

**EXPLORATION OF FACTORS HINDERING CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION
OF LEARNERS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT: THE CASE OF BLANTYRE
URBAN**

M.Ed. (PRIMARY- EDUCATION FOUNDATIONS) THESIS

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**UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI
CHANCELLOR COLLEGE**

NOVEMBER, 2016

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By

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of Master of Education (Primary-Education Foundations)

**UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI
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NOVEMBER, 2016

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used acknowledgement has been made.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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I dedicate this work to Joan A.C. Kalawa and Penjani L. Masanjala and all learners with hearing impairment in all primary schools in Malawi.

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ABSTRACT

Despite schools practicing inclusion, gaps are evident in its implementation in regular primary schools in Malawi. The study aimed at exploring factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with hearing impairment (HI) in two selected regular primary schools of Ndirande Zone in Blantyre Urban. It was a case study and used qualitative methodology. The sample consisted of 26 participants who included headteachers, regular teachers, learners with HI and learners without HI. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and lesson observations. Qualitative data was analysed thematically. The findings revealed that classroom participation of learners with HI is hindered by some school factors such as: communication breakdown between the learners with HI and their teachers, class size that is numbers of learners per class, time allocation per lesson, teaching, learning and assessment resources availability, attitudes of teachers, parents and learners without HI towards learners with HI, knowledge and skills on how to teach learners with HI, teaching, learning and assessment methods suitable for learners with HI, seating arrangement in the classroom and sign language interpreters availability. It was concluded that the learners with HI fail to participate and they perform poorly due to the factors mentioned above. The implication of findings was that lack of knowledge and skills to communicate with learners with HI affect their participation. The study recommends the Ministry of Education to support fully learners with HI in regular schools.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
dB	Decibel
DEM	District Education Manager
DTED	Department of Teacher Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HH	Hard of Hearing
HI	Hearing Impairment
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
PEA	Primary Education Advisor
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SNE	Special Needs Education
TTC	Teacher Training College
UNESCO	United Nation Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter overview

This chapter discusses the background to the study, the historical perspective of the education of children with hearing impairment (HI), those that are deaf and hard of hearing in Malawi, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study and significance of the study. It also defines some terms that were used in the study.

1.1 Background to the study

Internationally, estimates for the number of children with special educational needs (SEN) have increased dramatically in recent decades (Banks & McCoy, 2011). According to report commissioned by National Council for Special Education (NCSE) of 2011 the policy trend towards inclusive education has broadening the definition of (SEN), greatly effecting prevalence estimates. Prevalence of learners with special education needs range from less than 1% in some countries to more than 20% in others. In Iceland and Finland, for example, estimates range from 15% and 17.8% respectively compared to 0.9% and 1.5% in Greece and Italy (NCSE, 2011).

The report on inclusion in education for children by UNICEF (2015) indicates that the national statistics office in Malawi estimates a prevalence of childhood disability of 2.4%. However, these figures are believed to be low, as the definition of disability used in the census was not in line with the World Health Organisations' international classification of disability and Health. By these estimates, the most common type of disability was listed as hearing impairment at 23%. In addition, a study conducted by Education Management Information System (EMIS) in 2013, indicated that there were about 90,089 learners with special needs in Malawi. Amongst these, 21,939 learners are with hearing loss. This number, however, did not specify learners who were in inclusive settings or in special schools but it is obvious that the number of learners with HI in Malawi has increased.

It is also obvious that the number of learners with HI in inclusive schools has increased due to limited space in special schools. The EMIS report of 2012/ 2013 indicates that there were 88 learners with HI in Blantyre Urban while the 2015 education sector performance report according to educational division indicates that South West division where Blantyre Urban is, had 2,793 learners with HI. Looking at the report of 2015 and that of 2013 it is clear that the number of learners with HI is increasing drastically.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly 1948, Article 26) stipulates that, everyone has the right to education. Furthermore, the Convention on The Rights of the Child (1989) article 23 states that, State Parties should recognize the

right of the child with challenges. They should ensure that, he/she gets effective access to and receives education, among other social services, in a manner conducive to the child's achievement of the fullest social integration.

In addition, the Salamanca statement (UNESCO 1994) reaffirms the right to education of every child. UNESCO (2008) noted that education offers hope and a promise of a better life. It also expands opportunities, prosperity, democracy and social justice. The changing perceptions have led to the emergence of inclusive education. Carreiro (2003) asserts that, inclusive education means that all students in school regardless of their strengths, weakness or disabilities in any area become part of the school community. Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC, 2005) states that government shall promote, and facilitate education to disadvantaged social and cultural groups. It also states that, primary education shall be universal. Furthermore, Malawi Disability Act (2012) notes that, the government shall ensure that public institutions provide services to people with challenges in the same manner as they provide to the non-challenged except where necessary.

On participation rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006) recognised that, disability results from the interaction between person with impairments and attitudinal and barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. And those persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in their participation as equal members of the society. The Convention

makes participation of those with disability one of its principles, stating that the principles of the present convention shall be full and effective participation and inclusion in society subsequently enshrining the right of those with disability to participate fully and equally in education, community and all aspects of life.

Stubbs (2002) emphasized that it is not enough to include learners with disabilities into an existing rigid system or it is not about adapting a learner to the system, but adapting the system to all learners. According to Ministry of Education Science and Technology-MoEST (2015), in Malawi, most aged children with HI are now in regular or special school classes.

1.1.1 Historical perspective of the education of children with HI in Malawi

According to Montfort Special Needs College (2012), the education of learners with HI started in Malawi as a direct influence of Dutch brothers from Holland. Late Brother Hortensius Meews was the one who brought the idea of education of learners with HI in Malawi. He came to Malawi in 1963. He was a specialist teacher, teacher trainer, dedicated Audiologist, speech therapist and Mathematician. His vision was to establish a centre with dual purpose of teaching children and train teachers for learners with HI. In 1967, late Bro Hortensius was inspired by John Chadwick; the director of the Commonwealth Foundation start education for the learners with HI. In 1967, the commonwealth donated 750 pounds to late Bro Hortensius to go to England to facilitate his plans on education for the learners with HI. The Ministry of Education (MoE) became

an interested partner in such a development and advised that the emphasis should be on training local teachers for the education of learners with HI at basic level (Montfort Special Needs College, 2012).

Late Bro Hortensius began teaching the learners with HI in 1968 using temporary quarters at Montfort TTC adapted for the purpose. The education programme for Montfort and its associated schools that deals with children with HI therefore consists instructional techniques such as: speech reading, sound training, speech training and language development. Furthermore Montfort Special Needs College (2012) explains that late Bro Hortensius commenced clinical sessions at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital.

In addition, Montfort Special Needs Education (2012) indicates that three other special education schools were subsequently opened for children with HI in different regions of the country. ‘Mua’ in the Central Region of Malawi was opened in 1986, ‘Embangweni’ opened in 1996, in the Northern Region, and ‘Mountain view’ in 1997 in the Southern Region. All these are residential schools which provide education for both boys and girls for the age range of six to twenty years. The intake of each school is low, typically only twelve to fifteen children of six to nine years of age per academic year. These special education schools are divided into two stages, pre-school and main or primary schools. Children start their education at the pre-school stage and have four classes, pre-school one to four.

This is where children who have profound hearing loss and have delayed language development learn to produce sound, a process referred to as vocalisation, as these schools follow an oral method of teaching except Embangweni School. At the pre-school stage, there are usually about six teachers, of whom four are class teachers and two speech therapists. At the main or primary school, there are classes from standard one to standard eight, and each class usually has twelve to fifteen children.

The schools follow the national primary school curriculum. This primary school course takes learners with HI a maximum of fourteen years to complete as they repeat other classes depending on their ability in vocabulary acquisition. Each class is allocated to one teacher and there are also two speech therapists concentrating on the words identified by the class teacher which are difficult for the children to pronounce.

Montfort Special Needs College (2012) indicates that, the training of specialist teachers for learners with HI takes place at Montfort Special Needs College for the duration of two years. Student teachers graduate with a diploma. The College also trains specialist teachers for learners with visual impairment and specialist teacher for learners with learning difficulties. The in-take of student teachers for learners with HI course varies in each academic year and ranges from thirty to forty students. There are about ten lecturers teaching the students in the hearing impairment department. The student teachers of learner HI do their teaching practice at Mary-view School for Children with H I which acts as a demonstration institution. In the vicinity of Mary-view, about 200 metres away,

there is Montfort Demonstration School for training teachers of learners HI in the mainstream or ordinary schools. Mary-view School for Children with HI and Montfort Demonstration School also provide inclusive education by including some learners with HI into their academic classes.

This inclusion of learners with HI is supported by Gregory (2010) who noted that, there have always been a significant number of children with mild hearing loss, who have enjoyed mainstream school education. This inclusion is also being practiced in some regular primary schools in Malawi.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite schools practicing inclusive education, gaps are evident in its implementation in regular primary schools in Malawi. According to Chavuta, Itimu, Chiwaya, Sikero and Alindiamao (2008), many learners with HI are not benefiting from inclusive education in majority of regular primary schools in Malawi since they do not participate fully in classroom activities. Many studies have been conducted at different levels including special schools and units about education of learners with visual impairment in specific and with special educational needs in general. However, the researcher did not find any study on factors hindering classroom participation of learners with HI in regular primary schools of Malawi which leads to their poor academic performances. It is critical to understand such factors because it would assist in the implementation of inclusion of learners with HI. This study therefore explores factors hindering classroom participation

of learners with HI in selected regular primary schools of Ndirande zone in Blantyre Urban.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI.

1.4 Research questions

The study was guided by the following main research question and its sub-questions:

1.4.1 Main question

What are the factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI?

1.4.2 Sub questions

To explore the factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI, the study further had the following sub questions:

- What factors affect classroom participation of learners with HI in inclusive setting?
- What factors hinder the teachers in inclusive setting to involve learners with HI in classroom activities?
- How do teachers address the challenges faced by learners with HI in class?

1.5 Significance of the study

The findings of the study has contributed to knowledge because it has unveiled the factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI and factors that hinder teachers to involve learner with HI in inclusive setting. Furthermore, it has provided ways and means of addressing such factors which will help in improving the participation of learners with HI in classrooms.

Secondly, the findings of this study has also helped the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in formulation of future education policies aimed at maintaining standards in order to enable a learner with HI benefit from education. Furthermore, the teacher training colleges (TTCs) and other stakeholders may also benefit from the study to know what they are supposed to include in their curriculum in terms of special needs education (SNE).

Lastly, the findings would inform the teachers in the context of practice so that they should include all the learners in the teaching and learning process, assisting all the learners including those with HI for them to reach their full potential in education.

1.6 Definition of Terms

In order for the reader to fully understand this study, it was necessary to define the key terms and relevant concepts that were utilised throughout the study.

Decibels: These are a unit used in measuring the level of hearing loss in a learner with HI (Muiti, 2010).

Deaf: It refers to someone whose hearing disability is so severe that it precludes successful processing of linguistic information through auditions, with or without a hearing aid (Ayiela, 2012 p.9). It is also defined by UNESCO (2000), as one who gets little help from sound, or do not hear anything at all. The “deafness” is often referred to as “severe” or “profound”. All these definitions are applicable in this study, because the learners in this study have similar characteristics as stipulated in the definitions above.

Disability: It is defined as any restriction or lack, resulting from impairment, of ability to perform any activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being (Carson, 2009, p.7). It denotes the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and the individuals’ contextual factors (environmental and personal factors). With respect to the above definitions, it can be deduced that while learners with HI have hearing loss, it is not their hearing loss that creates disability but the way in which society responds to their impairment.

Hearing Aid: It is a device which amplifies and shape incoming sounds to make them audible to the person with HI. The amplification device “is tuned specifically to suit the person’s degree of hearing loss” (Mahshie, Moseley, Scott & Lee, 2006, p.347).

According to Hallahan and Kauffman (2006 cited in Skrebneva, 2010, p.25), “there are three main types of hearing aids: those worn behind the ear, those worn inside the ear, and those inserted farther down in the canal of the ear. The behind-the-ear hearing aid is the most powerful and is therefore used by those with the most severe hearing loss”.

Hearing Impairment: Hearing impairment is a generic term that is preferred when one has a hearing loss that may be mild, moderate, severe or profound. It is especially used in educational setting (Ayuela, 2012, p.5). There are many definitions of the concept of Hearing Impairment (HI). The term has been defined by the World Health Organization (2015), as the loss of hearing in one or both ears. According to Action on Hearing Loss (2015), the level of impairment can be mild which is 25-39 decibels (dB), moderate 40-69decibels (dB), severe 70- 94 decibels(dB) and profound 95 decibels (dB). These definitions indicate that one has to be tested to know his or her level of hearing loss.

In this context of the study, HI encompasses the terms Deaf (D) and Hard of Hearing (HH). Stedman (2000), defines D as HI that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, which adversely affects educational performance while HH is defined as HI, whether permanent or fluctuating which adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The hard of hearing is being defined as those children with moderate hearing losses who are still able to understand readily fluent speech through hearing whether or not amplification is used. According to Mpofu, Chimhenga and Mafa (2013), a learner who is HH may have speech

impairment due to the inability to hear his or her own voice clearly. While a learner who is D may have little or no speech depending on the severity of the hearing loss and the age of onset.

Inclusion: It refers “to the philosophy of including learners with special needs in mainstream primary schools” (M’rithi, 2014, p.12). Farrell & Ainscow (2002, p.3) describes it “as a process in which schools, communities, local authorities and government strive to reduce barriers to participation and learning for all citizens”. The idea is to bring different perspectives in the definition of inclusion). This is a goal that all participants in any society should aim at achieving to ensure that all persons regardless of their racial, economic, and physical or any difference are not excluded from any of the society’s activities (Musengi and Chiresi, 2012). This calls for equal opportunities and accessibility to all resources, services and responsibilities. The full and equal participation of each individual is assured in an inclusive society in which differences is respected and valued. Inclusion should start from the beginning of life rather than having the individual segregated first and the later brought back into the mainstream of society. This is when schools accommodate all learners/ students regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional linguistic or other needs. It is seen as a step further towards the normalization of children with challenges in the education system. In this study therefore inclusion has been used to mean school for all types of children.

Inclusive Education: It refers to “the broadening of opportunities for children with challenges and marginalized groups so as to bring out their full potential” (Mlay, 2010, p. 7). It is about enabling schools to serve all children. It has its particular focus on “challenged children and those with special educational needs who have been traditionally excluded from mainstream educational opportunities” (UNESCO, 2007, p.16). Chavuta, Itimu, Ciwaya, Sikero and Alindimao (2008) define inclusive education “as a learning environment that provides access, accommodation and support to all learners”. For the purpose of this study, inclusive education stands for education that caters for all learners despite their condition because schools in which this study was carried out accommodate all learners despite their condition.

Inclusive Setting: Inclusive setting describes a situation where all learners including those with special needs participate in all activities in a community that recognizes and addresses the needs of each learner as much as possible (Mlay, 2010, p. 7).

Regular/ Mainstream School: These refer to the public school which follows the curriculum that is prepared for the average ability learners (Mndolwa, 2010).

Special Needs: These are conditions or factors that hinder normal learning and development for individuals.

This is general term that refers to conditions, barriers or factors that hinder normal learning of an individual child who needs some form of extra help and assistance. These conditions may include physical challenges, social challenges, emotional challenges, health difficulties or giftedness (M'rithi, 2014).

Special School: These are “schools that have individually planned and systematically monitored arrangements of physical settings, special equipment and materials, teaching procedures and other interventions designed to help exceptional children achieve the greatest possible self-sufficiency and academic success” (Ayuela, 2012, p.10). In Malawi these are schools set up to serve categories of challenges usually by charitable organizations like churches. In this study special schools refer to those that are for children with learning problems, for example, visual problems, hearing problems and mental retardation among others.

Specialist teachers: These are teachers who work in special or ordinary schools with particular responsibilities for children with special needs. They usually have attained extra training for taking care of learners with special needs in education (Mndolwa, 2010, p.17).

Special Units/ Classes: These refer to “a classroom that is located in a regular school, but is set aside for educating learners with specific type of disability”. It is usually manned by a specialist teacher who is responsible for most of the learners’ activities.

These are classrooms that are attached to a regular school but set aside for teaching learners with specific types of challenges. These learners may receive some or all of their teaching in the unit (Dukmak, 2013, p.64).

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the background of the study, the historical perspective of the education of the children with HI in Malawi, and statement of the problem that prompted the study, its purpose as well as the research questions which the study tried to answer. Furthermore, the chapter included the significance of the study and introduced the theoretical framework that guided the study and definitions of terms were presented. The next chapter is the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter overview

The chapter presents the literature and studies that were reviewed in relation to participation of learners with HI in mainstream classes. The review is divided into sections. The sections are based on the main themes from the research questions and the emerging themes as: factors affecting classroom participation of learners with HI in inclusive setting; factors hindering the teachers in inclusive setting to involve learners with HI in classroom activities; and how teachers address challenges faced by learners with HI in inclusive classroom. It also presents the theoretical framework that guided the study.

2.1 Literature review

The literature related to factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI was reviewed. The review was divided into the following sections: factors affecting classroom participation of learners with HI, Factors that hinder teachers in inclusive

setting to include learners with HI in classroom activities and how teachers address challenges faced by learners with HI.

2.1.1 Factors affecting classroom participation of learners with HI in inclusive setting

Reed (2004) asserts that learners with HI are likely to succeed in regular education classroom if they receive target support services in the classroom. It is clear therefore, that while learners with HI are included in regular classroom they need to be supported to participate in the learning. However, there are some factors that affect the participation of learners with HI in these classrooms. Studies conducted in different countries have revealed this. Braswell-Burris (2010) in his study trying to find out factors that affect the educational and personal success of Deaf (D) or Hard of Hearing (HH) individuals in California noted that learners face language barriers that prevent them from participation. Muiti (2010) also in her study in Kenya said that there is communication breakdown between teachers and the learners with HI. This was due to the fact that there are two languages that the learner with HI is exposed to at one time, sign language and the oral language. In addition, in his study Ayiela (2012) trying to find out factors affecting performance of learners with HI in Kenya, again found that developing an effective communication system is often the greatest challenge a learner with HI face, and it is also the most important area for support team to work on.

On the other hand, the findings of Awori (2003) on participation of learners with HI in Kenyas' regular schools indicated that if a child with HI perceives his or her socialization as inadequate and social ability as poor, effective interaction is not likely to take place.

And Schimer (2001) quoted Hart and Gonzalez (1998) revealing that children with HI often feel uneasy about communicating with peers without HI and that uneasiness exhibits them from communicating and makes them feel that the interaction is less satisfactory. These findings revealed that children with HI are less able to express their aggressiveness. Instead, they choose to be quiet or withdraw.

Furthermore, Skrebneva (2010) in South Africa, noted that one of the challenges faced by a learner with HI is the issue of reading and oral comprehension, which is often hampered by their limited vocabulary. Learners with HI often use local contexts in the text to guess the meaning of the words, rather than consider the full context of the text. They show a tendency to miss some of the information and misunderstand some of it, so that ultimately they have to depend on vision to a greater extent than hearing. They struggle to understand oral instructions. In addition Safder, Akhtar, Ghulam and Misbahm (2012) in Pakistan also noted that students with HI lag behind in academics as compared to their counterparts with visual impairment and physical disabilities on account of their problems in communication, socialization, curriculum adaptations and modification and above all sign language interpretation.

The findings from the above studies suggest that communication is the key to all learning and access for the learners. The social model of disability indicates that all barriers should be removed so that learners with HI participate in classroom activities.

It is therefore the duty of the teachers to make sure that language and communication is not a barrier when it comes to learning of the learners with HI.

2.1.2 Factors hindering the teachers to involve learners with HI in inclusive setting

Adoyo (2008) suggests more key teaching adaptations for learners with HI. These include adapting the regular classroom materials, for example, text books, planning assignment and activities that allow mainstreamed learners with HI to be successful.

A study on the academic and social inclusion of students in mainstream schools in Greece, conducted by Groumpos and Lampropoulou (2003) revealed that lack of communication skills leads to low academic performance. In addition, Musengi and Chiresi (2012) in their study on inclusion of the of students with HI in mainstream rural primary schools in Zimbabwe, found out that the teachers were dissatisfied with the material resources that were available as they say that they were not conducive to learning, for example, the hearing aids. However, the situation in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe simply suggest that learners with HI are denied the necessary resources for their learning and this makes it hard for teachers to teach such learners. The social model of disability argues along economic and environmental perspective. Resources are supposed to be provided to learners for their learning to be effective. The department of

education in Malawi should make sure that all learners in the inclusive setting have enough and relevant resources that they need for their learning.

Njoroge (2007) did his study in Kenya on challenges facing the teachers that handle learners with special needs. The data revealed that, the biggest problem was that many parents/guardians of learners with HI are in a denial state about their children's state. They did not fully accept that their child is a special case and that the child needs special education. Due to the denial by parents it was noted that there is no collaboration between teachers and the parents. He also found out that salaries and allowances together with understaffing in schools were part of the problems the teachers faced. This caused low morale and motivation. His study also revealed that, the government of Kenya did not allocate enough funds for assisting the special education programme. However, he also found out that, the success of the special education programme was rated fair, which indicated that things are changing for the better in matters of special education in Kenya.

Furthermore, Muwana (2012) study on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion indicates mixed attitudes. In her study, she reported that some findings reveal positive teacher attitudes towards inclusion. Similarly, other researchers, for example Gudyanga, Wadesango and Gudyanga (2014), found that teachers have negative attitudes towards inclusion in Zimbabwe primary schools. Additionally, a few researches indicated that teachers have uncertain or neutral attitude towards inclusion. Teachers' attitude towards

inclusion is critical factor in the participation of learners with HI. Only teachers who have positive attitude will include learners with HI. The social model of disability demonstrates that teachers need to change their perception towards learners with disabilities to accommodate them in learning.

A study conducted by Banks, Zuurmond and Ngwira (2015) indicates that one of the barriers to inclusion in Malawi is class size. Teachers often lack the capacity to provide any individual attention to learners. Although the maximum class size under Malawi policy is 60 learners per teacher, almost all teachers had well over 100 learners in a single class where the study took place. Consequently, few learners with HI were receiving the support they needed in the classroom.

From the findings of the above study it can be concluded that, lack of communication, skills, knowledge gap, class size, material resources and attitude of teachers and parents contribute to low class participation and academic performance of learners with HI. It may be also concluded that there is need for support from the government to provide these classroom materials and also making sure that the teachers have the knowledge and skills required for the adaptation and planning of these activities.

2.1.3 How teachers address challenges faced by learners with HI in inclusive classroom

While learners with HI faces a lot of challenges in inclusive classroom they still need to be educated as any other learner. Teachers need to find ways of accommodating learners with HI in their classes. Some studies that have already been conducted on how to accommodate learners with HI have come up with suggested strategies on teaching learners with HI in an inclusive setting.

According to Millet (2009) preferential seating is always a key component to any list of strategies provided to teachers to facilitate understanding in the classroom for learners with HI. His study clearly indicated the effects of distance on speech perception in classrooms and underscored the need to consider where the learners with HI are seated in the classroom.

In addition, Pottas (2005) noted that it is important that the teachers realise that communication is not an isolated (sensory) skill but that it involves the entire child, including expressive and receptive language systems, speech production and higher level linguistic skills of reading and writing. Pottas (2005) adds that an effective inclusive program requires that the teacher to recognise communication as the core program. Therefore there is need for those teachers to provide a language – rich environment and communication with hearing peers.

In conclusion, learners with HI cannot just be included in regular primary schools without better planning and understanding of the challenges that they and the teachers face. It may be difficult to include them. However the researcher tends to believe that it is possible to include learners with HI in regular schools of Malawi, and see them participate and perform well if the direction is worked out well like what some developed countries like America have done to include the learners with HI fully and not physically.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Two main disability models which are frequently discussed are medical model of disability and social model of disability. According to Carson (2009), through the medical model of disability, disability is understood as an individual problem.

If somebody has an impairment like, a visual, mobility or hearing impairment, for example, in ability to see, walk or hear is understood as their disability; hence the disability being regarded as, “a typical personal tragedy”(M’rithi, 2014).

This study did not adopt the medical model of disability because it encourages segregation of learners with disability making them fail to receive the interventions they need. Chilemba (2011) indicated that according to the medical model of disability, the education of children with disabilities is not perceived as a human right issue. Hence, it is considered that the provision of primary education to children with disabilities based on medical model of disability would emphasize segregated education as the state would not feel obliged to ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream society.

The study therefore adopted the social model of disability whose originator is Mike Oliver (1983). The social model of disability suggests that it is the society that causes individuals with physical or psychological differences to be disabled. Individuals with impairments are not disabled by their impairment but rather due to the barriers that exist in society which do not take into account their needs (Chilemba, 2011). These barriers can be divided into three categories; environmental, economical and cultural. The social model of disability postulates that the environment disables people with impairments by not being accessible enough for them to move, function and communicate as effectively as people without impairments.

According to M'rithi (2014), a great deal of the environment is designed by people without impairment. For example, a learner with HI is only disabled if the classroom environment is not designed for people with HI. The social model of disability proposes that a friendly building for learners with hearing loss would include acoustic walls, lights and amplification systems. These are the same modifications that are required in schools for inclusive setting.

The model further argues along economic perspective. The model posits that people can be disabled by lack of resources to meet their needs. Economically therefore, the society does not provide the same opportunities to people with HI and this actually starts at school and continues throughout one's career (ibid). For instance at school, lessons are

designed for learners without HI using environments, material resources and teaching methods that are not suitable for learners with HI (M'rithi, 2014).

Furthermore, M'rithi (2014) indicates that on the cultural dimension the social model of disability postulates that society lets people with impairments down because of the prejudiced views and negative shared attitudes of the community towards people with physical and psychological impairments. Prejudice is associated with the belief that people with HI are not seen as normal by people without HI. Prejudice is evident in language and the terminologies used to describe people with HI (Carson, 2009). The social model of disability can be applied in education along cultural lines.

The teachers perceive the learners with HI as abnormal and that these learners can only benefit in special schools as opposed to mainstream setting. This is wrong perception because learners with HI and those without HI both benefit in an inclusive setting. Winter (2003) argues that people with disabilities should be empowered, not oppressed, and included, not marginalised.

M'rithi (2014) emphasised that the social model of disability demonstrates that schools need to improve on various factors in order to accommodate learners with special needs. To facilitate inclusion learners with special needs require friendly physical facilities such as ramps, adapted furniture, wheelchairs, spacious classrooms and levelled playgrounds, adapted material resources such as Braille, large print text books, hearing aids etcetera. If

the physical facilities and material resources are modified, there is likelihood of realizing more inclusion of learners with HI in regular primary schools. Teachers also need to change their negative perceptions towards learners with HI. They also need to undertake refresher courses on special education and inclusion to add more knowledge and skills on how to handle inclusive education practices.

In Malawi, the social model of disability influenced a change on policy towards viewing disability as a cross- cutting and human right issue as Kamchedzera (2010) noted in Ministry of Education (2006, 2007).

As a cross – cutting issue, disability cuts across all sectors such as education, economics and gender among others. As a human right issue, the policy advocates the right to education for children with disabilities.

According to Chilemba (2011), social model of disability advocates for inclusion of children with disabilities in the society, it will inevitably emphasize inclusive education, especially the inclusive schools approach, since the mainstream schools would be adjusted to accommodate all children including those with HI. Chilemba also noted in Combrinck (2008, p.31) “that according to the human right model, disability is perceived as a human rights issue and the ‘problem’ associated with disability is attributed to external factors such as the society. As a result, the model holds that the state has the responsibility to ‘tackle’ socially created obstacles in order to ensure full respect for the

dignity and equal rights of all persons”. Quinn and Degener (2002) also indicated that in respect of the education of children with HI, the model requires the state to take measures to ensure that children with HI are able to attain primary education on an equal basis with other children.

Chilemba (2011, p.14), emphasizes that “since the human right model emphasizes equalization of opportunities of children with disabilities in the enjoyment of all rights. It will inevitably require the state to promote inclusive education so that children with disabilities are not excluded from the mainstream society”.

The social model of disability was applicable to this study because implementation of inclusive education in regular primary schools depends on how well school factors are modified and adapted to meet the needs of the learners with HI. It is only when one is accommodated in the society that he or she can be able to participate fully and benefit from the society. Furthermore, it was also applicable as indicated above by Chilemba (2011) that the social model of disability advocates for the inclusion of children with disabilities in the society including the learners with HI. It will inevitably emphasizes inclusive education, especially inclusive school approach since the mainstream schools would be adjusted to accommodate all children in the selected regular primary schools of Ndirande zone in Blantyre Urban.

2.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter, review of related literature on factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI was discussed. There seem to be a lot of factors that hinder classroom participation. These include communication, teaching, learning and assessment resources and class size. Furthermore, it was noted that learners with HI are faced with challenges like communication and lack of special learning resources. From the literature, gaps on factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI in inclusive setting have been identified hence the study was conducted in order to explore the other factors. The next chapter presents research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the research design and methodology that was adopted for the study in order to explore the factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI and the rationale of this particular design. It first discusses the research design and theoretical perspectives.

Secondly, it describes the methodology and sampling strategy. The target population of the study and its constituting sample and sampling design or technique which was used in the study is explained. It further describes the research instruments used, and data collection procedures followed.

Thirdly, the chapter describes method used to collect data. The issues of trustworthiness, reliability and ethical issues were considered.

3.1 Research design

This study was designed and conducted as a case study. According to Creswell (2014, p. 14), a case study is “a qualitative design in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals”. In this study, two selected regular primary school in Ndirande Zone in Blantyre Urban were used. The researcher chose to use case study because case study has proven particularly useful for studying educational innovations, evaluating programs, and informing policy (Stake, 1995). Furthermore, case study helps to find answers to specific questions as observed by Blanche et al. (2006). The study has uncovered issues hindering the classroom participation of learners with HI in the selected regular primary schools. However, there has been frequent criticism of this design, particularly of its inability to provide a generalised conclusion. Nevertheless, one could argue that one can learn some important lessons from almost any case (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Therefore this was another reason why the researcher used it too.

3.2 Theoretical perspectives

According to Creswell (2014), we need to explore the range of theories available to us as researchers, and how we can select them. Investigation is informed by a number of theoretical perspectives that determine which method to be used in a study (Gray, 2009). The theoretical perspectives are also called paradigms. Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006, p. 612) indicates that paradigms are “all-encompassing systems of unified practices and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their inquiry along three

dimensions; methodology, epistemology and ontology”. Methodology looks at how the researcher carries out the study (O’Leary, 2004). Epistemology looks at nature of relationship between the researcher and what is to be known while ontology looks at the nature of reality (Blanche, 2006). Interpretivist and constructivist are some of the theoretical perspective for inquiry. This study is guided by interpretivist paradigm.

Since theoretically interpretive paradigm allows researchers to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants. This study sought to explore factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI, the researcher thought to working within the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative approach in this study.

3.3 Methodology

According to Creswell (2014) there are three research approaches, qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approach. The distinction between qualitative and quantitative being that one uses words while the other uses numbers respectively (Creswell, 2009).

On the other hand, mixed method has the elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

This study followed a qualitative approach. This is so because it focused on participants’ perceptions and experiences, and the way they make sense of their lives. According to

Creswell (2014, p.185), qualitative research is “an approach for exploring and understanding the individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. Miles and Huberman (1994) show that most qualitative research involves conducting thorough intense contact within a “field” or a real life setting. Data was therefore generated in the participant’s setting that is regular primary schools.

3.4 Sampling and population

The targeted population for this study was the regular teachers, administrator (headteacher), learners without HI and learners with HI in the selected regular primary school of Ndirande Zone in Blantyre Urban. The enrolment of learners and number of teachers per school is indicated on table 1 below. The location was selected based on the fact that the schools were practicing inclusion. In addition, it was because of their accessibility (Creswell, 2008). It was easy for the researcher to undertake the study because it is near to where she lives and works. Therefore with limited financial resources, travelling from one school to the other was not a problem. Furthermore, there was no evidence that research has been carried out on the education of learners with HI in the same area or in the same aspect.

Table 1: Enrolment of learners and teachers per school

	Number of Learners enrolled	Number of Teachers	Number of learners with SNE	Number of learners with HI
School A	7,825	61	36	9
School B	4,245	49	38	6

Source: Researcher (2016)

3.4.1 Sampling strategy

Sampling involves ‘the use of a subset to represent a whole population’ (Schaefer, 2006, p.178). In drawing regular teacher participants, the researcher used purposive sampling as the teachers were chosen on the basis of the classes that they were teaching that is, classes where there are learners with HI. The teachers were also chosen on assumption that they are aware of the challenges and opportunities of inclusive education. According to Gray (2009, p.152) “in purposive sampling, the researcher deliberately selects the subjects against one or more trait to give what is believed to be a representative sample”. This criterion also implies to the head teachers, learners with and those without HI. The learners with HI were selected to represent their own views on factors that hinder their classroom participation. In this regard, the study had twenty six participants from the two selected regular primary schools; these were two head teachers, six regular primary school teachers, twelve learners without HI and six learners with HI. The researcher

chose learners from junior and senior sections assuming that they can be able to communicate their views with some ease as compared to those in the infant section.

All subjects were given codes for confidentiality as follows: The schools were called school A and school B. The headteachers were called headteacher A and headteacher B. The learners with HI were given numbers 1, 2, 3 from school A and 4, 5, 6 from school B. The regular teachers were given letters C, D, E from school A and F, G, H from school B. While learner without HI were number 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 from school A and 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 from school B.

Table 2: Summary of sample

CATEGORIES	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Headteachers	0	2	2
Regular teachers	1	5	6
Learners with HI	4	2	6
Learners without HI	6	6	12
Total	11	15	26

Source: Researcher (2016)

3.5 Data generating procedures

Using a letter of introduction from the office of the dean of education at Chancellor College, permission to collect data from the two selected regular primary schools was sought and obtained from the office of the District Education Manager (DEM) for Blantyre Urban. Letters of introduction were written to the Primary Education Advisor

(PEA) for Ndirande Zone and to the headteachers of the two schools by the District Education Manager (DEM).

The researcher had to meet the headteachers and work out how best data could be collected without interrupting classes as indicated in the introductory letter from the DEM. The researcher got permission from the parents through the class teachers. The data was collected in all the two schools for the period of two weeks (14 days) using observations, interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs).

At the two schools the researcher first observed lessons. Three classes were observed whereby in each class two lessons were observed. Each lesson was thirty five minutes long. Then the researcher had one FGD with three regular teachers at each school, and also with learners without HI. Later, the researcher had interviews with learners with HI and also headteachers. The interviews were one to one. In total the researcher had eight interviews. This was followed to make sure that the researcher got the information that was a true reflection of factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI. The researcher had the assumption that if she started with interviews the participants could have ideas of what she was looking for during the observation of lessons, hence failing to explore the exact factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI.

3.5.1 Interviews

Cohen (2007, p.172) defines interviews as “one-on-one question-answer encounters between a researcher and his chosen participants”. On the other hand, Cohen, Manion and Marison (2000, p.137) regards interview “as an exchange of views between two people on a topic of mutual interest and emphasise the social context of research data”. It is a research instrument and involves the generation of data through verbal interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Interview provides a chance for the informants to expand on their ideas, explain their views and identify what they regard as crucial factors.

Gray (2009) adds on that an interview is a conversation between people in which one person has the role of a researcher. Interviews have the ultimate advantage of soliciting information that is comprehensive, up-to-the-minute, and insightful. With personal interviews, a researcher is also assured of a high response rate as most people find it rather difficult to turn down a personal request for an interview (Schaefer, 2006). Given a researcher’s ingenuity and skills, a personal interview has the potency of probing beyond the written word, thus uncovering a participant’s underlying feelings and verbally unsolicited responses (Creswell, 2014).

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to solicit information. Personal interviews were particularly vital in this study as they helped to utilize other multi-sensory channels of information flow which other tools fail to capture. The researcher conducted face to

face interviews with the learners with HI and headteachers of the selected regular primary schools.

These interviews involved unstructured and generally open ended questions that intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants.

Interview was the supplementary method of data collection method used in this study. As Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) stated the advantage of interview is its adaptability; skilled interviewers make an effort to build trust and rapport with the respondents thus making it possible to obtain information that the individual probably would not reveal by any other data collection method and also can follow up a respondent's answers to obtain more information and clarify vague situations.

However, an interview has the danger of bias due to poorly constructed questions. The researcher mitigated this shortfall by making sure that she rephrased the questions so as to let the participants understand what the questions were asking for. In addition, Gray (2009) mentions inaccuracies due to poor recall as another shortfall of interviews. The researcher therefore asked for a quieter place to conduct the interviews. However, the researcher noted that all the two schools selected had large population of learners and it was impossible to have a quite atmosphere. This situation forced the researcher not to record the interviews but just take notes. Notes which were taken by the researcher were revisited and interpreted the same day of the interview.

Two headteachers and six learners with HI were interviewed separately by the researcher after the observations were completed. Interview guide with list of questions were prepared before the study. The interview guide for the learners with HI was translated into vernacular language that is, Chichewa. Furthermore, the researcher allowed the learners with HI to express their views orally or using gestures and signs and also writing. The questions were open ended and unstructured that means other relevant questions rising during data generation an onsite - analysis were included. The interviewer recorded the interview by taking notes.

The length of time for the interview with learners with HI was approximately one hour (60 minutes) and was conducted in the resource rooms. This was so because there was a lot of interpretation and rephrasing of the questions. The interview with the headteachers of the schools was conducted in their offices and was half an hour long. The researcher used an interview guide (refer to the appendix 3 and 4) for the headteachers and learners with HI respectively.

3.5.2 Observations

According to Creswell (2014, p.191), observation is when a researcher ‘takes field notes on the behaviour and activities of individuals at the research site’. Observation provides “an opportunity to get beyond people’s opinions and self-interpretations of their attitudes and behaviours, towards an evaluation of their actions and practice” (Creswell, 2014).

According to Gall, Gall and Borg (2007), the advantage of observation in qualitative research is that it helps to obtain the real data directly from the social and physical environment of the informants being studied. If used properly, it provides reliable data. Selected observations in a researcher's report provide a more complete description of the phenomena than would not be possible by just referring to interviews statements or documents. Just as important, observations provide an additional source of data for verifying the information obtained by other methods. Observation draws on the direct evidence the witness has (Cohen, Manion & Marison, 2000). In the cause of making observation it can either be participant based, whereby the researcher becomes part and parcel of the community he or she wants to study or non-participant observation whereby the observer can be in the community targeted by only observing what is happening.

Specifically, the researcher used non participant observation to gather information during lessons. This was so because the researcher wanted to watch the participants and listen to what they say. Furthermore, to minimise disturbing the participants, the researcher observed things in their natural environment without disturbing the setting on the phenomenon being studied.

The observation was based on how learners with HI participated in classroom activities with emphasis to factors that hinder their participation. Some key points were developed from each research question on study prior to the study to be used as guide for observation. The key points which has been observed were; use of hearing aids, use of teaching, learning and assessment resources, interpreter availability, teaching strategies

like; prompting, task analysis, peer tutoring, direct instruction, remedial instructions if provided to learners with HI, adaptation of curriculum content, adaptation made to teaching, learning and assessment materials to cater for learners with hearing impairment and interaction of learners with HI with their peers without HI.

The researcher did observe lessons in the classes where learners with HI were allocated in the selected regular primary schools. The researcher was collecting the data overtly, the participants were aware that they were being observed. According to Gray (2009), observations are time consuming and costly and also event may proceed differently because it is being observed. Johnson and Turner (2003) add that the drawback of observation is the reactivity problem. To overcome the mentioned shortfalls, the researcher made sure that the participants were aware of her presence in the classroom and in time to avoid destructing the class.

In addition, the researcher did not start taking notes in the first session of the observation; this helped the participant to feel that the researcher is one of them. Furthermore, the researcher used the observation guide; to ensure what the study wanted to check was not missed. The researcher made sure to know where exactly the learners with HI were sitting before the lessons started. This was very vital for the researcher, to easily spot out the learners from the large classes and observe them easily since that was her target.

3.5.3 Focus group discussions (FGDs)

The researcher conducted focus group discussion with regular teachers that teach in the classes of the selected regular primary schools where learners with HI and also learners without HI are. The researcher used this method because the selected regular teachers had the same experiences of teaching in an inclusive classroom. This method helped the researcher to find answers to the research questions and also get other issues from the regular teachers regarding classroom participation of learners with HI (Creswell, 2014). The researcher was guided by the guiding questions in Appendices 5 and 6 for teachers and learners without HI respectively.

According to Creswell (2014), focus group discussion has the following limitations; not all people are equally articulate as well as perceptive and researcher's presence may bias responses. The researcher tried to overcome the first limitation by giving a chance to the participants to express themselves in either English or Chichewa for the regular teachers. Furthermore, the researcher gave turns to each participant to say something on the issue of discussion. The learners without HI were allowed to express themselves in vernacular language which was Chichewa. The researcher was rephrasing the questions for all participants to be on the same page during discussions.

3.6 Piloting

The instruments used in this study were piloted at one of the regular primary school in Mangochi district. This school also practices inclusive education. The researcher carried

an interview with the headteacher and also with three learners with HI. Furthermore, she conducted focus group discussion (FGD) with three teachers who were teaching in the classes where learners with HI were learning. Finally, the researcher conducted focus group discussion with three learners without HI from the classes where learners with HI were learning.

The outcome of the pilot study assisted the researcher because she was able to rephrase and modify the guiding questions for the interview because of the way the participants were answering the questions. The researcher was able to find the vagueness of some questions. Furthermore, it also guided the researcher on how to go about probing for more information from the participants.

3.7 Validity of instruments

Validity according to Kothari (2008) in Mndolwa (2010, p.51) is “the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure”. “It is the ability to produce findings that are in agreement with theoretical or conceptual values”. The researcher therefore consulted her two supervisors from the department of Education at the University of Malawi, Chancellor College to validate the instruments. The results of piloting were also used to further validate the instruments.

The interview guide content were scrutinised in order to assess their clarity, suitability of the language used and their relevance, to find out whether they are

related to the research topic. The researcher revised the instruments accordingly based on the supervisors/experts recommendations and findings of pilot study findings.

3.8 Reliability of instruments

“Reliability is a measure of the degree to which an instrument yields consistent results or data or information after repeated trials” (Orodho, 2009) in Mndolwa (2010, p. 51). Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) noted that reliability of an instrument will be determined if an instrument has no ambiguity and that participants understand the questions fully. Best and Khan (1993) assert that the reliability of an instrument is a degree of consistency that an instrument or procedure demonstrates. In order to ensure reliability of the instrument, the researcher piloted the instrument in one school that was not in the sample.

3.9 Data analysis procedures

The data were analysed using thematic analysis. Themes are umbrella constructs which can be identified before, during and after data collection (Creswell, 2014). This means that “the data analysis and data collection were done simultaneously” as advocated by Marshal and Rossman (1989) in Creswell (2009, p.184). The researcher followed the six steps of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Firstly, reading through all the data to get general sense of the information and reflecting on its overall meaning. Secondly, the researcher generated initial codes, thus detailed

analysis involving coding was done. Thirdly, the researcher searched for themes. Theme identification involved comparing and contrasting material. This method allowed the researcher to examine the headteachers', regular teachers', learners' without HI and learners' with HI points of view on the factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI. Fourthly, the researcher reviewed the theme, by doing so the researcher was trying to reduce the categories of themes by grouping themes that were related to each other. Then, the researcher defined and named the themes.

Lastly, the researcher produced a report on the findings.

3.10 Limitations and Delimitations of the study

3.10.1 Limitations

The study was conducted in two selected regular primary schools in Ndirande zone in Blantyre Urban. This means that the findings cannot be generalised. It was also limited to exploring factors hindering classroom participation of learners with HI.

3.10.2 Delimitations

The study was delimited by class level of learners, which is learners with HI in the infant classes were not involved in the study because it was assumed that relatively more and precise information might be obtained from the junior and senior students who communicate and understand better.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the design and methodology that was used in the study. It particularly discussed the overall approach and rationale of the method used, the setting and population involved the sample and sampling procedures that were used, data collection methods and data analysis procedures. The next chapter presents and discusses findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Chapter overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The study sought to explore factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI. The findings are presented based on the major themes from the research questions and the emerging themes such as: factors that affect classroom participation of learners with HI in an inclusive setting; factors that hinder teachers in regular classrooms to involve learners with HI in class activities; teachers' suggested strategies used to address such challenges faced by learners with HI in regular classrooms.

4.1 Factors affecting classroom participation of learners with HI in inclusive setting

The participants were asked to state the factors that affect classroom participation of learners with HI. The findings revealed several factors as discussed below.

4.1.1 Communication

This study established that communication was one of the factors that affect the classroom participation of learners with HI. This was evidenced from the interviews with the headteachers, regular teachers, and learners and through the classroom observation.

One headteacher stated:

“ as one of my duties is to supervise teaching in classes, I do have chances of visiting the classes and observe these learners with HI learning, it is so hard for them to participate in the lessons because they cannot orally communicate their views, they depend on signs which their peers and teachers are not familiar with.” (Interview with headteacher A, February 12, 2016).

The other headteacher agreed on the same and she stated:

“The teachers who are teaching in the classes that have learners with HI report to me that these learners’ performance is low because the learners fail to participate in the classroom activities due to communication problems.”(Interview with headteacher B, February 19, 2016)

Both headteachers pointed out that it was their wish that these learners could participate in classroom activities as the other learners without HI do. One headteacher explained that it is through participation that learning takes place. When they were probed further, these headteachers suggested that the classes with learners with HI need to have sign language interpreters who could act as a bridge between the learners with HI and the teachers and also between the learners with HI and their peers without HI.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that communication was echoed by all learners with HI as a factor that affect their classroom participation. They said that they do not hear most of what is being said in their classes due to their deafness as such they fail to participate. They further lamented that they do not perform well due to the fact that they do miss a lot and fail to communicate with the teachers and their peers without HI.

Additionally, they cannot communicate orally well but with signs while on the other hand their teachers and peers without HI cannot communicate well to them with signs, hence the learners with HI opt to remain silent during lessons. This is what one learner with HI pointed out:

“I use sign language not oral language and my teachers and my friends without HI cannot hear me because they do not know sign language therefore I choose to keep quite during lessons.” (Interview with learner with HI 4, February 18, 2016).

In addition, the findings showed that learners with HI find it hard to participate in the classroom activities because the teachers talk too fast or sometime speak without looking at them. However, the learners with HI pointed out that they are able to get what the teachers and other peers say because their friends without HI tell them in signs. Using sign language, one learner with HI explained:

“My friend, most of the times, sign to me what the teachers and the other peers are saying, he is good and very interested in sign language, so I teach him and he is skilled.. I wish my teachers were skilled like him.” (Interview with learner with HI 6, February 18, 2016).

Additionally, the learners with HI pointed out that it was still hard for them because they could not get what their peers without HI were saying to them orally. Findings of this study revealed that communication was featuring highly as a factor that affects classroom participation of learners with HI. This was followed by lack of sign language interpreter.

The learners with HI suggested that the presence of an interpreter could assist them to participate in the activities. For example, one learner with HI indicated that he could easily communicate with his specialist teacher because she can sign. The learners with HI emphasised on the importance of sign language interpreter and this was supported by the headteachers and regular teachers also. For example, the headteachers wished if all classes where learners with HI had interpreters so that teachers, learners with HI and those without HI could communicate with less difficulties. The regular teachers added that while learners with HI are willing to participate in classroom activities, there is usually communication breakdown due to the fact that either the speaker or the listener cannot get what the other one is saying since it is difficult to express to each other orally or in sign language. One regular teacher commented as follows:

“Communication is supposed to be two ways, from the learners with HI to us, and from us to learners with HI. Again from learners with HI to their peers without HI and vice versa but this is not the case”. (FGD with regular teacher H, February 16, 2016).

The regular teachers added that the learners with HI are used to signing and not oral speeches while the teachers and the learners without HI are used to oral speeches. This

creates a gap between them which makes learners with HI to remain silent during lessons hence no participation.

Again all the regular teachers reported that they do not know sign language as a result they too fail to get what the learners with HI are communicating to them. The regular teachers wished they had sign interpreters in their classroom to facilitate communication between them and the learners with HI. This was in agreement to what the headteachers observed and what learners with HI lamented. The learners with HI explained that there is a need that each class should have a sign language interpreter for the learners with HI to fully participate in the lessons. In addition, another regular teacher said he felt guilty when the learners with HI in his class tried to communicate to him and then he ignores him or her because he could not get what she or he was saying.

However, one learner without HI (14) proudly said that some of the learners without HI can communicate well with their peers with HI and they assist them to interpret what is being said in class. Nevertheless, problems arise on days when they are absent. This learner also recommended that the specialist teacher at the school should be in the classroom to interpret for their peers with HI.

The findings from the classroom observations corroborate the findings from the interviews and focus group discussion. Thus, for example, it was observed that there was frequent breakdown in communication between learners with HI and their teachers. Furthermore, at one point, the teacher asked the learner with HI to open her book but

instead of opening a book the learner was going to the front where the teacher was. This was so because the teacher was giving the instruction orally and the learner could not hear what the teacher was saying because of her hearing loss. Had it been that the teacher knew how to sign she could have communicated to the learner what she wanted the learner to do.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that there was frequent communication breakdown when the teacher was teaching. For instance, in another class, it was observed that a learner with HI was asking the teacher to repeat what she said but because the teacher did not pick up the signs she proceeded with her teaching. The learner showed that she was embarrassed by the teacher and the teacher kept on wondering, not knowing what to do.

However, the evidence from the observation revealed that in two classes the teachers were asking the learner without HI what their peers with HI were saying whenever the learners with HI were contributing something in the class activities. This was also observed at times when the teachers were giving instructions to the class, for example, in one class the teacher said,

“Muuze mnzako zomwe ndikufuna muchite” meaning (John, tell your friend what I want all of you to do). (Observation, February 15, 2016).

On the other hand the findings on classroom observation indicated that communication was a bit easier in other classes between the learners with HI and those without HI. For example, in one class a learner without HI was taking advantage of just using gestures

and actions to communicate to his peer with HI and he was proud when he was successful in communicating to his friend with HI.

At one point the learner without HI was able to communicate to his friend that they have to copy the sums from the chalkboard. This learner just took out his exercise book and started writing from the chalkboard and pointed to the friend's exercise book and gestured to the friend to do the same.

Based on the interviews, focus group discussions with the participants of this study, it is felt that the majority of learners with HI will continue to be denied their right to education and access to schooling unless schools are made more accessible. This requires a greater will by teachers, learners without HI, and the community at large to learn sign language and to recognise the valuable role that can be played by the learners with HI.

The findings of this study are in agreement to what Braswell –Burris (2010) and Muiti (2010) in their studies found. Again the findings are in agreement to Ayiela (2012) and Safder et al (2012) study findings. They all point out that there is communication breakdown between the regular teachers and the learners with HI due to the fact that there are two languages that the learners with HI are exposed to at one time, sign language and oral language. This is undesirable because the learners with HI cannot benefit from oral language since they are not familiar with it.

It is also the belief of this study that undesirable education does not promote inclusion. Yet without an effective means of communication such as sign language, it is extremely difficult for the learners with HI to be included in education. Furthermore, Communication is vital for human survival. In societies, people communicate in different ways and languages. Learners with HI communicate by speech-reading and verbal communication. In order for communication to be effective, both persons should be aware of each other's differences and needs (Mlay, 2010). However, the researcher noted that the participants of this study are not aware that learners with HI can speech read and some can be able to communicate verbal if given a chance.

Interaction between humans often takes place through communication which is the process of transmitting information from sender to receiver as well as the sender having the ability to encode (compose) and the receiver to decode (comprehend) information (Thomas, 2000). It is important that there is a feedback to the sender since communication is a two way process. When the learner talks or signals to his or her fellow, the learner understands the communication and responds. Human communication does not only involve exchange of ideas and information but it also allow individuals to form relationships and maintain their contact at every level of community/society.

4.1.2 Large classes

The findings showed that all participants in the study concurred on large classes as a factor that hinders classroom participation of learners with HI. For example the regular

teachers described their classes as “*msonkhano*” in vernacular language meaning (*a gathering*). This description refers to the large number of learners. The regular teachers said it was not possible for the learners with HI to participate in the classroom activities because they are in minority.

This was in agreement with what the learners with HI pointed out. Regular teacher C said that he most of the times forget that he has learners with HI in his class not by design but due to large class. Regular teacher F said that since the learner with HI in her class does not talk so it is easier not to recognise her as compared to those hearing peers since they talk one can recognise them when they are making noise. One teacher confessed:

“I sometimes remember her when I see her coming with her work for marking”
(FGD with regular teacher D, February 9, 2016).

On another note the findings indicated that the learners with HI pointed out that due to large classes there is a lot of noise, making it hard for them to get what is going on therefore they do not participate and they remain as spectators.

Through class observations, the findings also indicated that it was very difficult for the teacher to give a chance to all the learners to participate in the lesson. It seemed more difficult for learners with HI to reveal their existence in the classes since they could hardly talk while their peers without HI could sometimes shout out to the teacher for them to be recognised.

Furthermore, it was also noted that it was hard for the teacher to mention her learners by name. In some classes it was observed that the learners with HI were doing something contrary to the lesson and they were not noticed by the teachers due to the large number of learners in the classes. In addition, learner with HI 5 mentions noise as another factor that hinders their participation.

The above findings concurs with Johnstone (2007) who observes that the more learners in a classroom, the more challenges arise in terms of inclusive education because learners may be unable to hear, see or follow the teacher because of distractions caused by overcrowding. The headteachers and regular teachers in this study were concerned that their schools were overcrowded, making it difficult for teachers to attend to individual learners needs.

In this view the willingness of teachers to involve learners with HI in classrooms activities is influenced by the size of the class and the teachers' workload. Teachers are more willing to include learners with HI if they have a small class size. In Malawi, the recommended average teacher-learner ratio is about 1: 60 (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2008). But according to all the participants at the two schools there are more than 150 learners in their classrooms and this is overwhelming.

According to the Social model of disability it is necessary that the environment in which learners with HI are learning should be conducive to allow them participate fully and

benefit academically. Where the classes are congested it is indeed difficult for learners with HI to successfully achieve their goals.

4.1.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Resources

The study discovered during the interviews with the two headteachers that learners with HI in their schools failed to participate in the classroom activities because they did not have hearing aids. As one device that assists learners with HI, the two headteachers were surprised that their offices have never received hearing aids from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The findings from classroom observation indicated that no specific teaching, learning and assessment resources were available and being used in all the lessons that she observed.

Surprisingly, it also noted that in other classes even general teaching, learning and assessment resources were not used. It was therefore concluded that, failing to use general teaching, learning and assessment resources and specific resource like hearing aids contributes to the failure of learners with HI and also contributed to hindering the involvement of learners with HI. One headteacher pointed out:

“I am surprised to note that the Ministry only advise us to enrol these learners in our schools but there is no provision of hearing aids, these learners are not assisted...”(Interview with headteacher B, February 19, 2016).

Furthermore, headteacher A explained that it was very sad that her school cannot manage to buy the hearing aids to assist learners with HI hear and participate when they are in class. However, during the interview with learners with HI, it was found out that some learners with HI had hearing aids. Learner with HI 5 confessed his hearing aid was faulty so he kept it at home.

The finding further revealed that learner with HI 5 was not using his hearing aids because the batteries were flat. Contrary to that, two learners with HI pointed out that there was too much noise in the classroom so her hearing aid does not help her. It was discovered that the hearing aids were from well-wishers and not from the Schools. This was a contradiction to the findings from the interviews with the two headteachers and teachers who seemed to be ignorant that these learners had hearing aids. One teacher reported:

“We are told by the specialist teachers that these learners can hear if they are using hearing aids but it seems they do not have them.”(FGD with regular teacher C, February 9, 2016).

The findings from classroom observation indicated that none of the learners with HI in all the classes was using a hearing aid. This observation was in agreement with what the headteachers and the regular teachers said that the learners with HI lack special resources to use for their learning. Regular teachers who participated in this study were anxious and less confident in making instructional accommodations and adaptations for learners with HI.

The findings of this study are in accordance with researchers such as Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cabello and Spagna (2004) who argued that regular teachers do not make adequate instructional accommodations when teaching learners with HI.

According to the social model of disability for the learners with HI to participate fully and benefit from academic education, the institutions should provide specialised resources like hearing aids. It is the responsibility of the government to remove the economic barriers in regular primary schools and see to it that they are were funded to enable them purchase the hearing aids and other accessories.

4.1.4 Attitude of teachers, parents and learners without HI

When asked to mention factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI, the findings indicated that some teachers and learners without HI have negative attitudes towards these learners with HI which negatively affect the participation of such learners.

One headteacher lamented:

“Some of the teachers and learners without HI in the classroom call these learners negatively by giving them names like agonthi, osamva meaning (deaf) instead of calling them with their names...”(Interview with headteacher B, February 19, 2016).

This negativity affects the willingness of learners with HI to participate in classroom activities.

Furthermore, it was found out that apart from the negative attitudes that regular teachers have towards learners with HI, parents' attitude also negatively affect the participation of learners with HI in classroom activities. The headteachers were concerned with the parents' attitude towards their children with HI. One headteacher pointed out:

“Parents attitude towards their children with HI is so negative; they fail to take care of them in their homes.....” (Interview with headteacher A, February 12, 2016)

The headteachers noted that this attitude from parents affect the learners with HI in that when these learners are in class they waste time feeling sorry for themselves other than participating in the classroom activities. However, the findings on the other hand, indicated that some parents are poor that they fail to provide for their children so it is not by design not to take care of their children but due to their economic status.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that other learners without HI laugh at the learners with HI when they are given a chance to participate in the classroom activities. It was again revealed that they are also discriminated by their Parents. This result into learners with HI feeling unwanted. For example, one teacher pointed out that one learner reported that his mother calls him a failure because his young brother is in secondary school. This suggests that the labelling by the parent makes it difficult for the learner with HI to participate in class because he looks at himself as a failure.

Contrary to what one headteacher pointed out on parental attitude, some regular teachers made observations that not all parents are poor, citing that these same parents do have children without HI and they are well cared for while discriminating the other children with HI. Furthermore, in the findings, there was an indication that some learners without HI that are so negative on their friends with HI to the extent that they do not allow them to participate in classroom activities, saying that they waste their time. This was clear in the complaints that the regular teachers were making. In addition, the findings indicated that some teachers' attitudes towards the learners with HI in their class hinder the classroom participation of learners with HI. One teacher pointed,

“When I am teaching, if my partner is in the class she always makes negative gestures towards learners with HI which leaves my learners discourage and not willing to participate in the lesson even if they seem to be following the lesson”(FGD with regular teacher G, February 16, 2016).

However, one teacher pointed out that this was common in the first days of the school when the learners with HI were just included in the classes. She confessed that they now know that disability is not inability. Furthermore, participants showed different attitude towards learners with HI. For example, the attitudes of the two headteachers interviewed left the study to question their interests in learners with HI at their schools. Headteacher A referred the learners with HI belonging to the specialist teachers', this was negative attitude.

On the other hand, the regular teachers complained that the PEAs seem not to be aware that in the schools there are learners with HI. This is also an indication of negative attitude towards learners with HI being portrayed by the officers. However, the responses given by the learners with HI indicated that they do have good relationship with their peers without HI and they do get along well during play time.

Contrary to the responses that the learners with HI gave in this study, the learners without HI pointed out that, some of their friends call the learners with HI with names like, “*bubu*” in vernacular language Chichewa, which means “one who cannot hear”. This is in agreement with Muwana (2012) in her study on teachers’ attitude towards inclusion, she also noted that there are mixed attitudes by teachers. She found that some teachers’ negative attitude is toward learners whose disability is severe and only include those with mild disability in the class activities. Therefore, it may not be wrong for the researcher to conclude that if the teachers have negative attitude towards learners with HI in their classroom, the learners will not be given chances to participate in class activities, hence their academic performance being low.

On the cultural dimensions, the social model of disability postulates that the society lets people with impairments down, because of the negative shared attitudes of non-impaired community towards people with disability and in this case those learners with HI.

4.2 Factors hindering teachers in regular classrooms involving learners with HI

The evidence from the findings revealed that there are a number of factors that hinder teachers in regular classrooms to involve learners with HI in class activities. The teachers identified some of them.

4.2.1 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Resources

No special materials were provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to assist regular teachers in the teaching of learners with HI in both schools that the study was done. The findings indicated that both headteachers pointed out that even though the Ministry provides other general teaching and learning resources for the schools, the supply is not adequate. Headteacher B cited mirrors that were said to be needed in the teaching of speech to learners with HI as material resources that were in short supply. She quoted one regular teacher coming to complain to her that in the teachers' guide there is a mention of mirrors as one teaching resource for learners with HI but they do not have them at the school.

The findings also noted that while some resources are locally available, the regular teachers do complain that they do not know how to use them. The example that was given by the headteachers was the feathers. According to the teaching of learners with HI, feathers are said to be used by teachers when they want to assist learners with HI to differentiate plosive and non-plosive sounds.

Furthermore, regular teachers shared their thoughts on teaching, learning and assessment resources. The findings indicated that all the regular teachers had the feeling that teaching, learning and assessment resources hinder them to involve learners with HI in classroom activities. Regular teacher H pointed out that the learners with HI are supposed to use hearing aids for them to hear and be able to speech read, but she said her learner do not have hearing aids therefore they fail to participate in classroom activities.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that all teachers pointed at the teachers' guides that they indicated teaching resources that are not available in the school. For example, the mirrors which they say could assist a learner with HI to speech read and pronounce words correctly, the teachers pointed out that they are not available. This was in line with what the headteachers said to be the complaints from their regular teachers. On this factor, one regular teacher emphasised the need to have the teaching, learning and assessment resources mentioned in the teachers' guides. The teachers believed that they need to be guided through the teachers' guide and that what is in the guides should be provided so that they teach effectively.

Adequate provision of resources for the inclusion of learners with HI in regular schools is necessary for teachers to let these learners participate fully. Headteachers interviewed in this study and regular teachers in the FGDs expressed concern about the lack of government and administrative support, lack of classrooms, and a lack of teaching and learning materials and equipment to support learners with HI in inclusive setting. In this

study, almost all participants raised issues related to special and general resources to support learners with HI in classrooms. Participants identified the following needs: teaching and learning materials and special assistive devices like hearing aids and trained teachers.

Similar findings were reported in previous research (e.g., Avramidis et al., 2000) where a lack of training, a lack of resources (both human and material), and a lack of facilities and classrooms were identified as barriers to successful inclusion. This is clear evidence that inadequate facilities, absence of support services, and poor infrastructure are major barriers to achieving meaningful inclusion in developing countries, such as Malawi. The lack of resources and supports in Ndirande zone schools may be attributed to inadequate funding, which is a result of the poor economy within the country.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are in agreement to what Musengi and Chiresi (2010) found in their study in Zimbabwe. They found that teachers are dissatisfied with the material resources that were available as they say that they were not conducive to learning and an example was the hearing aids.

The social model of disability posits that learners can be disabled by lack of resources to meet their needs. Economically therefore, the government of Malawi through the Ministry of Education does not provide the same opportunities to learners with HI and this actually is seen starting at school and may continue throughout one's career if left

unchecked. For instance at the two schools where the study was conducted, lessons were designed to benefit only learners without impairment using general material resources and teaching methods that were not suitable for learners with HI. The Ministry of Education needs to adopt policies that will support in redistributing resources for the benefit of all learners.

4.2.2 Knowledge about learners with HI

The findings of this study demonstrated that knowledge about learners with HI was so vital for the teachers to be able to involve them in classroom activities. The findings also showed that both the school heads were satisfied that each of their schools had a specialist teacher for learners with SEN who was responsible for the resource room. Both headteachers indicated that the two specialist teachers carried out staff development training for all teachers and that at one point they have visits to classes where children with SEN were being taught.

However, it was noted that the trainings were not done so often and were not long. Both headteachers pointed out that usually the training last just for two hours of the day and they are done once per school year. The headteachers pointed out that the time for the staff development training was not enough for the training as a result the regular teachers remain with gaps without knowledge about learners with HI.

Furthermore, the findings in the focus group discussions concurred with the findings from the interviews with the headteachers as one regular teacher confessed:

“I attend the staff development training conducted by the specialist teacher but then I quickly forget what I have learnt because it was one day training and a lot was said and to me it was too general for learners with special needs...” (FGD with regular teacher E, February 9, 2016).

However, the findings indicated that regular teacher G denied having attended any staff development training on how to teach learners with HI since he joined the school two years back. This was in contradiction to what the headteacher pointed at.

The findings during classroom observations reflected that all the regular teachers at the two schools have gaps in their knowledge of learners with HI. The findings showed that in one classroom the teacher was emphasizing on the learners with HI to read the word “*kusesa*” meaning “sweeping” on the chalkboard while the learner with HI was able to demonstrate the action showing that she knew what the word was saying. However, due to lack of knowledge on how learners with HI learn the teacher did not adapt this situation.

Most regular teachers, who participated in this study, acknowledged that teaching learners with HI was difficult for them. Some said they were not conversant with appropriate skills and language for use. Past research and the current one, indicate that teachers’ knowledge and skills are important as they play a crucial role in instructional delivery (Avramidis, et al., 2000; Kuyini & Mangope, 2011).

Clearly, the findings of this study support the importance of pre-service and the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as teachers learn how best they can make learners with HI participate in class activities. This has implications for the preparation of inclusive education teachers, their constant professional development and mentoring.

According to the social model of disability, to facilitate inclusion, teachers need to undertake refresher courses on special education and inclusion in order to add more knowledge and skills on how to handle inclusive education practices. In this vain, the researcher concludes that classroom participation of learners can only be enhanced if all teachers have knowledge and skills on how to handle learners with HI.

4.2.3 Time allocation

The findings showed that from the interviews and the FGDs there was emphasis that time allocation is way too little to carry on all activities that are supposed to be done per lesson. It was said that teachers are supposed to follow what the teachers' guide plan for them on each lesson. The participants pointed out that this left teachers at a tight corner where they fail to give the needed attention to learners with HI due to time limit. One headteacher pointed out:

“These teachers are limited to time and learners with HI needs a lot of time to be assisted fully but it is impossible to do so” (Interview with headteacher B, February 19, 2016).

Learners with HI also complained that their teachers do not spare their time to listen to their contributions during lessons. Learner with HI 5 sadly pointed out that every time he tries to participate, either the teacher or some of his hearing peers would stop him by

saying he is taking more time to talk and they cannot hear what he is saying. Sometimes he is told to wait. This is what he said by signing,

“When I start talking the teacher always shows me her wrist watch and I get frustrated so I stop talking” (Interview with learners with HI 5, February 18, 2016).

However, the learner with HI commended that some of her hearing peers keep on encouraging her not to be frustrated. On another note, the findings indicated also that regular teachers admitted that they rarely attend to learners with HI. Some of them mentioned the time table as restricting them from paying attention to individual problems. Knowing that learners with HI needs a lot of time to express themselves, the teachers confessed that they avoid involving these learners. One teacher confessed:

“Time for one lesson is not enough to attend to each child individually, imagine thirty five minutes lesson full of steps to conduct...”(FGD with regular teacher E, February 9, 2016)

Nevertheless, regular teacher pointed fingers on the primary education advisors (PEAs) and headteachers who always want to remind them of the time allocation on lesson even if they are trying to help learners with HI. The findings indicated that the regular teachers pointed out that when the PEAs are in their classes observing the lesson it is even harder for them to involve learners with HI. The reason the teachers gave was that, the PEAs want the teachers to conduct the lesson stipulated in the teachers’ guide.

The findings from the classroom observation showed that teachers were teaching against time. This was clearly seen where the teachers were failing to accommodate learners with HI when they were making their contributions. Furthermore in one class the teacher ignored to recognise a learner with HI who wanted to make a presentation on behalf of the group by saying that he will take more time.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that teachers had lack knowledge on how to involve learners with HI without wasting much time. For example in one class the learner with HI could hardly speak and read out but was able to identify objects that their names were being drilled on the chalkboard. It was difficult for the teacher to realise that this learner knows the words because the teacher had no knowledge on how learners with HI read. The teacher stopped the learner participating in the lesson because she had no knowledge of what was going on.

While teachers in schools follow time tables and time allocation for lessons, it was revealed in this study by all participants that it compromises with the classroom participation of learners with HI. Because of the limited time per lesson learners with HI who need more time to learn are left behind in most of the activities. The thirty five minute given lesson at the infant section failed the teachers to have learners with HI participate fully. This was also the case with the thirty minute lesson at the junior and senior classes.

It was observed that, the severity of hearing loss appeared to be related to the eagerness of the teacher to let the learner participate in the classroom activity. The teachers related the severity of hearing loss to the time that they may need to get to understand what the learner is contributing on the activity and also the support that the teacher may need to give the learner. This was in terms of giving instructions.

4.2.4 Large classes

Significantly, the findings indicated that both headteachers mentioned that large classes hinder the teachers in regular classrooms to involve learners with HI. It was alarming both headteachers stating that almost all classes had a teacher learner ratio of not less than one to one hundred (1: 100).

Furthermore, in connection to what was found from the headteachers, the findings also revealed the same from learners with HI comments. The learners pointed out that their teachers do not involve them because there are many learners in the classes. However, one learner with HI recommended that it could be better if they were learning in the resource room because there are few learners and they all participate. In addition, another learner without HI added that the classes are congested and that their teachers fail to involve their peers with HI because they are a few in numbers. This learner commented:

“Our friends with HI can be given chance to fully participate in the resource rooms, where they are a few in numbers not in our class.” (FDG with learners without HI 8, February 10, 2016).

The study further observed that all regular teachers pointed at large classes as hindering their ability to involve and pay attention to individual learners with HI. The revelation that the regular teachers made were that the classes that they teach were too congested to allow them really give chance to each and every learner the class to participate even those hearing learners do not participate fully. These revelations were reflected in the findings from the class observations. The issues raised above revealed that indeed large classes hinder regular teachers to involve learners with HI in classroom participation.

4.2.5 Skills

This study had also established that the headteachers and the teachers believed that lack of special skills was one of the factors hindering the regular teachers to involve learners with HI in classroom activities. Both headteachers pointed out that all the teachers in regular classes are not specialist teachers; they did not have any training in the teaching of learners with HI. However, headteacher A reported that most of the teachers teaching in classes where learners with HI are included show some passion in these learners. The findings also established that the offices of the headteachers do support the teachers that have learners with HI in their classes. One headteacher reported,

“We have one teacher who was trained in SNE at this school so I advise my teachers to consult her for assistance BUT she cannot manage to impart all the skills needed to communicate perfectly with these learners with HI”.(Interview with headteacher B, February 19, 2016).

The above finding showed that one need to have skills in order to communicate with learners with HI. One other finding was that the qualification of the teachers teaching in these classes and the type of training that these teachers have. It was found that all the teachers had attended regular teacher training and they were qualified regular teachers, but none of them had training in SNE hence lacking the skills to communicate and handle the learners with HI.

In addition, the study findings discovered that all the regular teachers believed that there are special skills needed to help them let learners with HI participate in classroom activities. The regular teachers observed that the special skills for teaching learners with HI were difficult for them as they were not specialists for example they pointed out that they do not know how to train the children to speech read or sign. One regular teacher pointed out:

“I am taught many skills by the specialist teacher during staff development trainings but I quickly forget...” (FGD with regular teacher F, February 16, 2016)

The findings showed that regular teachers suggested that there should be in service training for all regular teachers to equip them with skills on how to handle learners with HI in their schools. However, regular teacher H revealed that during their teacher training course they had a module on SNE but, lamented that the lectures were not well conversant with it and they were not taught in details. This led to the suggestions that

there is need that even TTCs should have specialist lecturers in all categories of disabilities.

During lesson observation it was clear that the regular teachers lacked skills to involve the learners with HI in the lessons. It was noted that some of the regular teachers were willing to let the learners with HI to participate but they could not manage to do so due to lack of skills. For example in one class the researcher saw the teacher saw the struggling to assist the learner in pair work.

The above findings are in line with what Groumpos and Lampropoulou (2003) study on the academic and social inclusion of students in mainstream schools in Greece revealed. The study revealed that lack of communication skills leads to low academic performance of learners with HI. Teachers need to have skills to communicate with learners with HI. However, the findings of this study has also revealed that the teacher training college have a module on special needs education therefore, it may not be wrong to conclude that there is lack of dedication on the lecturers to impart the knowledge to the student teachers.

4.2.6 Communication

In this study, it was found that the headteachers and all regular teachers mentioned communication as one factor that hinders teachers to involve learners with HI. The findings established that all the teachers at the school do not know sign language because

they were not trained; therefore they failed to communicate with learner with HI in their classes.

Furthermore, it was noted that while learners with HI seem willing to participate it was hard for the regular teachers to communicate with these learners for fear of how they would give feedback to the learners. To that end, one regular teacher said:

“I wish we had sign language interpreter to assist us communicate with these learners with HI because the learners with HI are willing to learn...”

(FGD with regular teacher F, February 16, 2016)

With the sentiments from some of the teachers it is clear in the findings that while the learners are willing to learn teachers are also willing to involve them in the lesson, however, the setback is communication.

The study further revealed that during lesson observation it was noted that none of the classroom had a sign language interpreter who could be interpreting what the teacher, learners with HI or the hearing peers were saying during the lessons. This observation gave enough evidence to why all regular teachers were finding it hard to involve the learners with HI. It could even be noticed that the learner with HI wanted to contribute by raising a hand but the teachers were ignoring them. It may not be wrong to conclude that the teachers feared that they may not be able to communicate to the learners.

Furthermore, during observation of lesson the researcher could notice that the learners with HI were left behind due to communication breakdown. At times the teacher could show that the learner with HI is failing to get what the teacher was saying, but there was nothing that the teacher could do, due to the fact that the two had two different languages. In this case the teacher was using oral while the learner with HI was signing.

Learners with HI who are well included academically should be able to participate in the classroom in a manner similar to that of their classmates. This requires that the learners with HI have access to all teachers' and peers' without HI communication and also that discussion and other activities are structured in a manner that allows them to participate. Thus, the teacher may need to examine both the learners' access to classroom communication (through hearing aids, or interpreters) and how the means of access affects participation in learning activities and classroom discussion.

In the lesson, there may be different levels of communication for the teacher and learners to be aware of and learners with HI may in this respect be a challenge for their peers. Interaction takes place well when there is good language and good communication; the two go hand in hand (Mlay, 2010). This will be a good tool for the interaction between the two groups of the learners. Communication during the lessons should be simple and clear so that everyone attending the lesson understands including learners with HI. Mlay (2010), claimed that no teacher can function successfully unless he or she is able to communicate with learners at their level of communication.

Additionally, Language is the raw material for communication. It serves as the stimulus to communicate and provides the structure for our communication. Language can be verbal or non/verbal. In order for any two or more people to communicate they must have a common language.

4.3 How teachers address challenges faced by learners with HI in regular classrooms

All learners in regular classroom face challenges when learning. Teachers need to address these challenges so that learning becomes meaningful. Learners with HI are not exceptional, they too face challenges when learning, and therefore teachers need to address these challenges. In this study, it was found that the regular teachers tried to address these challenge through teaching, learning and assessment method and seating arrangement.

4.3.1 Teaching, learning and assessment methods

The findings showed that when the regular teachers were asked how they address challenges faced by learners with HI, they all admitted that they were not familiar with the specific methods of teaching learners with HI since they were not specialist teachers. However, the findings indicated that during staff development regular teachers were taught some skills that they can use to assist learners with HI, one teacher confessed:

“I was taught many skills by the specialist teacher during staff development trainings but I quickly forget....” (FGD with regular teacher G, February 16, 2016)

In addition, the findings revealed that some regular teachers only tried to address the issue of large class by using group-work and pair-work as strategies to ensure that all learners participate. This is because the teachers do not know that they have the training on special needs education.

The above were also noted in the findings that it was even harder for the teachers to give chances to learners with HI to participate due to large numbers of learners per group. However, it was pleasing to note in one class, that during pair work the learner with HI was paired with her hearing peer who was able to sign to her.

In explaining what they do to support learners with HI in their class, most teachers pointed that they used visual and tactile aids more often than before. One teacher commented,

“I tend to have more pictures and other charts in my lessons because I have been told that these learners with HI are visual learners (they learn through seeing). So I write a lot on chart paper to enable them to have something to refer to during and after the lesson. (FGD with regular teacher E, February 9, 2016)

The teaching methods of most teachers in this study were purely verbal that the learners with HI classroom participation were unnoticeable. In the first place, the teachers' did not know any alternative teaching methods, such as sign language. The teachers failed to assist learners with HI due to lack of sign language.

The findings established that some learners with HI commended that they understand better if the teacher brings in real objects, uses charts when teaching. The learners with HI also commended that they enjoy much when the teacher uses excursion because they see exactly what the teacher is talking about.

In addition, lesson observations corroborated many of the issues that the regular teachers in the focus group discussions were bringing up and also what learners without HI were pointing out during the focus discussions the researcher had with them. The findings indicated that what was happening very commonly in all four lessons observed was the use of lecture and chalk methods.

Furthermore, the study found that learners with HI were made to sit in front where they could have a good view of the teacher and chalkboard. However, lack of direct instructions to the learners with HI made the learners to be left behind in the lessons and they could not participate.

The findings showed that lesson observations on four out of the six lessons did not show any participation by the learner with HI. During the observations, no learner with HI initiated a dialogue with any of the regular teachers but, one could notice that the learners with HI were interacting with their hearing peers. No teaching and learning resource were used in any of the observed lessons besides chalk, the chalkboard, and books which were not enough at all for the large classes

Furthermore, it was noticed that most of the regular teachers were failing to give remedial instructions to the learners with HI. Where the learner gave a wrong answer due to misunderstanding of the questions or instructions, the regular teachers just rushed to pointing to another learner leaving the learner with HI disappointed.

4.3.2 Seating arrangements

Preferential seating is always a key component to any list of strategies provided to teachers to facilitate understanding in the classroom for students with hearing loss. In this study, it was found that the regular teachers indicated that they seat the learners with HI in the front row of the class for them to be able to speech read the teachers. All the regular teachers expressed awareness that in order to address the challenges that learners with HI meet during class activities, they need to seat the learners in front so that the learners are able to speech read the teacher.

However, the findings noted that one teacher admitted that in his classroom there is no permanent seating arrangement because of lack of desks and large number of learners. The learners scramble for where to sit during lessons. The regular teacher revealed:

“I fail to permanently find a place to let my learners with HI to sit due to large numbers of learners in my class...” (FGD with regular teacher D, February 9, 2016)

The revelation above was confirmed during lesson observation, the findings indicated in all except one class, that indeed the learners were seated in front. However, though the

learners with HI were seated in front they were not benefiting from the seating position since the teachers did not know how to let the learner speech read them during the lesson. The learners with HI who were observed seating at the back in one of the class, pointed out that, to them, there is no point seating in front rows since they do not participate in the class activities.

The findings also discovered that one learner with HI said he does not do well in class because he sits at the back. He reported out that the seating arrangement of the class depends on first come first serve due to the large number of learners in the class. This was in agreement to what his teacher revealed on the seating arrangement.

The participants mentioned seating the learner with HI at the front and also use of visual aids. However, while the participants were able to contribute what they know, it was clear that there was more saying than practice on the ground. (Mukhopadhyay, 2009) also noted that classroom discourses in primary schools in Botswana are characterised by the use of the teacher-centred method and teachers do not pay adequate attention to accommodate learners with HI. This study also made similar observation as Mukhopadhyay (2009) that teachers were paying little attention to learners with HI in their classes.

In conclusion factors hindering classroom participation of learners with HI may be numerous, but Malawi and other developing nations are obligated by the Salamanca

Statement (UNESCO, 1994) to provide inclusive education, recognize the right of all children to a free public education, and work toward providing quality community-based education for all learners.

Additionally, the Salamanca Statement advocates for organisational changes in schools, curricula, teaching strategies, and learning approaches in order to realize optimal opportunities for all learners (UNESCO, 2005). In line with these requirements, the Malawian government has issued a number of policy statements to guide the implementation of including learners with HI and other impairments in the education system. This commitment to educating learners with disabilities alongside their typically developing peers necessitates the examination of factors that may hinder classroom participation of individuals with HI.

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented and discussed the findings of the study. The findings have been discussed in line with the research sub questions of the study. The first sub question was sought to explore factors that affect classroom participation of learners with HI. All the participants mentioned communication, large class, time allocation, teaching, learning and assessment resources as some major factors that hinder classroom participation of learners with HI. The second sub question sought to explore factors that hinder teachers in inclusive setting to involve learners with HI in classroom activities. The study found that; communication, large classes, teaching, learning and assessment resources,

knowledge and skill were mentioned. The last question was on the suggested strategies that teachers use to address the challenges that learners with HI face in inclusive classes. The participants mentioned what they hear can help to address the challenges but admitted that they do not practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Chapter overview

This chapter presents a summary of the study's findings and their implications. The conclusions arrived at from the findings of this study are also presented in this chapter. The chapter further covers recommendations of the study based on the findings of the study. Finally, the chapter presents suggestions for areas to conduct further studies.

5.1 Summary

The study aimed at exploring factors that hindered classroom participation of learners with HI in regular primary schools of Ndirande Zone of Blantyre Urban in Malawi. The study was conducted using Case study design. The target group consisted of both learners with HI and those learners without HI, regular primary school teachers and primary school head teachers. The sample consisted of 18 learners, 6 teachers and 2 head teachers. Data was collected through observation, focus group discussion and interviews. Qualitative data was organized into themes and presented. The analysis revealed the following:

That, all the participants who were learners with HI, regular teachers, head teachers and learners without HI agreed that there was very little support from the government of Malawi through the Ministry of Education to learners with HI. This was evident from lack of specialised teaching, learning and assessment resources in the schools, and learners getting hearing aids from other organisation other than from the government through the Ministry of Education.

Further, it was also revealed by some of the respondents who comprised regular teachers and head teachers that there is a lack of training in special needs among the teachers. The researcher noted from the focus group discussion and interviews with the regular teachers and head teachers, respectively, that the teachers that were teaching in the inclusive classroom did not receive any training in special needs.

5.2 Conclusions and implications

In relation to the findings of this study, as discussed in chapter four, the following are the main conclusions the study came up with.

5.2.1 Communication

This study has established that in the two schools, while learners with HI were included in the classroom, the learners with HI were not participating fully due to communication breakdown. This was caused due to fact that most of the learners with HI were using sign language while the teachers and learners without HI were using oral language to

communicate. There were no sign language interpreters in all the classes to interpret what the learner with HI was communicating and also what the teachers and learners without HI were communicating. The implication here was that no one was able to get each other's language, therefore none or little communication was taking place hence a learner with HI failed to participate in the lessons.

5.2.2 Teaching, learning and assessment resources

It was apparent from the findings that all the schools lack teaching, learning and assessment resources both specialised and general. The participants seem to be aware that a learner with HI needed a hearing aid in order to learn better but the schools were lacking these hearing aids for learners with HI use. Furthermore, it was clear that the teachers knew that some locally available resources can assist them to teach effectively but they lack the knowhow. This implies that regular teacher lack knowledge on how to use the resources that are indicated in the teachers' guide that could be assisting learners with HI in learning.

5.2.3 Teaching, learning and assessment methods

From the findings it can be concluded that some of the regular teachers theoretically know several teaching, learning and assessment resources. However, practically, the regular teachers do not use the methods in class. Most teachers claimed to lack skills and also the resources to use to accompany some of the methods. It may imply that there is need for support from the government to provide these classroom materials and also

making sure that the teachers have the knowledge and skills required for the adaptation and planning of these activities.

5.2.4 Large classes

From the findings of study it can be concluded that the enrolment of learners in these schools is too big in comparison to number of teachers and classrooms available at the schools. Therefore, the teacher: learner ratio compromises the chances given to learners with HI to participate in classroom activities. The large classes may have an implication on seating arrangements which affect the participation of learners with HI. Further to this, teachers have too much workload.

5.3 Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following are the recommendations First; all stakeholders (learners with HI, parents and teachers) should receive some in service training and orientation so that they may be prepared for inclusion of learners with HI in regular primary schools and challenges associated with it. This would address the issue of negative attitudes towards learners with HI.

Second, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology together with the DTED in Malawi should consider revising the TTC curriculum to include SNE and implement it. This will enable all teachers who graduate from any TTC to be able to meet the needs of

any learner in the regular primary schools. This would address the issue of lack of skills and knowledge on how to involve learners with HI in classroom activities.

Third, thorough assessment should be conducted on learners suspected to be with HI in order to make proper school placement for them. This would address the issue of lack of provision of specialized resources in the schools and also seating arrangement in classes.

Fourth, the government through the Ministry of Education should provide special resources for learners with HI and general teaching, learning and assessment resources to all regular primary schools in Malawi for inclusion of learners with HI to be a success. This would address the issue of low performance for the learners with HI due to lack of teaching, learning and assessment resources.

5.4 Areas recommended for further research

This study focused only on the exploration of factors hindering participation of learners with HI in selected regular primary schools in Ndirande Zone of Blantyre Urban. However, the schools have other categories of learners who are included in the classroom. Thus, research can also be carried out to explore how ready schools are to practice inclusion of all learners with disabilities.

In addition, research may be carried on roles of different stakeholders on learners with disabilities who are enrolled in regular schools. Finally, a research may be carried to investigate the capabilities of learners with HI in different subject areas.

Finally, a study may be carried on Malawian primary school teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education for learners with HI.

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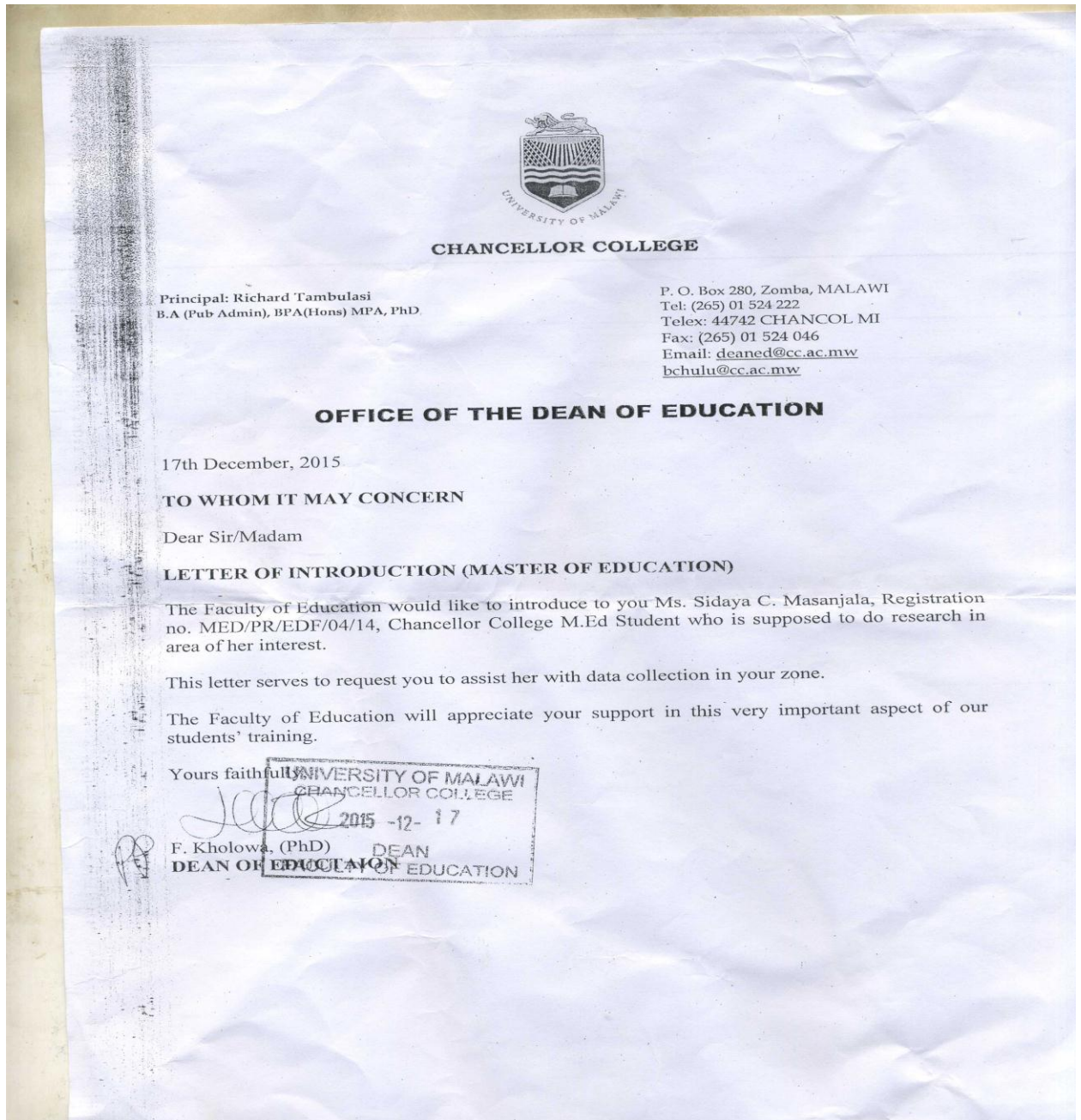
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter of introduction



Appendix 2: Consent letter



Ref.No: BC/13/3/010216/SC

1st February, 2016

FROM: THE DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGER BLANTYRE URBAN
P.O. BOX 30217, CHICHIRI, BLANTYRE 3

TO : The Dean of Education
Chancellor College
P.O. Box 280
Zomba

cc : The Headteacher, Ndirande LEA Pri. Sch.

cc : The Headteacher, Makata Primary School

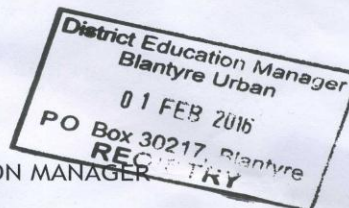
cc : The PEA, Ndirande Zone

PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH AT NDIRANDE AND MAKATA PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Permission is hereby granted to the Faculty of Education student from Chancellor College to conduct Research in Special Needs.

By copy of this letter, concerned headteachers are advised to provide necessary support to her and ensure that the activities do not disrupt teaching and learning in the schools.

M. Nhlema
For: DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGER
BLANTYRE URBAN



Appendix 3: Interview questions guide for head teachers

1. How many learners with hearing impairment are enrolled in your school?
2. What are your views/ opinion about the inclusion of learners with hearing impairment in your school?
3. What qualifications/ training do the teachers who are teaching in the inclusive classes have?
4. How do teachers and learners without hearing impairment view those learners with hearing impairment in your school?
5. What challenges do teachers face when teaching learners in an inclusive classroom?
6. What factors hinder the participation of learners with hearing impairment in your school?
7. How does your office support the teachers that have learners with hearing impairment in their classrooms?
8. What assistance does your school get from the Ministry of Education for learners with hearing impairment?
9. What are your recommendations for effective teaching and learning of learners with hearing impairment in an inclusive classroom?

Appendix 4: Interview guide for learners with hearing impairment

1. In which class are you? *Uli sitandade chani?*
2. How do you feel learning together with those without hearing impairment?
Umamva bwanji kuphunzira ndi anzako omwe alibe vuto losamva?
3. How do you interact with other learners in the classroom? *Umacheza bwanji ndi anzako mkalasi?*
4. What challenges do you face when learning in class?*ndimavuto anji omwe umakumana nawo mkalasi?*
5. What factors hinder your participation in classroom activities? *Kodi ndi zinthu ziti zomwe zimakulepheletsa kuphunzira?*
6. How does your teacher assist you when learning?*Aphunzitsi amakuthandiza bwanji pophunzira?*
7. Which mode of communication does your teacher use when teaching?*Aphunzitsi amagwiritsa ntchito njira zANJI pophunzitsa?*
8. Which mode do you prefer? Why? *Ndi njira ziti zomwe umazikonda? Chifukwa?*
9. How do you perform academically in examination? *Umakhonza bwanji mayeso?*
10. If well, explain and if no explain. What could be the causes of your good performance? What could be the causes of your bad performance?
Zimachititsa ndi chani?
11. Do you have special teaching and learning resources available that you use when learning? *Uli ndizipangizo zomwe zimakuthandiza pophunzira?*

Appendix 5: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Teachers in the inclusive classrooms

1. What are your views towards learners with hearing impairment in your classrooms?
2. Did you have any training on the teaching of learners with hearing impairment?
3. What challenges do learners with hearing impairment face in the classroom?
4. What factors hinder participation of learners with hearing impairment in your classroom?
5. What factors hinder you to involve learners in classroom activities?
6. What problems do you face when teaching learners in your classrooms especially those with hearing impairment?
7. How do you support the learners with hearing impairment in your classroom?
8. What instructional materials do you use to assist learner with hearing impairment to participate in the lesson?
9. Which modes of communication do you use when teaching learners with hearing impairment?
10. What level of interaction is there between learners with and without hearing impairment in your classroom?
11. What could be done to implement inclusion of learners with hearing impairment effectively in the classrooms?

Appendix 6: Focus Group Discussion Guide for learners without hearing impairment

1. What are your views about learners with hearing impairment in your class? *Mumawaona bwanji anzanu omwe ali ndi mavuto osamva?*
2. How do you feel learning together with learners with hearing impairment in your class? *Mumamva bwanji kuphunzira ndi anzanu omwe ali ndi vuto lakusamva?*
3. What challenges do your friends with hearing impairment face when learning? *Ndimavuto anji omwe anzanu avuto losamva amakumana nawo pophunzira?*
4. What factors hinder participation of your friends with hearing impairment in classroom activities? *Kodi ndi zinthu ziti zomwe zimawalepheletsa anzanu omwe ali ndi vuto la kumva kuphunzira m'kalasi mwanu?*
5. How do you assist your friends with hearing impairment in your class? *Mumawathandiza bwanji anzanu omwe ali ndi mavuto akusamva?*