Theories Used in IS Research. Equity Theory*. Accessed on 20th June 2009 from: <http://www.istheory.yorku.ca/equitytheory.htm>.
- Loeb, M.E and Eide, A.H (Eds) (2004). *Living Conditions Among People with Activity Limitations in Malawi*. Norway: SINTEF Health Research institute.
- MacJessie-Mbewe, S. (2004). *Analysis of Complex Domain: Access to Secondary Education in Malawi*. Michigan: Proquest Information and Learning Company.
- Makoko, A. and Chimutu, P. (2007). *A Baseline Report on the Status Of Special Education in Malawi*. Unpublished report Submitted to the Catholic University of Malawi.

- Malawi Government. (2000). *The Constitution of The Republic of Malawi*. Zomba: Government print.
- Marriot, J. (2008). *Post-16 Education and Disabled Learners: A Guide For Schools Colleges and Information, Advice and Guidance Workers*. Accessed on 9th June, 2010 from: <http://www.adcet.edu.au/StoredFile.aspx?id=1775&fn=Post-16+Disabled+Learners.pdf>.
- Marshall C. and Rossman, G.B (1995) *Designing Qualitative Research*. (2nd ed.). California: SAGE publications
- McCarthy, M. (1998). Inclusion Of Children With Disabilities: Seeking the Appropriate Balance in *Educating Exceptional Children*. (12th ed). New York: McGraw Hill.
- McLaren, S.J and Kearney,D. (2009, Sep, 28- 30). Coming Ready or Not: A New Zealand Tertiary Institution Ready for Those With Significant Impairments?. *Double Blind PeerReviewed Proceedings of Making Inclusive Education Happen: Ideas for Sustainable Change*. Accessed on 10th May, 2011from: www.imaginebetter.co.nz/downloads/IE.../PR/13b_MclarenPR.pdf
- McMillan, J.H and Schumacher, S. (1997). *Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction*. (4th ed). Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishers.
- Mertens, D. and McLaughlin, J. (2004). *Research and Evaluation Methods in Special Education*. California: Corwin Press.
- Miles, M.B and Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications.
- Ministry of Education (2008). *Educational Statistics: Educational Management Information Systems*. Lilongwe: Ministry of Education.

- Ministry of Education (2008). *Special Needs Department Position Paper*. Lilongwe: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (2006). *Special Education Need Policy* (draft). Lilongwe: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (2000). *The Policy Investment Framework* (PIF). Lilongwe: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Social Development and Persons with Disabilities (2006). *National Policy on Equalisation Of Opportunities For Persons With Disabilities, Give Us A Chance*. Lilongwe: Ministry of Social Development and Persons with Disabilities.
- Msowoya, S (1999). *Formal Educational Opportunities for Learners with Special Needs in Malawi*. Unpublished masters thesis, University of Waikato, New Zealand.
- Ngosi, B.E.C (6th – 7th October, 1997). *Special Education in Malawi and Its Challenges*. A paper presented at a workshop on Malawi Integrated Education Program for Visually Impaired Children. Mangochi.
- Odendaal-Magwaza, M., and Farman, R. (1997). Unpublished Submission by the University of Natal to Education Portfolio Committee at the public hearing on Draft White Paper 3. *A Programme for Higher Education Transformation* at the National Assembly, Parliament, Cape Town, South Africa.
- OECD Education Policy Analysis. (2003). *Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity: Insights From Special Needs Provision*. Accessed on 10th March, 2010 from: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/30/26527517.pdf>.

- Peters, S. (2004). *Inclusive Education: An Education for All Strategy for All Children*. World Bank. Accessed on 19th June, 2010 from: siteresources.worldbank.org/.../InclusiveEdu_efa_strategy_for_children.pdf.
- Phillips, S and Clarke, A. (2010). *Pathway to Students with Disabilities to Tertiary Education and Employment Project: Case Studies Research*. Accessed on 10th May, 2011 from: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/21/47469308.pdf>.
- Piantanida, M. and Garman, N.B (1999). *The Qualitative Dissertation; A Guide for Students and Faculty*. California: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Pinnock, H. and Lewis, I. (2008). *Making Schools Inclusive: How Change Can Happen, Save The Children's Experience*. London: Save the Children's Fund.
- Price, Mayfield, McFadden and Marsh. (2000). *Collaborative Teaching: Special Education for Inclusive Classrooms*. Accessed on 26th January, 2010 from: http://www.parrotpublishing.com/Inclusion_Chapter_6.htm.
- Rifkin, S.B. and Kangere, M. (2002). What is Participation? In Hartley, S. (Ed), *CBR, A Participatory Strategy in Africa*. (pp37-49). London: University College London.
- Rossmann G.B and Rallis, S.F (2003). *Learning in the Field: an Introduction to Qualitative Research*. California: Sage Publications.
- Rustemier (2003) *Inclusive Education* in a paper for the Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education (CSIE). Accessed on 10th June, 2010 from: <http://www.questia.com/read/108957727?title=From%20Them%20to%20Us%3a%20An%20International%20Study%20of%20Inclusion%20in%20Education>.

Salmonsson, A. (2006) *Disability is not Inability*. Accessed on 16th November, 2008

From:

www.eenet.org.uk/theory_practice/disability%2520is%2520not%2520inability.doc+Salmonsson+-+disability+is+not+inability&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk

Saradenga, S. and Otis, P.T. (1991). *The Encyclopedia of Blindness and Vision Impairment*. NY: Facts on File.

Shah, S. (2008). *Young Disabled People: Aspirations, Choices and Constraints*.

Accessed on 14th June, 2009 from:

www.ashgate.com/default.aspx?page=637&calctitle=1&pagesubject=2914&title_id=9995&edition_id=11410.

Soko, D (2004). *What Malawi Can Learn From the Literature From Majority World Countries about the Implementation of Inclusive Education*. Unpublished masters thesis.

Suran, B and Rizzo, J. V. (1979). *Special Children: An Integrative Approach*. London: Scoot, Foresman and Company.

Thurnbull, A.P. and Schulz, J. B. (1979). *Mainstreaming Handicapped Students: A Guide for the Classroom Teacher*. London: Allyn and Bcon, Inc.

UNESCO (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. Accessed on 26th May, 2010 from:
www.unesco.co.org/education/pdf/SALAMA-E.PDF.France.

University Of Malawi (2007 – 2009). *University Of Malawi Calendar*. Zomba: University Office.

- Walcott, M. (2002). *Introduction to Children with Special Education Needs*. (2nd ed.) London: Hodder Arnold.
- Watson, S. (2003). *Special Education*. Accessed on 8th November, 2008 from <http://specialed.about.com/od/idea/a/special101.htm>.
- Wearmouth, J. (2000). *Special Educational Provisions; Meeting the Challenges in Schools*. London: The Open University.
- Weiss, C.M. (1998). *Evaluation*. (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Winzer, M. (2005). *Children with Exceptionalities in Canadian classrooms*. (7th ed.). Toronto: Pearson Education Canada Inc.
- World Bank Report (2006). *Equity and Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Worthen, B.R and Sanders, J.R. (1987). *Educational Evaluation: Alternative Approaches and Practical Guidelines*. New York: Longman
- Zimpita, V. T. (2008) *Equity and Special Education; the Case of the Visually Impaired and Their Involvement in Physical Education and Sporting Activities*. Unpublished masters thesis, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, Zomba.
- Zuriff , G.E. (2000). *Extra Examination Time for Students with Learning Disabilities: An Examination of the Maximum Potential Thesis*. *Applied Measurement in Education*, 13(1), 99 – 117.

APPENDIX 1: INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO EVERY PARTICIPANT

Dear Participant,

My name is Flossie, Albertina Kamulaga. I am a 2nd year Master of Education (Sociology of Education) student at Chancellor College.

You have been selected to participate in this study. The Purpose of this study is to investigate whether learners with special needs are equitably treated as they participate in education at the University of Malawi.

The information you will give as you participate in this interview will be vital and valuable. I will therefore be very grateful if you answer the questions honestly and carefully.

The answers you give to the questions will be confidential. To ensure confidentiality, please do not disclose your name during this interview. You have a right not to respond to the items you feel uncomfortable with. Where the questions are not clear, please feel free to ask me for clarification.

Finally, I would like to thank you for sparing your time to participate in this study.

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND MONTH OF INTERVIEW

November, 2008

2 Ministry of Education (Special Needs Department) Officials
Administrator from Poly and COM
2 Lecturers from Poly
Madalo (HI respondent from Poly)

December 2008

Administrator from KCN and Bunda
2 Lecturers from KCN
Mercy (Partially VI learner from KCN)

January 2009

Administrator from Chanco
2 Lecturers from Chanco
Tadala (HI learner Chanco)
Chimwemwe (HI learner Chanco)
Peter (VI learner from Chanco)
Zikomo (VI learner from Chanco)
James (VI learner from Chanco)
Dalitso (VI learner from Chanco)
Paul (VI learner from Chanco)
2 special needs assistants for VI learners (Chanco)
1 special needs assistant for HI learners (Chanco)

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (LSNs)

College:
Program:
Year:

Date:
Time:

Sex:

Age:

Type of Disability:

A. Provision of Resources

- 1) How was your first day at the College?
- 2) What was your first semester like?
- 3) How accessible are the college buildings?
- 4) How do you get around the college?
- 5) How easy or difficult is it for you to get around the college?
- 6) Given a chance, would you improve / change any infrastructure in the college?

If No, Skip 7 and go to 8

- 7) How would you change it and why?
- 8) Does the College/ University provide you with any adequate special learning aids?
- 9) If yes, what are they and how useful are they to you.
- 10) Are there any people at the college specially assigned to assist you?

If no, skip to 12

- 11) At what times are they available and how do they assist?

B. Guidance in Course Selection

- 12) How did you make the decision to go to University/ what inspired you?
- 13) When were you selected into the University?
- 14) Were the institutions courses and procedures clear and well explained to you before or during enrollment? If yes, how were they explained? Who explained them to you? If no, why not?
- 15) Are you pursuing the program of your choice?
- 16) How did you choose this program?
- 17) What courses are you taking?
- 18) What sort of support does the University/ your college provided to Learners with Special Needs during course selection?

C. Classroom Activities

- 19) Explain your first learning day at the University.
- 20) What support is made available to you during lectures?
- 21) How does the teaching process in the classroom take account of your situation?

D. Examinations

- 22) How do you cope or manage with the assignments for continuous assessment?
- 23) How are the tests and examinations administered to you?
- 24) What special considerations do you get during tests and examinations?

F. Educational Participation

- 25) What changes do you feel should be made to maximize your educational participation in the college?

Do you have any questions or comments?

Thank You for Participating In This Interview.

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS

College:
Position:
Sex:

Date:
Time:

A. Provision of Resources

- 1) What is the current entry rate for learners with special needs into your college?
- 2) How friendly are the infrastructures to learners with special needs at your college?
- 3) How is support for learners with special needs organized in your college?
- 4) Do you have specially qualified people to support the learners with special needs at your college? If yes, what support do they give? If no, why not?
- 5) Explain how adequate the support provided is considering the number of LSN in your college?

B. Guidance In Course Selection

- 6) Which courses are common among LSN in your college? Why are these courses common?
- 7) Which courses are commonly not taken? Why not?
- 8) What information do you provide LSN before they select courses?
- 9) What information do you think LSN need to know more about as they select their courses?

C. Classroom Activities

- 10) Are there any special provisions made for LSN during lectures?

11) Are the lecturers at your college trained in teaching LSN? If yes, how are they trained? If no, why not?

12) How do lecturers become aware of LSN in their classes?

D. Examinations

13) Is there any special mode of continuous assessment used for LSN at your college?

14) How are LSN considered during examinations and tests?

E. Educational Participation

15) What are some of the common queries LSNs come with to your office?

16) How do you assist them?

17) How do the LSN have access to the college rules and regulations?

18) What has your office done to maximize the educational participation of LSNs at your college?

19) What else do you think should be done in order to improve LSN's participation in the University education here?

Do you have any questions or comments?

Thank you for participating in this study.

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LECTURERS

Department:
Subject (s):
Sex:

Date:
Time:

A. Classroom Activities

- 1) How many years have you been lecturing here?
- 2) How many learners with special needs have you lectured since?
- 3) How many do you currently lecture?
- 4) How did you find out you had LSN in your classroom?
- 5) Did you have/ have you ever had any communication from the administration about the availability of LSN in your class? If yes, how do they communicate? If no, why not?
- 6) Have you ever attended any training on how to teach LSN?
- 7) What support do you personally offer them during lectures?

B. Examinations

- 8) Do you have any special arrangements for LSN during the end of semester/year examinations or classroom assignments? If yes, what are the arrangements? If no, why not?
- 9) How about when administering them?

C. Educational Participation

- 10) Explain the sort of support the college should offer LSN in order to enhance their educational participation.
- 11) How can lecturers themselves support LSN for them to participate fully in University education?

Do you have any questions or comments?

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY.

APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW GUIDES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS

College:

Sex:

Date:

Time:

A. Provision of Resources

- 1) How long have you worked as a Special Needs Assistant in the University?
- 2) Who is your immediate employer?
- 3) Explain in detail what you are required to do as a Special Needs assistant.
- 4) Does the College/ University provide adequate special learning aids for LSN?
- 5) If yes, what are they and how useful are they to you as assistants.
- 6) How accessible do you think the college buildings are for LSN?

B. Guidance in Course Selection

- 7) As special needs assistants, are you involved in any way in the Program and Course selection process of the LSN?

C. Examinations & Classroom activities

- 8) How are you involved during the classroom and examination process?

E. Educational Participation

- 9) What changes do you feel should be made to maximize the educational participation of LSN in the college?

Any Questions or Comments?

Thank You for Participating in This Study

**APPENDIX 7: INTERVIEW GUIDES FOR MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
OFFICIALS (SNE DEPARTMENT)**

Position:

Date:

Sex:

Time:

A. Guidance In Course Selection

- 1) What support does your ministry offer to LSN at the University of Malawi?
- 2) How does your Ministry help LSN before they enter into University?

B. Educational Participation

- 3) What measures has your office put in place to ensure maximum participation of LSN at the University of Malawi?
- 4) How do you make sure these measures are effected in the colleges?
- 5) Explain your views on the infrastructure within the colleges of the University of Malawi in relation to LSN?

Do you have any questions?

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY.

APPENDIX 8: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Provision of Resources

- 1) How accessible are the college buildings?
- 2) How easy or difficult is it for you to get around the college?
- 3) Does the college provide you with any special learning aids?
- 4) How adequate, useful/helpful are they to you?
- 5) Are there any specially trained people assigned to assist you?
- 6) What sort of assistance do they give and how effective is this?

Guidance in Course Selection

- 7) How were the institutions courses and procedures explained to you?
- 8) Did you receive any assistance during course selection? If yes, from who and how did they assist? If no, why not?

Classroom Activities

- 9) How does the teaching process in the classroom take account of your situation?

Examinations

- 10) What special considerations do you get during tests and examinations?
- 11) What other ideas can you suggest to make the examination and testing process easier for you?

Educational Participation

- 12) What do you think should/ can be done to improve your participation in University education?

Are there any questions or comments?

Thank you for participating.

APPENDIX 9: OBSERVATION GUIDE

Provision of Resources (special teaching and learning resources/aids, infrastructure)

- 1) What sort of teaching and learning materials were provided for LSNs by the College?
- 2) Identify all the infrastructure in each College.
- 3) How accessible are the hostels, teaching area buildings and the cafeteria to LSNs?
- 4) What is the situation with the sports facilities?

APPENDIX 10: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

Department of Educational Foundations

PRINCIPAL

Emmanuel Fabiano, B.Ed., MSc., Ph.D.

P. O. Box 280, Zomba, MALAWI

Tel: (265) 01 522 222

Telex: 44742 CHANCOL MI

Our Ref.: Edf/6/19

Fax: (265) 01 522 046

Your Ref.:

Email: edf@chanco.unima.mw.

25th November, 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

INTRODUCING FLOSSIE KAMULAGA

I have the pleasure to introduce to you Flossie Kamulaga, our M.Ed student in the faculty of Education. To fulfill some of the requirements for the program, Flossie is investigating equity in educational participation for learners with special needs in University of Malawi. She is now required to collect data for her thesis. I, therefore, write to kindly ask for your support towards her study as she collects the data and related literature.

I thank you in anticipation for your cooperation and support.



Dr. Bob Wajizigha Chulu

Lecturer in Psychometrics & Head, Educational Foundations Department