

**CHALLENGES FACED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL
SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION POLICY GUIDELINES THAT ADVOCATE
FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A CASE OF ONE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN
ZOMBA RURAL**

M.Ed. (POLICY, PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP) THESIS

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**UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI
CHANCELLOR COLLEGE**

JUNE, 2018

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BY

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JUNE, 2018

DECLARATION

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

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DEDICATION

To all learners with disabilities

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ABSTRACT

Although the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines (MoE, 2007) were adopted to guide the implementation of inclusive education at all levels of education, there seems to be some challenges in the implementation of inclusive education. The study therefore sought to explore the challenges faced in the implementation of the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that provide guidance for the implementation of inclusive education in Malawi's one mainstream primary schools in Zomba rural. A mixed method approach was used to address the issues at hand. Data were generated through interviews, focus group discussions, observations, questionnaires and document analysis. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis and quantitative data were analysed through Microsoft Excel. Key findings reveal inadequate training of teachers in special needs and inclusive education, high pupil-teacher ratio, inadequate teaching and learning material/resources and negative attitude towards learners with special educational needs. Learners with special educational needs face such challenges as disability unfriendly environment, negative attitude from their teachers and lack of assistive devices; discrimination by their fellow learners and inadequate learning resources. The study findings imply that the challenges faced in the implementation of the NSNEPG that advocate for inclusive education require multi-sectoral approach and concerted effort to deal with them so that learners with special needs can reach their full potential in education. Such implications include but not limited to the need for coordination of government ministries and departments.

TABLE OF CONTENT

ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF APPENDICES	xii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	xii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Chapter overview	1
1.2 Background to the study	1
<i>1.2.1 SNE in Malawi</i>	1
<i>1.2.2 Malawi and International Standard and Frameworks</i>	5
<i>1.2.3 Malawi's response to International Standard and Frameworks</i>	9
1.3 Problem Statement.....	15
1.4 Purpose of the study	18
1.5 Research Questions.....	18
<i>1.5.1 Main research question</i>	18
<i>1.5.2 Sub Research Questions</i>	18
1.6 Significance of the Study	19
<i>1.6.1 Contribution to knowledge</i>	19
<i>1.6.2 Contribution to policy</i>	19
<i>1.6.3 Contribution to practice</i>	20
1.7 Definition of Operational Terms	21
1.8 Chapter Summary.....	22

3.4.1 Qualitative Methodology	65
3.4. 2 Quantitative Methodology	67
3.5 Sampling procedure, sample size and research sites.....	67
3.5.1 Sampling Procedure	68
3.5.2 Sample Frame and Size	69
3.5.3 Research site	70
3.6 Data Generation Methods and Instruments	70
3.6.1 Document analysis	70
3.6.2 Questionnaire	71
3.6.3 Interviews	73
3.6.4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).....	75
3.6.5 Non- participant observation	77
3.7 Pilot study.....	79
3.8 Data Management and Analysis	80
3.8.1 Data Management	80
3.8.2 Data analysis	81
3.9 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness	85
3.10 Role of the researcher.....	92
3.11 Ethical considerations	93
3.12 Limitations and delimitations.....	97
3.13 Chapter Summary	97
CHAPTER FOUR	100
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	100

4.1 Chapter overview	100
4.2 Background of teachers and characteristics of learners	101
4.2.1 <i>Background of Teachers</i>	101
4.2.2. <i>Characteristics of learners</i>	102
4.3. How Teachers Understood Inclusive Education.....	104
4.4 Current Practices of the implementation of National Special Needs Education.....	105
4.5 Challenges faced in the implementation of National Special Needs EducationPolicy	
Guidelines that advocate for IE	108
4.5.1 <i>Challenges that learners face</i>	108
4.5.2 <i>Challenges that teachers face</i>	125
4.6 Chapter summary	139
CHAPTER FIVE	141
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	141
5.1 Chapter overview	141
5.2 Conclusions.....	141
5.3 Implications.....	147
5.3.1 <i>Theoretical implications</i>	148
5.3.2 <i>Policy Implications</i>	149
5.3.3 <i>Implications on practice</i>	152
5.4 Chapter Summary.....	153
5.5 Suggested areas for further study.....	153
REFERENCES	154
APPENDICES	165

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Percentages of learners with SEN	4
Figure 2: Depicting inclusive education	29
Figure 3: Background of teachers showing academic qualifications.....	101
Figure 4: Background of teachers showing years of teaching experience.....	102
Figure 5: Numbers of learners with SEN at Luntha Primary School	103
Figure 6: Challenges learners with disabilities face.	109
Figure 7: A Standard 1 learner with EBD (standing) while her classmates are writing an exercise	111
Figure 8: A learner with albinism reading a book silently and alone	112
Figure 9: Classroom blocks with deep gutters	119
Figure 10: A lady teacher in the course of teaching	123
Figure 11: Challenges that teachers face	125
Figure 12: Standard 5 learners writing exercise from one text book.....	135

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Number of learners per SEN in Malawi	3
Table 2: Sample Frame	69

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Introductory Letter 1	165
Appendix 2: Letter to Primary Education Advisor	166
Appendix 3: Introductory Letter 2	167
Appendix 4: Invitation Letter to Parents.....	168
Appendix 5: Letter of informed consent.....	169
Appendix 6: Interview Guide.....	170
Appendix 7: Observation checklist.....	173
Appendix 8: Sample of data analysis using Microsoft Excel	174
Appendix 9 : Arrangement of desks in an inclusive classroom.....	175

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
EBD	Emotional Behaviour Disorder
EFA	Education for All
ESCR	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
HI	Hearing Impairment
IE	Inclusive Education
ISF	International Standard Framework
LD	Learning Difficulty
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MoH	Ministry of Health
MNPEOPD	Malawi National Policy on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities
MRPDE	Ministry Responsible for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly
NCSNE	National Council for Special Needs Education
NSNEPG	National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines.
NESP	National Education Sector Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SNE	Special Needs Education
SREOPD	Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities
UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights

UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Education Fund
VI	Visual Impairment

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Chapter overview

This chapter sets out to provide an introduction to the study. It has described the background to the study, problem statement and research questions. It has explained the purpose and significance of the study as well as given the full overview of the thesis.

1.1 Background to the study

Inclusive Education (IE) in Malawi originates from Special Needs Education (SNE) system which has been offered to learners with specific disabilities and in specific schools. A brief look at SNE in Malawi sheds light on the shift to IE.

1.2.1 SNE in Malawi

The history of formal education in Malawi traces back to 1875 when the Scottish Missionaries under the leadership of Dr. Robert Laws arrived in Malawi and later established Overtoun Institution at Kondowe in 1894 as the centre of higher education work (Phiri, 2004). The main focus of education then was on reading, writing and arithmetic. In 1926, the Department of Education was formed by the Government of Malawi.

The provision of Special Needs Education (SNE) was started by the Scottish South African Evangelical Missionaries in 1950 at Chilanga in Kasungu and Lulwe in Nsanje districts of Malawi respectively. The provision of SNE services began with the education of learners with visual impairments. In 1968, SNE for learners with hearing impairment started at Montfort campus in Chiradzulu district by the Brothers of Immaculate Conception (FIC) of the Roman Catholic Church (Alindiamao, Chavuta, Chiwaya, Itimu-Phiri & Sikelo, 2008). In 1996, the Ministry of Education introduced another SNE programme for learners with learning difficulties (p. 15).

All along, provision of SNE services for learners with special educational needs (SEN) has been done through special schools and resource classroom centres within the mainstream schools (Alindiamao et al., 2008). According to the Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) of the Ministry of Education, in 2015 there were 4, 670, 279 in primary schools in Malawi. Out of these, approximately 103,042 learners were identified with SEN representing 2.2%. However, these numbers may not reflect the actual number of learners with disabilities because the education system does not have formal assessment tools for identification of disabilities (MoEST, 2015). In addition, the numbers of learners with SEN cannot be accommodated in the few service centres established to assist learners who require SNE support (Ibid, 12). This underscores the reason for the drive to implement inclusive education both at national and international levels. Table 1 illustrates the specific SEN and the number of learners per SEN.

Figure 1 shows the percentages of learners with SEN according to their sex.

Table 1: Number of learners per SEN in Malawi

Special Educational Need	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys%	Girls%
Total Visual impairment	245	229	474	52	48
Total hearing impairment	1,684	1,401	3,085	55	45
Partial Hearing impairment (Hard of Hearing)	11,135	11,096	22,231	50	50
Learning Difficulties	25,443	22,196	47,639	53	47
Low Vision	10,604	10,280	20,884	51	49
Physical Impairment	4,922	3,807	8,729	56	44
Total	54,033	49,009	103,042		

Source: EMIS, 2015

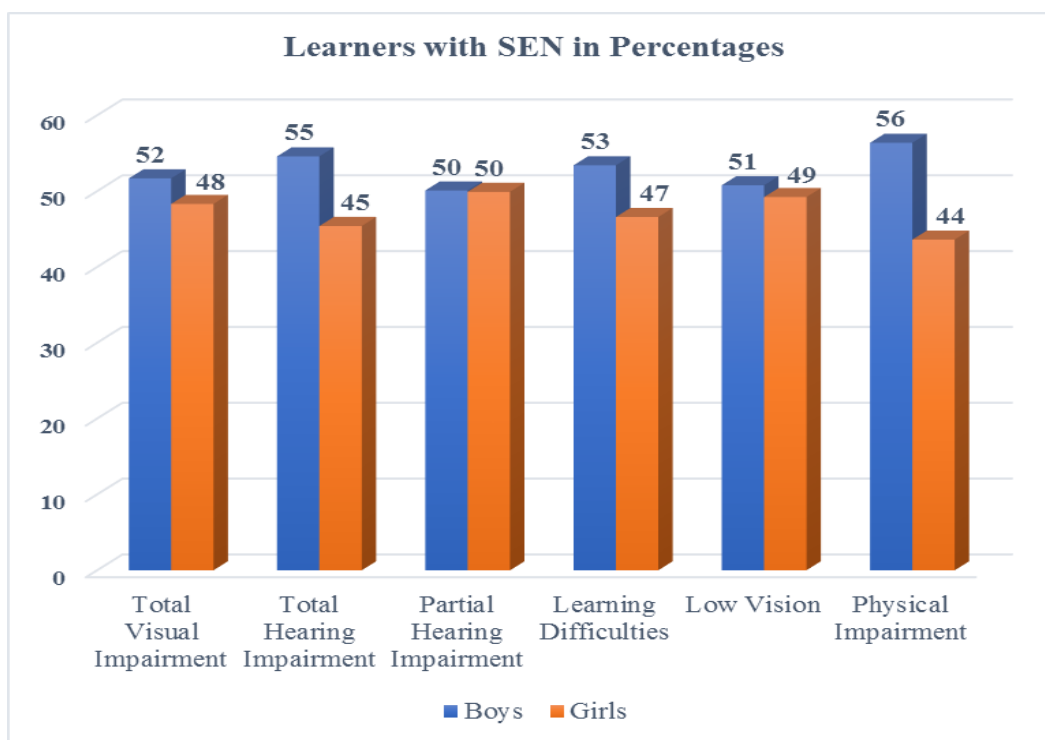


Figure 1: Percentages of learners with SEN

Source: EMIS, 2015

It is observed from both Table 1 and Figure 1 that Malawi has learners with almost every type of impairment in her primary schools. This clearly shows that every child can learn (UNESCO, 2014). It is also observed that there are more boys with impairments than girls who are in school despite that females take higher percentage than males in the population. Such disparity may be explained by the reason that most parents, especially in the rural areas, have been favouring the boy child as far as education is concerned (REFIE, 2015). However, boys and girls with partial hearing impairment share equal percentage

1.2.2 Malawi and International Standard and Frameworks

In order to progress in the provision of the education of learners with disabilities, Malawi is signatory to a number of International Standards and Frameworks (ISFs) that advocate for inclusion of learners with disabilities in the mainstream education (Kamchedzera, 2011). Such ISFs include the Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994); UN Equalisation of Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities (UN, 1993) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2007) among others. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UN 1994) stipulates that:

‘...schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include children with disabilities and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups’ (par.3).

The recommendation calls for inclusive education for all children irrespective of their differences.

Rule 6 of UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (SREOPD) affirms the equal rights to education of all persons with disabilities. It also states that education should be provided in ‘an integrated school setting’ and in the ‘general school setting’ (UN,1993). It further has the provision that in situations where the general school system does not yet adequately meet the needs of all persons with disabilities, special education may be considered (paragraph 23).

It should be aimed at preparing students for education in the general school system. The quality of such education should reflect the same standards and ambitions as general education and should be closely linked to it (UNESCO, 1993).

As such, the rule is not so rigid in the provision of education, whether special, integrated or mainstream. In this regard, it concurs with article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) which states that “parents are encouraged to have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children” (Paragraph 3). Nevertheless, it calls on educators of learners with SEN to allow for curriculum flexibility, addition and adaptation and governments to provide for quality materials, ongoing teacher training and support teachers.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD, 2007) stipulates that “every person who experiences disability should participate fully in an inclusive, quality education on an equal basis with people who are not labeled disabled” (par. 2 *b*). Specifically, this involves the right to IE at all levels of education intended to support “the full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity” (CRPD, par. 1 *c*). Additionally, the realisation of the right to education requires that accommodation should be made and support provided to “facilitate effective education...consistent with the goal of full inclusion” (par. 2 *d*).

In realising this, states shall ensure that:

- (a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education on the basis of disability;
- (b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality, free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- (c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
- (d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
- (e) Effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

However, the UNCPRD recognises that,

“Disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction of persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (UN, 2007 Art. 24)

Article 24 of CRPD, therefore, outlines the barriers to inclusive education of children with disabilities. As they interact with children without disabilities, children with disabilities experience some resistance from their counterparts. Children without disabilities and teachers as well as the society in general have negative attitude towards children with disabilities. In addition to this, the children with disabilities meet unfriendly environment as regards infrastructure. All these, as cited in the CRPD, hinder them from being at par with others as regards participating fully and effectively in the society.

All the International Standards and Frameworks are calling all countries to uphold the right to education for all children. However, they admit that it is not easy to exercise the right to education for every child since some children have disabilities which affect the enjoyment of the right to education to the fullest. They have highlighted some of the challenges that the children with disabilities face in schools. On the other hand, they have made some recommendations to countries on how these children can be assisted. Firstly, Governments must provide reasonable accommodation of individual requirements and necessary support within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education. Secondly, governments should facilitate the learning of Braille and sign language, ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and means of communication.

Thirdly, governments need to take appropriate measures to employ enough well- trained teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train teachers to incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate teaching methods (CRPD, Art.24)

1.2.3 Malawi's response to International Standard and Frameworks

In response to the calls by the ISFs, Malawi has made some strides in the recognition of the rights of people with disabilities. Malawi signed the CRPD on 27 September 2007, and subsequently ratified it on 27 August 2009 (Chilemba, 2014).

Malawi's commitment to uphold the right to education of children with disabilities is expressed in both legal and policy documents such as the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi (GoM, 1999), National Policy on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (Ministry Responsible for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly-MRPDE, 2006 now called Ministry of Gender, Youth, Disability and Welfare-MGYDW) and National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines (MoEST, 2009); the National Education Sector Plan (MoE, 2008-2017), Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (GoM, 2011-2016), the Education Act (GoM, 2013) and Disability Act (GoM, 2012).

1.2.3.1 Constitution of the Republic of Malawi (GoM, 1999)

Section 13 (f) of the Malawi Constitution makes the provision that the State has to provide adequate resources to the education sector and devise programmes in order to eliminate illiteracy in Malawi and make primary education compulsory and free to all citizens. Section 25 of the same Constitution stipulates that all persons are entitled to education. This section of the Constitution does not in any way discriminate as to who must access education. The underlining words “all persons” emphasise this.

1.2.3.2 National Policy on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (2011)

National Policy on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (MNPEOPD) aims at promoting equal access and inclusion of persons with disabilities in education (MRPDE, 2006)¹. This is aimed at promoting the rights of people with disabilities to enable them to play full role in society. It aims to ensure that concrete steps are taken for people with disabilities to access fundamental rights and responsibilities as any other person in Malawi. It emphasises that Government shall recognize the rights of persons with disabilities to education without discrimination on the basis of equal opportunity and ensure an IE system at all levels and lifelong learning by ensuring that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system at all levels and have access to quality and compulsory primary education (Section 8 paragraph a).

¹ Ministry Responsible for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly- MRPDE is now called Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MGCDSW)

It will take into consideration the special requirements of persons with disabilities in the formulation of educational policies and programs including assistive devices, teaching aids and learning support assistants (par. b); provide financial assistance to economically needy and deserving students with disabilities pursuing secondary and tertiary education in the form of scholarship grants, student loan programmes, subsidies, and other incentives in public institutions and ensure that a minimum of ten (10) percent of the allocation for students' financial assistance programmes as created by the local government is set aside for students with disabilities.

To achieve its aim, the policy outlines what needs to be done as follows: designing and developing appropriate technologies, assistive devices and learning materials; providing free appropriate resources to assist persons with disabilities with their learning needs and reviewing and reforming the delivery of the national curriculum. It calls on stakeholders to adapt and adopt communication systems appropriate for learners with SEN; train specialist educators; incorporate SNE in the teacher-training curriculum; and supporting and encouraging IE according to EOPD (14 & 15). It also aims at promoting easy access to schools' physical environments; providing information and education materials in accessible formats to people with disabilities and to establish a national sign language (nos. 12 & 14). It further stipulates that 'no learning or training institution shall deny persons with disabilities admission, expel, discipline, segregate, deny participation in any event or activity, or deny any benefits or services to any person on the basis of disability.'

Although the Policy recognises IE, it does not, expressly prioritise inclusive school approach. Instead it requires the provision of SNE while putting emphasis on special and integrated schools contrary to the requirements of the international standards.

1.2.3.3 The National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines (MoE, 2007)

The National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines advocates for inclusive education and aims at developing the personal, social and academic competencies of learners with SEN. The Policy Guidelines identify eight major components of SNE that include early identification, assessment and intervention; advocacy; care and support; management, planning, and financing; access and quality; equity and relevance (Malawi Government, 2009, SNE Policy Guidelines, Sec. 4.0).

For example, the policy area relating to access requires that ‘education system should encourage all individuals who have special needs to enrol in school and to facilitate the effective participation in all learning activities’ (NSNE Policy Guidelines, Sec. 4.5). Among others, the policy guidelines expect the government to develop and utilise national sign language; provide enough and well qualified specialist teachers; build more resource centres and special schools and a special bursary scheme for learners with SEN (SNE Policy Guidelines, 2009, Sections 4.5.1, 2 &3).

The Policy Guidelines, however, do not specifically mention the concept of IE despite the fact that the Policy Guidelines were adopted in 2007 after the CRPD was already in force (Chilimba, 2013). In addition to this, as Munthali, Tsoka, Milner, and Mvula (2012) have noted, most of the contents have not been fully implemented.

1.2.3.4 The National Education Sector Plan (2008-2017)

In the National Education Sector Plan (NESP 2008-2017), the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), through NESP, has set out government's goals and objectives of the general education sector to be realised over the period 2008-2017. The NESP intends to strengthen primary education through three sets of strategies and priorities (NESP, 19). The strategies that relate to people with disabilities aim at moving towards the 'recommended' pupil- teacher ratio of 10:1 in special schools and 5:1 in resource centres by 2017; fostering the development of tools for special needs such as sign language and braille and mobilising community participation in 'whole-school development' and management for ordinary learners and learners with SEN (NESP, 11). NESP further intends to introduce additional programmes in teacher training colleges for mainstream education and SNE (NESP, 19).

1.2.3.5 Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II (2011-2016)

This is an overarching government strategy that informs all other policies and strategies for 2011- 2016 (Milner, Munthali, Mvula & Tsoka, 2012). Within the MGDS II, children with disabilities are mentioned only once under Education. The goal of Government on Education is to improve access to quality and relevant education.

To achieve this Government through MoEST will ‘provide a conducive environment for students with special education needs.’ (MGDS II, Chapter 5.4.3). There is no elaboration in the MGDS II as to what a ‘conducive environment’ might be.

1.2.3.6 Education Act (GoM, 2013)

Malawi’s Education Act does not make any reference to education of children with disabilities or IE and it does not recognise compulsory education and Free Primary Education (FPE). This is at variance with applicable international standards (Chilemba, 2013). Nevertheless, the Education Act that enacts new education legislation recognises the concept of compulsory and FPE for every child below the age of eighteen of age (Section 13). However, the new Act has not made proposals in respect of the education of the persons with disabilities or IE apart from containing a non-discrimination clause that recognises disability as a protected ground (ibid. Sec. 4 (1)(a).

Based on the current status of SNE in Malawi, few teachers are trained to provide additional support to learners with SEN (Alindiamao, Chavuta, Chiwaya, Itimu-Phiri & Sikelo, 2008). For example, the Catholic University of Malawi has graduated approximately one hundred teachers in SNE from 2010 to 2016. As such, most learners with disabilities find themselves in the mainstream classrooms where they are expected to excel without any additional educational support.

This form of IE does not reflect the sort of IE addressed in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) which states that ‘within inclusive schools, children with SEN should receive whatever extra support they may require to ensure their effective education. Inclusive schooling is the most effective means for building solidarity between children with special needs and their peers.’

However, IE is inseparable with quality education. It means that quality education should be offered to all learners whether with or without disability. What IE requires is meant to offer quality education to those learners with SEN. Hence, quality education can only be achieved if the needs of all learners are addressed so that each and every learner is allowed an opportunity to succeed (Pinnock & Lewis, 2008). When learners with SEN are provided with appropriate support in an inclusive setting, they are able to develop a more positive self-concept (Schmidt & Cagran, 2008). The educational opportunities of learners with SEN are maximized when these learners receive classroom support, their teachers have the relevant skills, and funding is sufficient in order to provide appropriate teaching and learning resources (Farrell, Dayson, Polat, Hutcheson and Gallannaugh, 2006).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

All along, children with disabilities have been accessing primary education mostly in specialized or integrated schools. Farrell and Anscow (2002) and Foreman (2008) add that children with disabilities are located in mainstream schools but often in a separate classroom with other learners with disabilities and with a dedicated teacher.

Currently, Malawi has managed to mainstream approximately 100,000 learners with disabilities (MoEST, 2014). However, the implementation of inclusive education as outlined in the NSNEPG seem to face challenges making it difficult for some learners with special educational needs to reach their full potential in education. For example, studies in other countries like the one conducted by Lukhele and Nxumalo (2013) have found out that understanding of IE and SEN continued to cause tensions among Swazi stakeholders. In Uganda, Mariga, McConkey and Myezwa (2014) have noted that the Ugandan government faces many infrastructural challenges, including an acute shortage of classrooms, inadequate and poorly trained teachers, large class sizes and high teacher: pupil ratios and inadequate teaching and learning materials as most expenditure goes to teacher salaries. These challenges are negatively impacting on learners with disabilities or SEN and teachers. Learners with disabilities are negatively impacted because of the interaction of persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation at school on an equal basis with others.

Studies conducted in Malawi on the same include those of Alindiamao, Chavuta, Chiwaya, Itimu-Phiri and Sikelo (2008), Kamchedzera (2010), Lynch and Lund (2011) and Maganga, Mapondera, Mwale, Saka and Soko (2013). The baseline survey conducted by Alindiamao, Chavuta, Chiwaya, Itimu-Phiri and Sikelo, (2008) focused on the challenges that Special Needs Education is facing in Malawi. The challenges included lack of funding from government and that learners lacked assistive devices such as hearing aids, among others. The study that was conducted by Kamchedzera (2010) focused on the challenges that secondary school learners with disabilities face.

Lynch and Lund (2011) had special interest on the plight of learners with albinism in Malawi. They have reported that the learners with albinism lack monoculars and magnifying glasses which assist them improve their sight. Maganga, Mapondera, Mwale, Saka and Soko (2013) had their study focused on challenges that that learners with hearing impairment face. They have reported that teachers lack skills of communication with learners with hearing impairment. Mkwezalamba (2017) in her study explored the implementation of National Special Needs Education Guidelines in secondary schools in Malawi. She reported that the implementation of the guidelines faces a lot of challenges. Some of them are inadequate and lack of special teaching and learning resources for learners with special needs, inadequate and lack of trained teachers in the issues of disability and inclusive education, shortage of financial allocation to the Directorate of Special Needs Education that is responsible for the issues of special needs and inclusive education, unfriendly infrastructure among other challenges. Again Mkwezalamba' study focused on secondary schools.

There has been an increasing number of learners with different special needs in mainstream primary schools in Malawi. The National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines provides guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education. Some of the studies above focused on the challenges for specific group of learners with disabilities and others at secondary school level. This study therefore explored the challenges faced in the implementation of the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that advocate for inclusive education at primary school level for all learners with disabilities.

Unlike the earlier studies, this one takes on board all learners with diverse disabilities present in a classroom and explore the challenges they face in their education and those which their teachers face in the course of teaching them. This was done in one mainstream primary school.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore the challenges faced in the implementation of the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that advocate for IE in Malawi's primary schools

1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following main and subsidiary research questions.

1.5.1 Main research question

What are the challenges faced in the implementation of National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that advocate for inclusive education in primary schools?

1.5.2 Sub research questions

- (a) How is Inclusive Education (IE) understood by participants?
- (b) What are the current practices in the implementation of the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that advocate for IE?
- (c) What challenges do schools face in implementing the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that advocate for IE?
- (d) What strategies are used to address the challenges?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is important in the sense that it will contribute positively towards knowledge, policy and practice.

1.6.1 Contribution to knowledge

The perceptions of the units of study will help the implementers of the policy realise the gaps that need to be filled in order to make the National SNE Policy Guidelines implementation a success and with positive impact. The study further contributes to the current debates and discussion on the implementation of policies on inclusive education in both economically developing and economically developed countries.

1.6.2 Contribution to policy

The findings will inform policy-makers and help stakeholders who, among others, include the Malawi Government, Ministry of Education Science and Technology and the Directorate of Special Needs Education, teachers, parents and learners to appreciate the challenges faced in the implementation of the NSNEPG that advocate for IE in Malawi. The findings will also help them to chart the way forward on how to make the policy guidelines effective and efficient. They would further guide the effective implementation of the policy guidelines on inclusive education at primary school level.

1.6.3 Contribution to practice

The study would highlight changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies to be made in order to offer quality inclusive education to all learners on equal basis. It would also enable readers and the Malawi citizenry appreciate that the social model of disability as well as inclusive system of education are the most effective means for building solidarity among all children.

1.7 Definition of Operational Terms

Disability: It is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers. (Disabled Peoples' International, 1981)

Inclusion: This is the practice of establishing heterogeneous classrooms in neighbourhood schools where every child strives to accomplish individual goals while fully participating in social and academic activities (Flynn & Kieff, 2012).

Inclusive Education: Refers to a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education (UNESCO, 2005; Reiser, 2012)

Impairment: It is the loss or limitation of physical, mental or sensory function on a long term or permanent basis" (Reiser, 2012).

Special Educational Needs: Refers to all needs of those children and youth arising from disabilities or learning difficulties (UNESCO, 1994).

Special Needs Education: It is a system for providing conducive learning environment for learners who may require extra support in order to achieve their potential (Alindiamao et al., 2008)

Chapter Summary

IE is a concept that is being advocated for all over the world. ISFs such as EFA, CRPD, SREOPD and others have been used to advocate for IE. Malawi, being a signatory of these ISFs responded through legal and policy documents such as the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, National Policy on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (2006) and Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines (MoEST, 2009); the National Education Sector Plan (2012-2017, Malawi Growth and Development Strategy and the Education Act (2013).

Malawi's response to the ISFs through the implementation of the legal and policy documents has seen an increase in number of learners with diverse SEN accessing basic education. It is presupposed that their pursuit of their right to education has not been without challenges which have triggered the study.

The study was guided by four research questions to generate comprehensive data. It is envisaged that the study on the challenges is so significant in the sense that it contributes to knowledge, policy and practice. The positive contributions that the study makes to these three tenets enable various stakeholders to appreciate and embrace the social model of disability and successful implementation of inclusive system of education. The next chapter reviews extant literature on the topic under study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter overview

The previous chapter has given, to some extent, brief background to the study. In this chapter relevant literature and studies about the challenges faced in the implementation of IE is reviewed. The structure of the chapter is guided by the research questions. The chapter has also explored the challenges in the implementation of IE as experienced in some countries of Africa and then in Malawi. At the end of this chapter is the conceptual framework which informed the study.

2.2 Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century, which are affected by rapid globalisation (World Education Forum, 2000, par. 6). At the heart of IE is a commitment to seeing education as fundamental to the development both of individuals and of societies (UNESCO, 2000).

To this effect, some authors such as Depeller, Harvey and Loreman (2010), Reiser, (2012), and Chilemba, (2013) as well as institutions such as the National Council on Special Needs Education (NCSE, 2010) have written on IE. Apart from them there have been International Standards and Frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement and Framework (UNESCO, 1994), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2007) among others that advocate for IE.

2.3 How Inclusive Education is understood by the public

There are several definitions of IE which shows clearly that the term IE is a social construct and contested concept (Depeller et al., 2010). The National Council for Special Education (2010) have defined IE as “a dynamic process of participation of people within a net of relationships”. Further to this (NCSE, 2010) have described IE as “a process involving changes in the way schools are organised, in the curriculum and in teaching strategies, to accommodate the range of needs and abilities among pupils”. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend and, in so doing, reduces the need to exclude pupils. This process legitimises people’s interactions within social groups (Ibid, p.15).

Inclusive education can also be defined as “all children learning together in mainstream classrooms in their locality or community, irrespective of the different range of abilities and disabilities, with teaching methods, materials, and school environments that address the needs of all girls and boys” (Walker, 2012).

The definition encourages education system that does not exclude any school-going child. Although such is the case, it focuses much on equal access to education by boys and girls and not learners with disabilities and those without disabilities. Of course, it emphasises on the requirement by social model of disability in which environment, teaching methods and materials should be modified to suit the needs of the learners, in this context, boys and girls.

The Index for Inclusion as cited by Reiser (2012) is a widely used tool and defines inclusive education as having the following aims: Firstly, valuing all students and staff equally; increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from the cultures, curricula and communities of local school. Secondly, restructuring cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in the locality. Thirdly, reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as having special educational needs. Fourthly, learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes that benefit students more widely. Finally, viewing differences among students as resources that support learning, rather than as a problem to be overcome. The other components include acknowledging the right of students to receive an education in their locality; improving schools for staff as well as for students and emphasising the role of schools in building community and developing values, as well as in increasing achievement; fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities; and recognising that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.

The Index for Inclusion shows clearly that the social model of disability should be central to education of learners. It should be implemented right from the local communities where learners with disabilities come from. Societies should see to it that cultural practices and policies should enable children with disabilities to access education in the same way as learners without disabilities. In addition to this, learning environment should enable learners with diverse disabilities to have less or no problems in accessing education.

UNESCO (2005) presents a working definition of IE. It defines IE as “a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education” (p. 13). It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the state to educate all children. IE is not a marginal issue but is central to the achievement of high-quality education for all learners and the development of more inclusive societies.

The definition underscores the whole essence of the social model of disability. It emphasises that it should not be learners with disabilities who should adapt to the learning environment, content, approaches and structures as in the medical model, rather it should be the environment and the rest that should be modified to suit the need of the learners with disability.

In practice, according to Reiser (2012), the UNESCO's definition means that one ministry is responsible for the education of all children, one school system is responsible for the education of all children in their region and there is a diverse mix of students in classes.

It also means that teachers use classroom strategies that respond to diversity, such as multi-level instruction, co-operative learning, individualised learning modules, activity-based learning and peer tutoring; there is collaboration between teachers, administrators and others in responding to the needs of individual students. IE is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non-formal educational settings. Rather than being a marginal theme on how some learners can be integrated into the mainstream education system, IE is an approach that looks into how to transform the system so that it will respond to the diversity of learners (UNESCO, 2013).

It is important to understand IE as a broad concept, referring to the right of all learners (including children with disabilities, but also other marginalised groups) and applying to learners of all ages, both children and adults (Handicap International, 2012). IE is not another name for special education needs. Rather it is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity needs for all learners through increasing participation in learning, in cultural activities and in communities and reducing exclusion within and from education.

It involves a different approach to identifying and attempting to resolve difficulties that arise in schools. It involves changes and modification of content, approaches, structures and strategies with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range. It also appreciates the conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (Depeller, Harvey & Loreman, 2010).

The definitions of IE can thus be summarised as a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners. This process involves changes in the way schools are organised so that all children (regardless of their ability or disability) can be learning together thereby enhancing participation within a net of relationships.

The key issues that should be underscored include “process” which implies that IE is not a system of education that can be implemented overnight; “addressing and responding” to diverse needs of learners meaning that there must be identification of the needs of learners with SEN first and address and respond to them accordingly in order to implement IE successfully (UNESCO, 2005).

The principle that, ‘All students can be successful learners’, recognises that all students can succeed when they are provided with sufficient time, support and effective teaching. This ensures that the aims of social justice and equity are seen in practice as all students, irrespective of race, ethnicity, disability or socio-economic background can achieve quality educational outcomes. It acknowledges the right of all students to be successfully enrolled in schools and experience success through participating in IE programs (UNESCO, 2009).

The democratic and human-rights based intent of IE is defined in the Salamanca Statement, and represented in the “recognition of the need to work towards ‘schools for all’ – institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs (UNICEF, 2011). Figure 2 shows what IE entails.

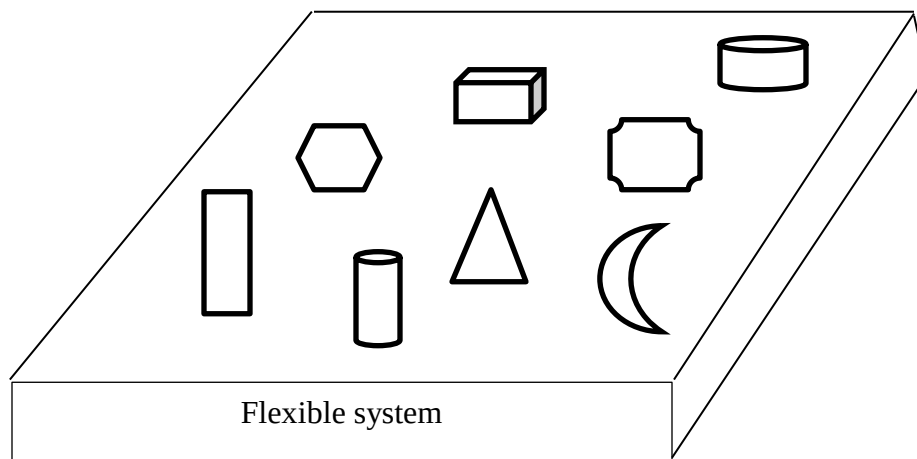


Figure 2: Depicting inclusive education

Source: Reiser 2012, p. 65

The different shapes in **Figure 2** depict that children are different. They have diverse needs depending on their abilities and disabilities. However, they are in one “classroom” despite their abilities and disabilities. IE demonstrates that all children can learn. However, the education system must change to fit the child.

2.4 Current practices in the implementation of policies on IE

There are practices that are currently being done in the implementation of policies on IE in some countries. These practices are to do with parental involvement and instruction of learners with disabilities.

Mukhopadhyay (2013) has noted that parental support is minimal in terms of working hand in hand with teachers in the education of learners with disabilities. Abongdia, Dakada and Foncha (2015) concur with him having observed that parents do not play a vital role in the education of their children with disabilities.

Parents would want to avoid stigmatization which in a way may hinder the teachers from identifying the child’s barriers to learning. However, the role of parents is undervalued by teachers who still hold to the role of being experts about the child while parents listen and sign whatever documents they are told to (p.15).

Despite parents' reluctance, Beyene and Tizazu (2010) found that educators were cautiously accepting including a child with cognitive disability and were more accepting of children with physical disabilities. The degree of acceptance for inclusion was high for children considered to have mild or moderate disabilities.

As regards instruction of learners with disabilities, Mukhopadhyay (2013, p.23) has reported in his study that:

“Teachers used teacher-centred methods which did not cater for individual differences. Their lesson notes were scanty without clear evidence on how they would meet learning needs of learners with SEN. None of the teachers employed instructional accommodation during teaching and learning. Teachers felt that learners with SEN do not comprehend well when instructed in English- they operate within the “deficit model” which views learners with SEN as incapable of learning. Educators are faced with a difficult task in identifying learners with learning barriers in their classrooms. They are expected to continue to use the existing curriculum to teach learners who were previously not in the mainstream because these learners opted not to be in that stream but rather because the education system did not allow them to be included with other learners”.

The findings of Mukhopadhyay (2013) demonstrate that the teachers were not trained on how to identify, handle and teach learners with SEN. Their perception of learners with disabilities is negative so much so that they considered them as people who are not worth of accessing education from their hands. This perception has forced them to cling to the medical model of disability rather than embracing the social model. As such, they are unable to modify the teaching strategies in order to accommodate learners with disabilities

2.5 Challenges in implementing Policies on IE at International and National Levels and Strategies to Address such Challenges

There are challenges that are experienced in implementing policies on inclusive education both at international and national levels. However, individuals, governments and non-governmental organisations at both levels have come up with strategies to address those challenges. The following paragraphs describe such challenges and explain the strategies to address them.

2.5.1 Challenges in implementing policies on IE at international levels and strategies to address them

In a bid to implement policies on IE there are a number of challenges that are faced which alert IE policy framers as well as implementers. Depeller et al. (2010) outline rationale, scope and pace; resources, commitment and key staff and as well as relationship to other initiatives as areas from which challenges to IE are established.

They explain that the benefits to inclusion have not been communicated to those involved in the process. As regards pace, they have noted that required changes are either implemented too quickly or too slowly. Resources that are very essential to IE are either not provided or allocated timely to ensure inclusion can work or in a way that is helpful.

There is no long-term commitment to inclusion and that staff members who are crucial to the success of the implementation of policies on IE may either not be committed or could be taking on too much of the work load which might alienate other staff members.

Regular classroom teachers feel that they are lacking in the prerequisite skills and knowledge for effective implementation of policies on IE to cater for learners with significantly diverse learning needs. As such, they observed that IE works best with teachers who understand and demonstrate effective teaching and learning practise within a framework of collaboration and support from the school and local community. In addition to these, Depeller et. al. (2010) have also observed that parents are not included in the schools as collaborators and finally that the implementation of IE is dealt with in isolation from other school initiatives.

Studies conducted by Lukhele and Nxumalo (2013) in Swaziland, Lebona (2013) in South Africa and Mariga, McConkey and Myezwa (2014) in Uganda also discuss challenges similar to those of Depeller et. al. (2010) and many others.

Lukhele and Nxumalo (2013) in their study on the *Implementation of Inclusive Education in the Kingdom of Swaziland* have found out that understanding of IE and SEN continued to cause tensions among Swazi stakeholders. According to them, there are tensions in policy development and implementation, that is, “schools for the deaf have asserted preference to schools for the deaf where students and teachers share a common language and culture” (p. 23). In addition, they have observed that the responsibility for advocating and promoting inclusion and IE is not broadly shared within government structure. In some quarters, IE was still narrowly defined and associated with disability only. The role of special schools had never been fully explored. There were inadequate monitoring and evaluation of IE at national level. There was no local research in IE to inform practice.

Early childhood education was not yet inclusive. Finally, curriculum was not child centred, not inclusive to the extent that repetition rate was higher than 10% (Lukhere & Nxumalo, 2013).

The findings of Lukhere and Nxumalo, 2013) call for a clear understanding of the difference between IE and SNE where IE should draw from the principles of social model of disability. This type of education system should be seen right from the early childhood education. They also show that the success of IE is dependent upon the attitude of the government towards it. Hence, lack of political will cripples the success of an education system. This is the more reason UNESCO (2009) has put it, as a strategy to address the challenge, that:

“A decision to provide education to all children, including children with disabilities, requires a commitment from government to accept that all children have an equal right to education. Unless the commitment is made explicit, this particular group of children are at a very high risk for continued exclusion” (p.56)

Therefore, governments have a big role to play to enable the school going children access inclusive education regardless of their state of life, that is, whether with or without disabilities.

A study conducted by Lebona (2013) on *The Implementation of Inclusive Education in Primary Schools* established that “as a result of South Africa’s particular history of inequalities and discrimination and the context of rapid social changes, most schools do not even have basic resources such as toilets, water, electricity and sufficient classrooms and that they are experiencing a serious breakdown in the teaching and learning culture.”

Any effort at building an inclusive school will have to include the identification of specific priorities relating to particular needs in the context of building a culture of teaching and learning.

In accepting an inclusive approach, the Education Department in South Africa in White Paper no.6 acknowledged that the learners who were most vulnerable to barriers to learning and exclusion were those who were historically termed ‘learners with special education needs’, that is, learners with disabilities and impairments. It stated that their increased vulnerability had arisen largely because of the historical nature and extent of the educational support provided (Reiser, 2012).

Different challenges to the implementation of policies on inclusive education can arise due to different factors. For example, according to (Lebona, 2013), the challenges might arise because of negative attitudes, an inflexible curriculum, an inappropriate language of learning, inaccessible and unsafe built environments, inadequate support services, inadequate policies and legislation, failure to involve parents and inadequately and inappropriately trained education managers and educators.

Children with disabilities face many challenges in education. Three of the most serious challenges involve institutionalised discrimination, stigmatisation and neglect from the classroom to the local community and in the home. They are often isolated within their societies and communities because of a mixture of shame, fear and ignorance about the causes and consequences of their impairment. In addition, many schools, particularly those in remote rural areas or slums, are physically inaccessible to some disabled children (p.256). All these are the identified challenges faced in the implementation of policies on inclusive education.

Lebona (2013) has shown that the availability of adequate basic resources in a school is crucial to the education of learners. On the other hand, availability of basic resources that are disability friendly is very important to the education of learners with disabilities. Such proves the reasonable implementation of the social model of disability. Where the culture of teaching and learning is broken, the learners with disabilities are victims since they are the minority and not many or none of the teachers have positive attitude towards them. Hence, it is difficult to adopt the social model of disability when learners with disabilities are sidelined.

Reiser (2012), citing Anthony (2009) has reported that one qualitative study on attitudes towards children with autism in Ghana revealed that they were widely described as ‘useless and not capable of learning, stubborn, lazy, or willfully disobedient’.

The education of children with disabilities is undervalued by many families, there is no awareness about the potentials that children with disabilities have in society or at school. Children with disabilities in mainstream schools receive less attention from teachers and there is an overemphasis on academic achievement and examination as opposed to all round development of children.

With such an attitude it is very difficult for learners with disabilities to participate fully in their education. Ainscow and Booth (2002) cited by Reiser (2012) have looked at participation as going beyond access. Participation implies learning alongside others and collaborating with them in shared lessons. It involves active engagement with what is learned and taught and having a say in how education is experienced. More importantly participation also involves being recognised for oneself and being accepted for oneself.

The Global Campaign for Education (2012) argues: ‘... high quality education requires sufficient recruitment of teachers who are trained, supported, paid and managed as professionals’ (p.3). Teacher training both pre-service and in-service is essential to develop skills necessary to teach successfully in inclusive setting and it leads to more inclusive attitude (Cogran & Schmidt, 2011).

Mukhopadhyay, Nenty and Abosi (2012) have reported in their study on *Inclusive Education for Learners with Disabilities in Botswana Primary Schools* that teachers have large classes which increase their workload. Secondly IE is not supported fully by the Division of Special Education to the extent that there are inadequate resource materials and appropriate infrastructure. Thirdly, their study found out that there was too little collaboration among special educators, regular teachers and parents.

In a study conducted by Mariga, McConkey and Myezwa (2014) on *Inclusive Education in Low Income Countries* , they have noted that the Ugandan government is committed to education for all but faces many infrastructural challenges in achieving this, including an acute shortage of classrooms, inadequate and poorly trained teachers, large class sizes and high teacher: pupil ratios (officially 1:40 but extending to 1:80 in underserved areas), and inadequate teaching and learning materials as most expenditure goes to teacher salaries. Of course, when a teacher has large classes it becomes difficult for him or her to teach effectively. Some learners may not be attended to fully and may not be given enough assignments.

In such situations where the teacher has large classes, Deppeler (2010) has suggested parallel teaching design as one way of sorting out the challenge. In this teaching strategy the teacher divides the class into two groups and teaches them simultaneously. The learner/ teacher ratio is low and more time is devoted to learning versus learners waiting for help, opportunities for re-teaching are immediate, support for the learners is present, communication is constant and behaviour problems can be minimised.

Mwangi and Orodho (2014) in their study on *Challenges Facing Implementation of Policies on Inclusive Education in Public Primary Schools* have found out that challenges faced in Kenya were but not limited to the following: firstly, physical and critical teaching/learning resources were either inadequate or in bad condition. Secondly, there were inadequate specialised teachers to handle the SNE curriculum. Finally, there were several socio-economic and cultural variables that constrained effective teaching and learning in most of the schools. They argued that the pupils with learning difficulties used the same facilities with their counterpart regular pupils which posed a major challenge to both teachers and the learners. The instructional materials are inadequate, there is lack of an SNE learner-centred inclusive curriculum and inadequate teaching strategies (p.124). Accordingly, IE in other countries faces such challenges as negative attitude, inadequate human and material resources and no collaboration between policy and practice.

In terms of strategies to address the challenges faced in the implementation of policies on inclusive education, some have suggested such strategies. For example, with regard to curriculum as a challenge, Depeller et al. (2010) suggest that designing a universal curriculum for learning can be one way of dealing with this challenge. According to them, universal design for learning involves multiple means of representation, multiple means of expression and multiple means of engagement. The second one is making learner-specific adaptations and modification. Multiple means of representation means giving all learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge. It involves representing information in multiple formats, for example, direct teaching, group discussion and differing assignments; visual, auditory and kinesthetic presentation.

Multiple means of expression means providing all learners with alternatives for demonstrating what they know. This means offering multiple and perhaps non-traditional avenues for assessment which go beyond written assignments or tests to include verbal and/or visual presentations, performances, etc. Adapting and modifying curriculum to link it to an individualised programme is a pragmatic alternative to universal design for learning. It requires identifying links between individual objectives and the classroom curriculum (p. 145).

Multiple means of engagement means to tap all learners' interests, offer appropriate challenges and increase motivation. Differing needs, learning styles, abilities and interests are taken into account to ensure that strength along with needs, are addressed for all individuals (p. 150).

Regarding infrastructure as a challenge, Scott, Leach and Bucholz (2008) have explained that the type of classroom environment that a teacher creates and encourages can either increase or decrease a student's ability to learn and feel comfortable as a member of the class. The classroom environment should do as much to foster cooperation and acceptance as the teaching methods that the teacher uses. According to them, the physical environment of a classroom plays a part in the ownership students feel about their school. What Scott et. al. (2008) mean is that the environment should be conducive to all learners; those with and without disability.

2.5.2 Challenges in implementing National Special Needs Education Policy

Guidelines that advocate for IE in Malawi and Strategies to address them.

Empirical evidence on challenges that may impinge on IE is sourced from different surveys and research studies that were conducted by different people in Malawi since 2007. The National Special Needs Education (NSNE) Policy guidelines (2007) outlines seven challenges which implementation of such guidelines is likely to face. They are financial constraints, environmental barriers and attitudinal barriers; shortage of specialist personnel, rigid curriculum, little coordination among stakeholders and disorganised institutional and administrative structures. While (NSNE) Policy guidelines (2007) focused on the challenges relating to SNE, this study goes beyond SNE and focuses on inclusive education (IE). The replication of the challenges in the study findings prove how slow it has taken the government and other stakeholders to address or how they have been neglected all together. Hence a call for action to address the challenges.

The NSNE Policy Guidelines (2007) has put forward some strategies to avert the challenges related to access of education by learners with SEN. Firstly, MoEST is to develop and utilise national sign language to learners with hearing impairment, tactile language for learners with deaf-blind, augmentative alternative communication for learners with communication difficulties and braille for learners with visual impairment (Sec.4.5.2.1.1). Secondly, MoEST will provide enough and well qualified Specialist Teachers, Sign Language Interpreters, Learning Support Assistants (Teacher Aides), and Braillists for learners with SEN (Sec.4.5.2.1.2).

Finally, it will also promote enabling environment for all categories of learners with SNE (Sec.4.5.2.1.5) and equip SNE units with adequate staff and assistive devices (Sec.4.5.2.1.6). Further, the NSNE Policy Guidelines that advocate for IE offer long term strategies to enable stakeholders implement them successfully. Provision of specialist teaching personnel and equipment as well enabling environment require strong political will to put the plans into reality.

A baseline survey on IE project was carried out in Shire Highlands Education Division in 2008. Its aim was to conduct a situational analysis of mainstream education system for the inclusion of learners with SEN in 20 selected primary schools in Shire Highlands Education Division. The primary schools where the study was conducted include: Chimvu, Chifide, and Chikuli; Chingazi, Chisoka and Goliati; Gologota, Makuwa and Malimba; Migowi CCAP, Mwanje and Nakoma, Namphande, Nasiyaya, Nawita and Samikwa. The report revealed that there were challenges faced by both mainstream teachers as well as learners with disabilities. Insufficient funding, environmental and attitudinal barriers were some of the major challenges to implementing IE in schools (Alindiamao, Chavuta, Chiwaya, Itimu-Phiri, & Sikero, 2008).

In her study of barriers to IE in Malawi's inclusive secondary schools, Kamchedzera (2010) found out that the challenges, among others, included lack of specialist teachers, inadequate and lack of teaching/ learning resources, lack of support, inadequate trained teachers in SNE, negative attitudes, inaccessible infrastructure and physical environment among others. She also observed that learners with disabilities lacked active participation.

Furthermore, the findings in her 2015 study revealed that there is an imbalance in the delivery of IE in primary and secondary schools which the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines fail to address. She noted that school committees, parents and teacher associations are not given the autonomy to come up with innovative ways to deal with school-specific challenges.

Lynch and Lund (2011) who had special interest on the plight of learners with albinism in Malawi found that these learners lacked low vision devices such as monocular telescopes and magnifiers and sun protectors such as wide brimmed hats and sun glasses. In addition to these the learners with albinism suffered from name calling (*Napweri, Mzungu dala*) meaning that “pretending to be white yet you are not.” Some teachers have negative attitude on learners with albinism (p.28).

In order to deal with the above-mentioned challenges, Lynch and Lund (2011) have proposed the following strategies. Firstly, every teacher should know about albinism and how to take care of someone with albinism; this must be included in their training. Secondly, teachers should protect the child with albinism from other pupils in school. Finally, they have proposed that teachers must give notes to the child with albinism to copy (and not rely on them seeing on the chalkboard (p.30).

Maganga, Mapondera, Mwale, Saka and Soko (2013, p.32-33) concur with Kamchedzera as noted in their study. In addition to what Kamchedzera (2010) reported, they identified language problem, inappropriate curriculum and lack of expertise in managing learners with SEN as some of the challenges faced in IE. They also found out that there were negative attitude of teachers towards learners with SEN, lack of motivation for specialist teachers and lack of vocational training.

UNESCO (2015) emphasise that “no child is ‘learning impaired’” (p. 133). Thus, they challenge that “given the right conditions all children can learn effectively” (p. 134). Training of teachers, lesson planning, classroom arrangement, teaching strategies and classroom management play crucial role in ensuring IE. Developing inclusive schools may be more a question of improving teachers’ skills and attitude, developing support systems and better utilizing human resources that already exist in schools.

UNESCO (2015, pp.253-266) recommend that when teachers are planning lessons they need to plan to use visual materials; to use tasks that involve discussion and provide opportunities for movement of some form, for example, drama, dance that is possibly linked to the different cultures represented in the classroom. The teacher should ask him/herself “what activities will be relevant to them and how can he/she adapt an activity to make it more relevant so that all of the children in class can learn.

Organisation of the furniture in the room is also important. There should be enough space for all students to easily move throughout the classroom. Teachers should consider the use of universal design. Universal design is designing products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for modification or specialized design (Burgstahler, 2008). Ideal desk arrangements create opportunity for students to be actively engaged in learning and have the opportunity to work cooperatively, when appropriate, with their peers, while still allowing students to navigate the environment safely. Thus, Depeller et al. (2010) recommend that desks should be arranged in a square shape. (See Appendix 9).

When children learn, they may use several pathways to help them understand and remember (UNESCO, 2015). It is therefore important for teachers to use different strategies that cover a mix of learning pathways. These pathways are logical or mathematical where children learn through reasoning and calculation; visual and spatial where some children like art and verbal or linguistic where children think and learn written and spoken words, memory and recall.

More pathways are body and kinesthetic where some children learn through body movements, games and drama; musical and rhythmic where children learn through sounds, rhythm and repetition and interpersonal where children learn easily in groups through cooperative work. They enjoy group activities and easily understand social situations. In the intra-personal pathway some children learn best through personal concentration and self-reflection. They can work alone, are aware of their feelings and know their own strengths and weaknesses (UNESCO, 2015)

Franck (2015) observes that despite the fact that educators did not receive in-service training on IE, they are expected to implement more effective delivery techniques. They also have to change instructional strategies, grouping practices, pacing and assessment, not only to accommodate learners' individual needs but also to alter conditions that led the referral of students to special needs education. Depeller et al. (2010) suggest three models of inclusion which teachers may use to implement inclusive education in their schools namely; consultative, teaming and collaborative models.

2.5.2.1 Consultative Model

The consultative model is done in a building where there is low incidence of learners with SEN and overall low learner population. The special education teacher is made available to re-teach a difficult skill or to help the learner practice a newly required skill. This is a non-intrusion approach that provides the learners with SEN with at least two teachers to ask for help with curricular problems. Regularly scheduled meetings are recommended rather than communication on a needed basis.

2.5.2.2 Teaming Model

In this model the special education teacher is assigned to one class with one period per week for the team. This special education teacher provides learners with information, possible strategies, and modifications; ideas for assignment and/or tests and behavior modification strategies. The team meets on regular basis, establishing consistent communication among team members. The team model is designed in a way that teachers are not working independently to achieve success of their learners. Instead all team members, both regular education and special education teachers work together to broaden their knowledge in various areas.

2.5.2.3 Collaborative Model

Using this model, the regular education and special education teachers work together to teach learners with and without SEN in a shared classroom. Both are for instruction, planning and delivery; learner achievement, assessment and discipline. Learners do receive age-appropriate academics, support services and possible modified instruction. The model provides a minimum of schooling problems, continuous and ongoing communication between educators and lower learners/ teacher ratio than the consultative and teaming models.

According to Depeller et al. (2010), collaborative teaching can be organized in three different ways: One teacher one support, situation teaching, alternative teaching as well as team teaching. One teacher one support strategy works well for teaching a unit where one teacher is more of an expert in SNE than the other. This means that learners have two teachers to ask questions and get help (Depeller et al., 2010).

Situation teaching strategy invites the teacher to divide up the content and learners so that the teacher and learners rotate at the end of a unit. It is ideal for subject matter taught in units with no particular sequence. This has such benefits as immediate opportunities for re-teach, low learner/ teacher ratio and teacher becomes expert in material. There is also constant communication among teachers (Depeller et al., 2010)

In using alternative method of teaching one teacher leads an enrichment or alternative activity while the second teacher re-teaches a small group if they are having difficulty with content. Team teaching method demands that teachers work together to deliver the same material to the entire class. The teachers circulate around the class providing immediate re-teaching. This method also provides a low learner/ teacher ratio.

The three models and the other strategies above provide practical ways for the proper implementation of IE and the social model of disability in schools which are at the core of IE. However, in order to effectively implement policies on IE, classroom management plays a significant role.

Chilemba (2013) concurs with Kamchedzera (2010) and others who carried out studies in Malawi. He has further noted that Malawi is not adhering to the ‘four-As (4As)’ international standard relating to education in general as elaborated by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Committee on ESCR). The four-A’s are Availability, Accessibility, Adaptability and Affordability.²

Chilemba (2013) has concluded that Malawi experiences a number of obstacles that make compliance with this 4As standard a pipe-dream. The situation is apparently exacerbated by Malawi’s failure to implement the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that advocate for inclusive education. Citing the Cheshire and Montfort study (2008) he has reported that Malawi faces difficulties to implement inclusive education due to, amongst others, limited resources; insufficient funding; and environmental barriers.

² Availability of education implies that functioning educational institutions and programmes must be available in sufficient quantity within the state to cater for all children. The accessibility standard requires the state to ensure that educational institutions and programmes, including the environment, services, and all necessary facilities are accessible to all children. Accessibility has three overlapping dimensions which require that there must be physical accessibility; economic accessibility; and accessibility without discrimination. The attribute of acceptability entails that the form and substance of education, curricula and teaching methods are relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality and are regarded as such by parents and learners, including disabled children. Lastly, the standard of adaptability requires education to be flexible to adapt to the needs of changing societies and to be responsive to the needs of learners within their diverse social and cultural settings (Chilemba, 2013).

The challenges facing teachers and learners include a lack of knowledge and skills in teaching children with disabilities; inadequate teaching and learning resources; negative attitudes by teachers and the community towards disabled children; inaccessible school infrastructure; and a lack of assistive devices (Chilemba, 2013).

The REFIE country study report of the findings from the study they conducted in Malawi's primary schools in 2015 has it that "barriers to inclusive education in Malawi are mainly related to legislative, economic and attitudinal aspects. A main barrier lies in the absence of consistent, clear orientation towards inclusive education in Malawian education policy..." (REFIE, 2015, p. 37). The study also observed that there is strong emphasis on special needs education rather than inclusive education. Long distances to school and lack of infrastructure are huge challenges (REFIE, 2015). In addition, parents' view regarding their child's disability do influence their willingness to send children to school. They think that their children are stigmatized by their peers as well as the perception that it is not worthwhile to send their children to school as they would in any case be unable to learn anything (REFIE, 2015). Therefore, IE systems, grounded in a rights-based analysis, must no longer be seen as a marginal policy issue, but as central to the achievement of high quality education for all learners, and the development of more inclusive societies.

Most classrooms of today are inclusive classrooms which have a blend of all learners with and without special educational needs. The learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms often present with mild to moderate learning and/or behavioral challenges.

For students who might be identified as having learning disabilities, 45% of the time they also have an attention deficit and struggle with organisation and executive function (DuPaul, Gormley & Laracy, 2013). Creating a learning environment for inclusive classrooms that is well managed with clear structures and routines is of the utmost importance for learner success (Wong & Wong, 2014).

It can be noted that IE has broad and deep meaning and entails a number of things. It focuses mainly on transforming the teaching and learning environment and methodologies to accommodate all learners especially those with disabilities. IE expects the learner with SEN to access and excel in education in the same way as other learners without SEN.

It can be inferred, therefore, that IE draws from the social model of disability where education in its entirety is meant to be adapted to the learner with disability and not vice-versa as is the case in the medical model of disability. Although such is the understanding, the current practices do not reflect the actual meaning of IE and its implications. The extant literature shows that parents, on one hand, subject their own children with disabilities to stigmatization and discrimination in their own homes. On the other hand, it shows that teachers accept learners depending on the degree of disability.

This actually means that not all learners with disabilities can have access to education. It can also be concluded that when discrimination and stigmatisation begin with one's parent, it will be difficult to advocate for IE and to promote the social model of disability. The willingness of the parent to have the child with disability access education will compel the teacher to find better ways of accommodating the learner.

The current practices, therefore, point to the challenges which both learners and teachers experience. Learners with disabilities have challenges from their teachers, peers without disabilities as well as the physical environment while teachers' challenges are mainly from their employers (Ministry of Education) and trainers. The challenges imply that IE system of education and the social model of disability may not be hoped for.

Strategies that are lined up to deal with the challenges underscore the importance of advocating for IE and paradigm shift from medical to social model of disability. The strategies, according to the literature, concerned mainly the teacher; training, planning and delivery of content. It does not clearly demonstrate how the learner with disability will be helped to grasp, assimilate and apply the content. Much as the NSNE policy guidelines state that provision of enabling environment for learners with disabilities is one way of dealing with the challenges, they do not describe what the "enabling" environment is and how this will be provided.

In summary, in-depth understanding of IE and what it entails smoothens the process of policy formulation on IE and how the social model of disability can best be used. Such an understanding will also help prevent challenges which learners and teachers may face when implementing IE. When challenges arise, the strategies used to deal with them should benefit both learners with SEN and teachers. In the final analysis IE will be a success.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework hinges on two main models of disability namely; the medical and the social model of disability. These models are suitable for the study's theoretical framework because they demonstrate the shift in education system for learners with disabilities. It is worthwhile reviewing the two models, especially the medical model, in order to show the reasons why people should drop it and propagate inclusive education which is promoted by the social model explained in the following paragraphs.

2.6.1 Models of Disability

Different people have different perceptions about disability and children with disability. Two main views are explained below, namely, the medical and social models. These later explain the reasons for the establishment of a particular system of education for the learners with disabilities.

2.6.1.1 The medical model

The medical model of disability associates disability with damage and disease. People who think in terms of the medical model see disability as a problem in the person with disability that comes from their impairment that is, their difficulty in seeing or hearing well, being unable to move easily, or needing more time to learn and understand (Handicap International, 2012). Through the medical model, disability is understood as an individual problem. If somebody has an impairment - a visual, mobility or hearing impairment, for example - their inability to see, walk or hear is understood as their disability. (ibid). In the medical-model approach to disability, people with disabilities are thought of as 'deviant' because they are considered to be different (in negative ways) from what the rest of society considers 'normal' (Handicap International, 2012, p. 10)

In a society where medical-model thinking is common, the aim is to eliminate or reduce these differences through remedial treatments. So, people with disabilities are 'objects' to be 'treated' and changed in accord with the standards commonly accepted by society. Failure to change becomes primarily the problem of people with disabilities themselves (McArthur, 2010). What persons with disabilities 'could not do' led to their being categorised by type and degree of impairment and as a result labeled, separated and related to differently from people without disabilities (Reiser, 2012). This attitude often reinforced and was grafted on to the range of persistent traditional views outlined above and became a potent means of oppression (Reiser, 2012). However, the categorisation of people with disabilities by medical model of thinking does not mean that people with disabilities do not need interventions from medically trained professionals.

A vital part of people with disabilities' lives and rights is access to medically-based interventions to keep them alive, minimise their impairments and provide the best support available (Reiser, 2012). The medical model is not adopted for this study because it does not promote inclusive education. Hence it is discriminatory and propagates stigma. However, it has been reviewed so that one should be able to appreciate the reasons for advocating for the alternative model which is social model.

2.6.1.2 The Social Model

The social model of disability was adopted because it offers an alternative to medical-model thinking and practice. This model advocates for inclusive education and the international standards and frameworks highlighted in the previous sections have drawn from this model. The social model of disability is now widely used internationally, and emphasises the idea that 'disability' is constructed by a society that is overly concerned with 'normality' (McArthur, 2010).

From a social model point of view, the experience of disability does not come from impairment, that is, from bodily experiences, such as difficulty moving one's body, or experiencing challenges with vision or hearing. Instead, the experience of disability comes from living in a society that views some people as abnormal and then fails to respond to or support them (McArthur, 2010).

People with disabilities who live in a society that views them in this way face a number of barriers to their full participation in the community, because they are considered different and unable to fit in with the rest of ‘us’. Since society is not prepared to change, people with disabilities are oppressed and discriminated against (McArthur, 2010).

The social model suggests that it is not people with disabilities who should have to change to fit society’s ideas about ‘normality’, rather it is society that needs to change, to get rid of ideas about normal and abnormal, and to be more respectful towards and inclusive of diversity (Oliver, 2006).

In his report, Walker (2012) has argued that the so-called ‘social model’ of disability sees people living with disabilities as full members of society who have important contributions to make to their families and communities....

“The social model of disability, combined with a rights-based approach recognises persons with disabilities as rights-holders who should determine the course of their lives to the same extent as any member of society; and defines limitations imposed by the social and physical environment as infringements on people’s rights.” (p. 52)

With social model, the focus has shifted from viewing the problem in the person and their permanent impairment to examining the barriers of attitude, organisation and environment that deny peoples with disabilities access to an ordinary life in the culture and society in which we live (Reiser, 2012).

The social model allows administrators, teachers and parents to examine their thinking and practice so that they dismantle the barriers and become allies of learners with disabilities. In this way, they can help learners to maximise their social and academic achievements, and in the process, society will change. This model recognises the need to change people's thinking about people with disabilities, alter the environment to make it accessible and transform organisations and their policies, practices and procedures. The social model has therefore influenced policies on inclusive education

.

The model, however, has some weaknesses. Shakespeare (2010) has considered the following weaknesses: neglect of impairment as an important aspect in the lives of people with disabilities, social model assumes what it needs to prove: that people with disabilities are oppressed; the crude distinction between impairment and disability and the concept of a barrier-free- utopia.

According to Shakespeare (2010), the social model is very much concerned with making the environment accommodative rather than dealing with the impairment. For example, taking those with low vision to eye clinic, those with hearing impairment to an audiologist help them cure their problems. It defines disability "as oppression" (p.68). This is to say that the model looks at persons with disability as being oppressed in the society by those who have no disabilities. What the weakness portrays is that the society seems to be neglecting the people with disabilities by not giving them the necessary support for them to realise their potentials.

When Shakespeare talks about the crude distinction between impairment and disability he has considered that impairment is related to medical model and disability as related to social model (Shakespeare, 2010). As such social model treats impairment as a socialised and universal concept whereas disability is already social. The society imposes disability on people with impairment (McArthur, 2010).

It is difficult, however, to draw a hard and fast line between impairment and disability. Impairment may make someone not able to do something. For example, low vision may make someone not able to see or read perfectly. This implies that impairment may lead to a disability (McArthur, 2010). The two go together.

Finally, the concept of the barrier-free-utopia is rather unrealistic. This is so because some infrastructure, scenery and sounds cannot be modified easily to accommodate all learners with disabilities (Shakespeare, 2010). Accommodations are sometimes incompatible because people with different impairments may require different solutions: people with visual impairment prefer steps and defined curbs and indented paving, while wheelchair users need ramps, dropped curbs, and smooth surfaces. Sometimes, people with the same impairment require different solutions. For example, some people with visual impairment access text in Braille, others in large print, audio tape or electronic files. Practicality and resource constraints make it unfeasible to overcome every barrier. Therefore, it is really difficult to have a totally barrier-free environment.

These weaknesses, however, should not prevent policy framers or planners from coming up with ways to implement IE and social model of disability successfully. They should rather be considered as guides to policy formulation and planning for the implementation of IE and adoption of social model of disability.

2.7 Chapter Summary

The Literature Review has revealed that there are a number of challenges that are faced in the implementation of IE. Their effects on the education of learners with disabilities are adverse. It is worthwhile noting that the challenges experienced in Uganda, Swaziland and South Africa are almost similar to those experienced in Malawi. This means that the challenges are old, cross-cutting and probably that African governments have almost similar attitudes towards people with disabilities.

The social model of disability is worth adopting despite its weaknesses which are fewer than the strengths other than the medical model of disability. The social model of disability is congruent with IE hence its need for adoption.

Having considered the ideas from the existing literature the next chapter presents the methodology employed to come up with the findings.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology that the study employed to address the research questions. It also describes the data collection methods and how data was managed and analysed. The chapter has also explained issues of ethics that were considered and issues of validity, reliability and trustworthiness.

3.2 Theoretical perspectives/assumptions and the implications for the study

The construction of research needs the use of theory and appropriate methodology. The study is based on constructivism perspective. The study takes such a perspective because the goal of the research relied as much as possible on the participants' views of the topic studied (Creswell, 2003). The research design has an element of constructivism as it focuses on the perspectives, feelings and beliefs of the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) on IE. The participants' views were considered, described within a natural setting or context (which is a school) and the meaning participants attach to inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning in primary schools explored.

These are central to the perspective of constructivism or a naturalistic inquiry (Creswell, 2012). The meanings were not simply interpreted on individuals but were formed through interaction with the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 184). This implies therefore that the study generated the findings from the participants themselves. The criteria of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability and confirmability were applied to ensure quality or goodness of data (p. 194).

3.3 Research Design

The word ‘design’ in social sciences research refers to the specification of which groups to study, how many units in a group, by what means the units are selected, at what time intervals they are studied and the kind of comparisons that are planned (Creswell, 2008). In other words, it is thought of as the structure of research (Kombo & Tromp, 2002).

The study takes a case study design which is “an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the study of a single person or entity using an extensive variety of data” (Yin, 2009). It can also be defined as a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle; it is the study of an instance in action (Cohen, Mahon & Morrison, 2011).

The type of case study that was used for this study is instrumental case study. This is a type of case study where a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation (Stake, 2005). In this type of study, the case was selected because it represents some other issue under investigation and the researcher believed this particular case could help provide insight or help to understand the issue (Ary, Jacob & Sorensen, 2010). The choice of the case was made to advance understanding of the issue. Therefore, the case was at in depth, its contexts scrutinized and its ordinary activities detailed (Stake, 2005). The case in question is Luntha Primary School (pseudo name) in Zomba district.

The choice of the design was based on such advantages as usefulness in explaining presumed causal links between variables and that case study designs may describe the real-life context in a causal chain illustrate, specific constructs and illuminate a situation when outcomes are not clear (p.52). In addition, as Cohen et al. (2011) put it, the results are more easily understood by a wide audience, they are immediately intelligible, that is, they speak for themselves and they catch unique features which might hold the key to understanding the situation; they are strong on reality (p.256). Stake (2005) has added that the case is looked at in depth, its context scrutinized and its ordinary activities detailed. The greatest advantage of case study as Ary et al., (2010) report is the possibility of depth; it seeks to understand the whole case in the totality of the environment. Case studies often provide an opportunity for an investigator to develop insight into basic aspects of human behaviour.

The design was chosen despite its disadvantages such as researcher's use of creative insight and careful interpretation to make sense of and explaining findings that were observed as well as what was not observed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Additionally, the results may not be generalizable except where other readers/researchers see their application, they are not easily open to cross-checking, hence they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective and they are prone to problems of observer bias despite attempts made to address reflexivity Cohen et al. (2011).

3.4 Research Methodology

The study employed mixed methods approach to investigate the issues at hand. A mixed methods approach is one which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds (Creswell, 2003). It comprises both qualitative and quantitative methods of research. The approach employs both open and close- ended questions, both emerging and pre-determined approaches and both qualitative and quantitative data analysis (p.19). It uses strategies of inquiry that involve collecting data simultaneously to best understand research problems. Both quantitative and qualitative data are generated and analysed in a single study. The data generation also involves gathering both numeric information as well as text information so that the final database represented both quantitative and qualitative information. In particular, the approach was Fixed mixed method "where the use of quantitative data was predetermined and planned at the start of the study" (Creswell, 2008).

This was done in order to expand an understanding from one method to another, to converge and confirm findings from different data sources (Ary et al. 2010). As recommended by Creswell (2003) the practices that were used are collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, integrating the data at different stages of inquiry, presenting visual pictures of the procedures in the study and employing practices of both qualitative and quantitative research.

There were three of the principles as outlined by Greene (2007) and Creswell (2008) that were applied in order to determine the choice of mixed methods approach, namely, level of interaction between qualitative and quantitative strands, timing of qualitative and quantitative strands and where and how to mix the qualitative and quantitative strands.

The level of interaction is the extent to which the two strands (qualitative and quantitative) are kept independent or interact with each other. Greene (2007) argued that this decision is the most “salient and critical” (p.120). Timing refers to the temporal relationship between qualitative and quantitative strands within a study (Creswell, 2008). It is discussed in relation to the time the data sets are collected and describes the order in which the researcher used the results from the two sets of data within a study (p.66). Mixing is the explicit interrelating of the study’s qualitative and quantitative strands, the process by which the researcher implements the independent or interactive relationship of mixed methods study (Greene, 2007)

The mixed methods approach was used at an interactive level when direct interaction existed between the qualitative and quantitative strands of the study. Through this direct interaction the two methods were mixed before the final interpretation.

The study utilized the qualitative priority where a greater emphasis was placed on the qualitative methods and the quantitative methods were used in secondary role. Mixing of qualitative and quantitative strands was done during data collection. This was done by using the strategy of connecting where the results of one strand built on the collection of another strands (Creswell, 2008). A brief description of qualitative and quantitative approaches is critical to understanding the mixed method as a research approach.

3.4.1 Qualitative Methodology

The study used qualitative methodology because, just as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) put it, “in such methodology researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p.12). Mothata (2000) describes qualitative research as a research technique used to collect and present data in the form of words, rather than numbers.

According to Bazeley (2007) qualitative methods are chosen in situations where a detailed understanding of a process or experience is wanted, where more information is needed to determine the exact nature of the issue being investigated, or where the only information available is in non-numeric form. Qualitative research focuses on people acting in natural settings and describing their world in their own words (Cozby, 2009). This research design facilitates an understanding of a social situation from the participants' perspectives (phenomenology). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) point out that qualitative approaches focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings, that is, in the real world and they involve studying those phenomena in all their complexity. The researcher, therefore, had to go to the site in order to gather information from the informants in their own setting, that is, Luntha Primary School.

As a qualitative researcher a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices were deployed to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand. This was due to the advantage of qualitative research design that "it is inherently multi- method in focus, that is, it uses many methods in its study of the phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The use of multi- methods, or triangulation, reflected an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Flick, 2002).

This approach was also chosen because it gave a clear understanding of the participants' views and experience about IE and it captured participants' perceptions as they occurred naturally (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009) and in their actual words (Johnson & Christensen 2011).

Quantitative methodology is another component of mixed methods approach without which the mixed methods is incomplete. The following section describes this component.

3.4. 2 Quantitative Methodology

The quantitative research methodology was employed (although descriptively to find out the percentages of the variables) because it seeks scientific explanations about human behavior. In addition to this, it relies on hypothetical-deductive model of explanation (Ary et al., 2010). By this, it means that the inquiry started with a theory of a phenomenon to be investigated. From that theory any number of hypotheses is deduced. Thereafter, they are tested using a predetermined procedure such as an experimental and co-relational design (ibid). The importance of quantitative methodology in this study cannot be overemphasized. The study used numbers to generate and quantify data. Therefore, as stressed by Cohen, et al. (2011), arbitrary dismissal of numerical analysis (which is characteristic of quantitative methodology) would be mere ideology or prejudice.

Sampling procedure, sample size and research sites

3.5.1 Sampling Procedure

The sample population was obtained from both convenience sampling and purposeful sampling. Purposive sampling involves the researcher who should select what he/she thinks is a 'typical sample' (Walliman, 2005).

A particular case (primary school) was chosen. Strydom and Delport (2005) explain that, in purposive sampling, the researcher should first think critically about the parameters of the population and choose the sample cases accordingly. In this study, the researcher first investigated which primary schools (participants) would provide rich detail so as to maximise the quality of information that was to be obtained. Convenience sampling was used because of feasibility and access to participants (Lewis, 2001). The participants were conveniently selected based on collaboration with District Education Manager (DEM) and Primary Education Adviser (PEA).

Purposeful sampling was also used because all participants within the study maintain certain characteristics to meet the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2005; Del Balso & Lewis, 2001).

3.5.2 Sample Frame and Size

Qualitative research uses small samples of people nested in their context and studied in depth (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In qualitative research, a small, distinct group of participants should be investigated to enable the researcher to understand the problem in depth, as is the case with this study. The researcher may select a participant on the basis of age, position in an organisation or some other characteristic (p.351). The study targeted Primary Education Advisor, Primary School Head Teachers, and mainstream teachers and learners with disabilities as well as parents of some of them. Table 3 shows the sample size drawn from a sample population of forty- six (46).

Table 2: Sample Frame

Participants	Number	Total number
Primary Education Advisor	1	1
School Head teachers	2	2
Mainstream teachers	3	3
Learners with disabilities	8	8
Parents	3	3
Total	17	17

Source: Researcher

3.5.3 Research site

The study was conducted in Zomba rural within South East Education Division (SEED). In this district, one educational zone was selected and one school was selected. The site was chosen due to its closeness to Chancellor College where the researcher was pursuing his studies. This enabled the researcher to combine several activities such as meeting the supervisor for guidance when need arose and using the University library and other relevant offices for assistance.

3.5 Data Generation Methods and Instruments

The study used five methods and instruments to generate data. The methods included document analysis, questionnaire and interviews as well as focus group discussions and observation. Sometimes the methods were used together at the same time (triangulation). For example, soon after classroom observation, interview with teachers was conducted.

3.6.1 Document analysis

Documents refer to a wide range of written, physical and visual materials including what other authors may term artifacts (Ary et al., 2010). These can be of written or text-based artifacts, for example, textbooks, journals, policy statements, newspapers, etc. or of non-written records such as photographs. Therefore, curriculum guides, textbooks and teaching/learning aids were analysed to see if they benefit inclusive education.

Some of the indicators used to check this were whether the font size of the words in the text books was big enough to enable learners with low vision read easily; whether teachers used raised teaching and learning materials so that learners with visual impairment could feel them. The advantages of documentary analysis are that documents, as a good source of data, do provide good descriptive information and are stable. They also help ground a study in context. In contrast, documents such as public records may have built-in biases that need examination. Personal documents may be subject to deception or distortion (intentional or unintentional) and documents are generally produced not for research purposes and may be incomplete or unrepresentative (Ary et al., 2010). Creswell (2009) has added that document analysis enables the researcher to obtain the language and words of participants and it can be accessed at a time convenient to the researcher. In order to mitigate such negatives, only those documents that provided required and necessary information on the study were chosen.

3.6.2 Questionnaire

The second method was questionnaire. This is a data generation instrument with both closed and open-ended questions given to a participant so that he or she can complete and return at a given date (Ary et al., 2010). Descombe (2003) states that open-ended questionnaires allow respondents to write a free response in their own terms, to explain and qualify their responses and avoid limitations of pre-set categories of response. The close-ended questions require the respondents to provide *yes* or *no* answers to the given questions whereas for the open-ended questions the respondents are required to give *explanation* or *description* as per required by the question.

The main advantage of a questionnaire is that it hides one's identity and responses can be completely anonymous, allowing potentially embarrassing questions to be set with a fair chance of eliciting true replies (Gay et al., 2011). The use of the questionnaire allowed the respondent to think about the responses other than answering off the top of his/her head. The questionnaire was also used because it does not take much time to administer (Open University, 2001). Another advantage is that everyone was asked the same questions (Fontana & Fray, 2005). The researcher also chose to use the questionnaire because it could also be designed so that the analysis is simple and that someone could be asked to administer (Open University, 2001). In addition, the questionnaire can be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analyse (Cohen et al., 2011).

In this study, the head teacher was asked to administer the questionnaires to the teachers since he knew all of them. In addition, he was the focal person to handle the questionnaires and their administration systematically. The teachers had to return the questionnaires to the head on agreed date and the researcher in turn collected them from the head teacher. Hence the researcher's time was saved.

Creswell (2012) states that one of the main disadvantages of the questionnaire is that the picture it paints is often static, with facts and views presented as more concrete and fixed than they may be in the dynamic flow of personal formation and social interaction. However, this did not prevent the researcher from using the questionnaire since the advantages surmounted the disadvantage. For example, provision of credible information by allowing the respondent not to answer from on top of the head and giving similar questions to all respondents.

3.6.3 Interviews

Interview is a data generation technique that involves oral questioning of respondents, either individually or as a group (Ary et al., 2010). It is flexible tool for data generation, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard (Cohen et al., 2011). The researcher held in-depth interviews especially with parents of learners who have hearing impairment and speech impairment. There were three interviews that were conducted with them. This provided information that could not otherwise be obtained through observation or could be used to verify observation. Interviews supplied large volumes of in-depth data rather quickly. They provided insight on participants' perspectives, the meaning of events for the people involved and information about the site and perhaps responses on unanticipated issues. They also allowed immediate follow-ups and clarifications of participants' responses (Ary et al., 2010).

The use of interviews in qualitative research is usually characterised by three features of ethnographic interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). These, as applied to this study, are the following:

- Interviews were conducted with school-based support teams to capture participants' perceptions of inclusive education and their problems while dealing with learners experiencing barriers to learning.
- Semi-structured and open-ended interviews were used to provide participants with opportunities to describe and explain the most salient issues affecting inclusive education.
- Verbatim words and phrases from the interviews were analysed and used as data to illustrate the findings.

As regards this strategy, the researcher emphasised to the participants the need to stress the importance for straight facts and candid opinions was vital. Another disadvantage was that interviewees were somehow not willing to share information. In this case the researcher was tactful in asking questions. To mitigate this the researcher had to exercise patience and perseverance as recommended by Ary et al. (2010) and Open University (2001).

3.6.4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus groups are unnatural settings bringing together a specifically chosen sector of the population to discuss a particular given theme or topic, where the interaction with the group leads to data and outcome (Cohen et al., 2011). Focus group discussions are also known as Group Interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Focus group methodology is a way of generating qualitative data which essentially involves engaging a small number of people, for example, five to twelve, in an informal group discussion (or discussions) focused ‘around a particular topic or set of issues’ (Wilkinson, 2004). Focus group interviews were used to elicit data from a group of people on a specific topic or theme (Denscombe, 2003). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) regard the focus group interview as a strategy for obtaining a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem.

This was used to generate data from learners with SEN except those with hearing impairment because of problems in communication. Learners with SEN were asked such question as how they interact with their fellow peers without SEN. How teachers treat them and how the school infrastructure facilitates their learning In general, they were asked to list the challenges that they face as they learn together with those learners without SEN.

This method was used because of the advantages that they are relatively inexpensive to conduct and often produce rich data that are cumulative and elaborative (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Steward, Shamdasani and Rook (2007) have observed that focus group interaction allows respondents to react to and build upon the responses of other group members, thereby creating a 'synergistic effect'. They bring several different perspectives into contact and are socially oriented (Ary et al., 2010). They can be stimulating for respondents and so aid the recall and listening to other people helps people to form their own opinions (Fontana & Frey, 2005). In addition, the format for focus group discussions is flexible and open in form. (Ary et al., 2010; Fontana & Frey, 2005).

Using this method, the researcher gained insights into how the participants thought and why they are thinking the way they do. Focus group discussions are also more economical in time than several individual interviews. Some respondents, especially children, prefer to be interviewed as a group and this allowed the researcher to brainstorm and explore ideas (Open University, 2001).

Focus group discussions have some disadvantages such as that emerging group culture may interfere with individual expression, that is, a group can be dominated by an individual (Fontana & Frey, 2005), allow less control (Ary et al., 2010) and group think may be a possible outcome (Fontana & Frey, 2005). To say the list note-taking may not be easy and writing up notes is time consuming.

The disadvantages of focus group interviews are, according to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2011) that the researcher has less control over proceedings, data is difficult to analyse and organising and recording are time consuming. In this case the researcher had to be alert in order to control the group so that the participants do not digress from the topic. The researcher also used recorders in order not to weary with taking notes.

Although FGDs have a list of such disadvantages they were used because they are good for triangulation and can be used in conjunction with other data generating techniques. In fact, they are a viable option for both qualitative and quantitative researches (Fontana and Frey (2005). There were four focus group discussion in total. Two of them were conducted with teacher participants, one with parents of learners with total and partial hearing impairments and one with other learners with SEN in standards three upwards. Each focus group was composed six to ten participants in accordance with Open University (2001). The discussions were taking not less than thirty minutes.

3.6.5 Non- participant observation

Observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for the study (Marshall, 2006). In non-participant observation, the observer watches the situation, openly or concealed but does not participate (p. 210). Non-participant observation was done in classrooms as well as outside. The research question that guided this was that which sought to find out the challenges faced in the implementation of NSNE policy guidelines that advocate for IE.

A total of seven classroom observations were carried out to generate data. The researcher could go, sit in a classroom, watch carefully what was taking place without interfering with the lessons and take down notes for any relevant observation made. A keen interest was taken on learners' participation in class and how teachers delivered their lessons. How did teachers treat learners with SEN? That is, whether they were given an opportunity to respond to questions, whether they were volunteering to respond to questions, whether they were involved in group, pair, whole class discussion etc.; whether they were given support; whether there was interaction between the students with disability and the teacher, and between the students with and without disability; whether they had special teaching and learning materials, whether there were specialist teachers in class to support them.

Classroom observation schedule was used to get such information. Observation checklist was used to find out if mainstream teachers are trained in SNE/IE; if there were resource rooms, whether the physical environment was accessible for student with disabilities, if the infrastructure was accessible etc. Observation provided a record of behaviour that occurred in such a situation. It was also appropriate for use with young children. In addition, observation allowed the researcher to determine whether what was said actually matched with actions or illuminated subtleties that were outside the consciousness of the participant. It was also used in natural setting (Ary et al., 2010)

The disadvantage of observation, however, was that it was more costly because of the time required. Subjects may be observed for a number of sessions, requiring extended hours (Ary, et.al, 2010). Nevertheless, patience of the researcher was better option in order to collect the required data.

3.7 Pilot study

Pilot testing is normally conducted to establish whether an instrument takes too long to administer and whether directions and items are clear (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A pilot study was conducted in one primary school in Malabvi zone namely, Montfort Demonstration. This pilot study was used for the purpose of pre-testing questionnaire wording, measurement scales or other elements of the research design (Ary et al., 2010: 440). It was also used to pre-test the interview and observation schedules. For example, in the pilot study a question would be: What is Inclusive Education? The responses obtained required that the question be rephrased as: How do you understand Inclusive Education?

During the pilot study it was learnt classrooms did not have raised apparatus to assist learners with partial visual impairment. It was also learnt that although there were few specialist teachers, they were always confined in the resource room. They did not assist the other mainstream teachers. In addition, learners with visual impairment reported that the environment was disability unfriendly in the sense that that there were some gullies around which made them stumble and fall sometimes.

The findings of the pilot study provided to some extent what would be expected during the actual study. They provided checks on whether what was found could be similar to the findings in the actual study. On the other hand, they prepared good ground for bracketing in order not be biased in the actual study.

3.8 Data Management and Analysis

Data that was generated during the study was supposed to be managed very well and analysed properly. The way these were done is explained in the subsequent paragraphs.

3.8.1 Data Management

In recognition of the importance of data management in assisting data analysis, a complete list of data sources was created. The researcher opened and marked files clearly in which data generated from the data sources were kept. Recordings from interviews, focus group discussions and observations were transcribed and cleaned.

The finalised content from all data sources was stored in word processing files on password and virus protected computer, memory stick and compact disks (CD) to avoid losing data. Photographs from observation were printed out and kept in file. Soft copies were stored in computer, memory stick and CD.

Quantitative data was recorded in the researcher's field note book, tabulated into the personal computer in Microsoft excel sheet for analysis. A copy of the same was stored in memory stick and CD. This management of data assisted the researcher to analyse effectively.

3.8.2 Data analysis

Data analysis means the making sense of data in terms of the participants' definition of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Cohen et al., 2011). The analysis of data started right away when data generation began and was done concurrently. The four stages were used to analyse qualitative data as recommended by Ary et al. (2010), namely; organising and familiarising; theme identification and analysis; coding and reducing; and interpreting and representing. Data was organised into three groups of teachers, learners and parents of the learners. Data was also organised according to research questions. Then the researcher familiarised himself with the data through reading and re-reading notes and transcriptions, viewing and reviewing video tapes and listening repeatedly to audio tapes.

All data were transcribed directly to avoid potential bias in selection or interpretation that might have occurred with summarising. Notes were written to capture thoughts as they occurred and were reviewed. After this a complete list of different types of information was made. Verbatim words and phrases from the interviews were analysed and used as data to illustrate the findings. The following sections explain the ways data were analysed.

3.8.2.1 Thematic analysis

This is a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes within data. It minimally organises and describes data set in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In conducting the thematic analysis, three principles were employed.

The principles are those of discoverability where themes are visible, agreeability where expressions of themes are obvious and culturally agreed upon and thirdly inter-relativity where cultural systems comprise sets of interrelated themes, the importance of which is related to how often the theme appears (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this regard, themes of attitude, training, resources and infrastructure emerged during the study and were analysis.

3.8.2.2 Coding and reducing

Raw data in the form of words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs was examined and assigned codes or labels. This included the identification of categories and themes and their refinement. Concepts from raw data were developed, too (Ary et al. 2010). It was done in order to begin to recognize differences and similarities of data (p.484).

Coding enabled the researcher to make judgments about the meaning of adjoining blocks texts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The codes were either be words or numbers. A corpus of text and then selected units of analysis within the text were identified (p. 780). Microsoft Excel was used to code and put data generated from interviews and questionnaires into themes. When these were done the column for frequency was set to show how many times themes emerged per question. Then proportion of the frequency to the total will be translated into percentage.

3.8.2.3 Interpreting and representing

Interpretation is about bringing out the meaning, telling the story, providing explanation and developing plausible explanation (Open University, 2003). In this regard the researcher confirmed what is known already and is supported by data and eliminated misconceptions; illuminated new insights and important things. Representation on the other hand involved how data was presented (Ary et al., 2010). The qualitative findings have been presented in paragraphs using Microsoft Word processor.

Quantitative data were analysed using Microsoft Excel. For example, specific categories were plotted on a spreadsheet with their corresponding figures. Afterwards the field was highlighted, and the type of graph to be presented was chosen from the tool bar. In order to demonstrate how codes and themes were generated using Microsoft Excel. (See Appendix 8).

To find the frequency of, for example, “Attitude (A)”, the following formula was used: *=countif(range, “A”)*. Then the frequency for the next coded theme was worked out and so on ... Then the statistics frequencies were worked out as proportions of the total responses. For example, if there were 14 responses to the question and *Attitude (A)* emerged five times, this meant that 5 out of 14 (5/14). The proportions for each coded theme was worked out as percentages and then presented in a graph. The data obtained from the observation checklist and schedule was analysed using the same MS Excel after which the data was presented in graphs.

The whole process of the study including data generation, analysis and interpretation of study findings data, ought to be valid, reliable and trustworthy. The following section discusses how this was rendered valid, reliable and trustworthy.

3.9 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness

3.9.1 Validity

An important consideration in the choice of an instrument to be used in a research investigation is validity. Validity means the extent to which results from chosen instrument permit researchers to draw warranted conclusion about the characteristics of the individuals studied (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). It involves not only the selection or design of instruments but also the conditions under which the instrument will be administered (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

It was important to ensure that the data generated was valid and this was done through triangulation. Another way was to compare data from generated from the pilot study to that of the actual study using the same type of instrument whereupon it was found out that the results were valid.

3.9.2 Reliability

In addition to validity, reliability and usability should also be taken into consideration. Reliability of an instrument means that the research gives consistent results while usability looks at how easy it is to use, how long it will take to administer and how easy it is to score; whether it is appropriate for the group to whom it will be administered and it has clear directions (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

In qualitative research it refers to the consistency of the researcher's interactive style, data recording, data analysis and interpretation of participant meanings from the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Creswell (2012) asserts that using a combination of data types increases reliability and validity as the strengths of one approach can compensate for the weakness of another approach. Bearing this in mind, both qualitative and quantitative data types were opted to be used. In addition, Denscombe (2003) maintains that the criterion of reliability pertains to whether the research instruments are neutral in their effect and would measure the same result when used in other instances. Denscombe (2003) further states that measures to enhance reliability involve a complete description of the research process so that an independent researcher may replicate the same procedure in comparable settings.

This includes a delineation of the physical, cultural and social contexts of the study, a statement of the researcher's role in the research setting, an accurate description of the conceptual framework of the research and a complete description of the methods of data collection and analysis.

3.9.3 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the extent to which variations can be tracked or explained (Ary et. al., 2010). This was done so that the researcher demonstrates that the methods used are reproducible and consistent, that the approach and procedures used were appropriate for a particular context. In order to ensure trustworthiness of the study, the following issues were taken into consideration: transferability, dependability, conformability and credibility of the study (Merriam, 2009; Ary et al., 2010).

3.9.3.1 Transferability

This is the degree to which the findings of the study will be applied or generalised to other contexts or other groups. In other words, the evidence supporting the generalisation of findings to other contexts across different participants, groups, situation and so forth (Ary et al. 2010). Firstly, this was enhanced was by cross-case comparison of other units of analysis such as learners with hearing and visual impairment, learners with emotional behaviour disorders and learners with physical disabilities. The similarity of the challenges faced by these units of analysis increased transferability of findings to other settings. Secondly, providing detailed description or descriptive adequacy. This enabled judgment about a 'fit' with other context (Cohen et al., 2011). Thirdly, was to base on evidence of theoretical transference. This meant to find out if the same ideas applied more widely and are shown to be applicable in other fields (Ary et al., 2010). Therefore, the reviewed literature was matched with the study findings. The study findings on some research questions were found to be applicable more widely which meant that there is evidence of theoretical transference.

3.9.3.2 Dependability

This is what is known as reliability on quantitative study. The researcher gathered evidence to support the claim that similar findings would be obtained if the study were repeated (Cohen et al., 2011). This entails that the methods used are reproducible and consistent. Secondly, that the approach and procedures used are appropriate for the context and can be documented. Finally, it entails that the external evidence can be used to test conclusions (Ary et al., 2010). Corroboration and documentation has been used to ensure the dependability of the study.

Corroboration was used to investigate whether the data collected with one procedure on instrument confirm data collected by another procedure or instrument. This was meant to find support for the observation and conclusions in more than one data source. The combination of data sources such as interviews, questionnaires and observation and the use of different methods increased the likelihood that the phenomena under study is being understood from various points of view (Merriam, 2009).

Documentation is another way that was used to ensure dependability. Audit- trials were key to documentation because in this the researcher documented how the study was conducted including what was done, when and why (Ary et al., 2010).

Audit trails contained data gathered in interviews and observations, records of enquirers decision about who was interview or what was observed and why. As such it was the duty of the researcher to keep thorough notes and records of activities and keep the data well organized and in retrievable form. Documentation demanded that the researcher provide information on the sample of people studied, the selection process, contextual descriptions, methods of data generation, detailed field notes, tape and recordings and other descriptive materials that can be retrieved by other people (Ary et al., 2010).

3.9.3.3 Confirmability

Confirmability is also known as objectivity. This means the control of researcher's bias. In order to enhance this, audit trial and triangulation was considered. The researcher had to provide complete audit-trial to the supervisor.

Triangulation or corroboration was used as another way of enhancing confirmability. These were both data and method triangulation. In data triangulation the researcher has used various data sources such as interviews and observations while in method triangulation the researcher used more than one method, for example, document analysis and observation.

3.9.3.4 Credibility

This refers to believability of findings (Merriam, 2009:123). It concerns the truthfulness of the inquirer's findings (Ary et al., 2010: 423). It is an overarching criterion for judging the trustworthiness of qualitative data analysis.

For this reason, evidence based on structural corroboration, evidence based on referential or interpretive adequacy and evidence based on control of bias to ensure credibility were used. Structural corroboration is the means through which multiple types of data are related to each other to support or contradict the interpretation and evaluation of the state of affairs. Structural corroboration is best done through data and method triangulation which are similar to those explained under confirmability.

Referential or interpretive adequacy means portraying accurately the meaning attached by participants to what has been or is being studied by the researcher and the degree to which the participants' view-points, thoughts, feelings, intentions and experiences are accurately understood and portrayed (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). The accurate portrayal of meaning attached by participants was done through member checks (participants' feed backs) and low-inference descriptors.

On member checks, it was necessary to find out if the participants agreed to what was written. The participants were asked to review and critique the field notes or tape recordings for accuracy and meaning. Interpretation of data was shared with participants in order to help clear up miscommunication, identify inaccuracies and help obtain useful data. Low-inference descriptors required the use of direct quotations in writing. This helps the reader to experience the participants' world. Therefore, there was need to use tape recorders or video cameras to help generate descriptors. Finally, the use of evidence based on control of bias was used to enhance credibility. Research bias may result from selective observations, hearing only what one wants to hear, or allowing personal attitudes, preferences and feelings to affect interpretation of data. Reflexivity and negative-case sampling were used to control bias.

Reflexivity is the use of self- reflection to recognize one's own biases and to actively seek them out (Ary et al., 2010: 423). It is the process of reflecting on the self as researcher, the "human as instrument". It is the critical subjectivity. It is a conscious experiencing of the self both as inquirer and respondent, as the one coming to know the self within the process of research itself (Guba & Lincoln, 2005: 512).

Reflexivity helped the researcher to come to terms not only with the choice of research problem and with those whom to engage in the research process but with himself and with the multiple identities that represent the fluid self in the research setting (p. 210). Hence reflexivity demanded that each of the selves: research- based self, brought self and situationally created self, regarding the ways in which research efforts were shaped and staged in order for them to be interrogated.

In this regard, it was important to question oneself how contradictions and paradoxes shaped not only the identities called forth in the field and later in the discovery process of writing but also the interaction with respondents as regards whom he became to them in the process of “becoming” to himself” (p.210). In negative- case sampling examples of the opposite of what was expected were sought intentionally. Discrepant or contradictory data was searched for and explained away.

3.10 Role of the researcher

The study was conducted in South East Education Division and in Zomba rural to be specific. In order to gain entry into Zomba Education District the researcher obtained permission from the District Education Manager (DEM) in writing. Head teacher of the sampled school was also written to have their permission to carry out the study in his school (Refer Appendices 1 and 2). Where observation was needed it was ensured that there was no interference with the teaching and learning processes by either non-verbal communications like facial expressions or any form of interruptions.

3.11 Ethical considerations

Social research and other forms of research which study people and their relationships to each other and to the world, need to be particularly sensitive about issues of ethical behaviour (Walliman, 2005). Ethics means method, procedure, or perspective for deciding how to act and for analyzing complex problems and issues (Walliman, 2005). Eight ethical issues inherent in this study are discussed below.

3.11.1 Permission to conduct research

Permission was sought from the University of Malawi, Chancellor College to conduct the study in the said divisions and districts. The researcher sought permission from the Educational Division Manager, District Education Manager and Primary Education Advisor as well as schools head. Permission had also to be sought from parents of children with disabilities to interview them and their children as well as to take photographs where necessary. The permission was granted by all people who were involved in the study.

3.11.2 Voluntary participation

There was no coercion or deception for participants to participate in the study. Rather they were invited to participate with a clear understanding that they are under no obligation to do so. Potential participants were informed that there would be no negative consequences for them if they did not assist in the study (Christians, 2005).

3.11.3 Free and informed consent

Informed consent comprises three major elements: information, voluntariness and comprehension (McMillan & Shumacher, 2010). When providing information, it was ensured that participants were given sufficient detail about the nature of the research and the procedures involved; this highlighted the objectives of the study, potential risks and benefits and any alternative treatments were made clear. Potential participants were helped to understand fully what they had to be asked to do and that they were informed if there would be any negative consequences of such participation in the study. An information sheet was, therefore, was provided to all those who were invited to participate (See Appendix 5). This statement was for two purposes: to enable potential research subjects to make informed choices as to their participation in the study and to document their willingness to participate (Ary et al. 2010). Consent was sought from the participants as well parents of the children to take photographs and even record them whenever necessary.

3.11.4 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity are two main components of the right to privacy which is the heart of the conduct of ethical research with human participants (Ary et al., 2010). McMillan and Schumacher, (2010) explain privacy and anonymity as the individual's right to decide when, where, to whom and to what extent his or her attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour will be revealed.

Confidentiality means that the researcher knows who the participants are but their identity will not be revealed in any way in the resulting report (Christians, 2005). Ary et al. (2010) defines confidentiality as a process of keeping the information obtained from an individual during a study secret and private.

Anonymity, on the other hand, refers to the process of protecting the identity of specific individuals. No identification is attached to the data obtained (p.596). Therefore, participants were told that their identity and names would not be revealed in the write up.

3.11.5 Beneficence and non- maleficence

The principle of beneficence imposes the duty to maximise net benefits (Christians, 2005). They were told about the intention of the study which is to generate knowledge that would produce benefits for participants themselves, for other individuals and for the nation as a whole or for the advancement of knowledge.

Non- maleficence reflects the duty to avoid, prevent or minimise harm to others (Christians, 2005). Participants, it was ensured, would not be subjected to any unnecessary risks of harm. It was explained to them that their participation in research was essential to achieving important aims that could not be achieved without their participation.

3.11.6 Respect for all persons

Individuals were treated as autonomous agents. It was ensured that the subject had received a full disclosure of the nature of the study, the risks, benefits and alternatives, with an extended opportunity to ask questions. Everybody would be treated equally regardless of sex, race, age and social status (Christian, 2005)

3.12 Professional ethics

According to Creswell (2012) professional ethics refers to the moral commitment that scientists are required to make to acquire objective and accurate data about real phenomena. As such there was need to be objective in reviewing literature and obtaining data while refraining from falsification and/or fabrication of data and to describe the methodology used to obtain data.

3.13 Publishing ethics

Auricombe and Mouton (2007) state that one of the key ethical principles of scientific publication is that one must acknowledge sources. This research was done in compliance with publishing ethics. Firstly, quotes of all authors used in this document were properly acknowledged in a list of references. Secondly, other written work was free of plagiarism and flowed from the researcher's pen.

3.12 Limitations and delimitations

The study faced some limitations. When the questionnaires were administered, not everyone was willing to return them. Therefore, there was need for intensive follow-ups with the headteachers in order to have almost all questionnaires back. The interviews with participants were subject to bias since respondents thought they are expected to say nice things only. Stress on the need for straight facts and candid opinions were the best way to mitigate this limitation.

There was a possibility of changing teaching strategies (vulnerability to bias) when observation was used to generate data. In such cases the teacher(s) under observation were told at the beginning that they were supposed to be true to themselves and not to take the study as a means for inspection and rating on their part (Refer to Appendix 5).

3.13 Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented issues under the outlined subheadings. Theory and appropriate methodology are central to the construction of research. As such, the study was based on constructivism perspective because it relied much on the participants' views of the topic studied. The perspective has been reflected in the design that the study used, that is, instrumental case study. Such type of case study was appropriate since it represents the issue that is being studied which is believed could help get in-depth understanding of the issue.

Data was generated using mixed method approach which comprises qualitative and quantitative methods of research. It has to be recalled that the choice of mixed methods approach was based on three main principles of level of interaction between qualitative and quantitative strands, their timing and method of mixing them as explained by Green (2007) and Creswell (2008).

The mixed method approach was applied on a purposefully chosen sample and using different data generation strategies and tools. The strategies include document analysis, questionnaire and interviews; focus group discussion and non- participant observation. The varied data collection strategies ensure triangulation of data. The data generated using the mentioned strategies required proper management and analysis. Data analysis used four stages as recommended by Ary et. al. (2010). These are organising and familiarising; theme identification and analysis; coding and reducing and interpreting and representing.

It is important to ensure that generated, managed and analysed data is valid, reliable and trustworthy. Triangulation of data ensures validity of data while reliability is ensured by the extent to which research instruments were neutral in their effect. Finally, trustworthiness of data is ensured by transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Since research involves other people, ethics should be considered at all cost. Therefore, ethical issues such as permission to conduct research, voluntary participation and free and informed consent; confidentiality and anonymity, beneficence and maleficence and respect for all persons have to be invoked when carrying out a study. The next chapter looks at the study findings and their discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study on the exploration of the challenges faced in the implementation of National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that advocate for inclusive education in Malawi: a case of one primary school in Zomba rural. The structure of the chapter is guided by the research questions which were: How is IE understood? What are the current practices in the implementation of the NSNE Policy Guidelines that advocate for IE?; What challenges are faced in implementing the NSNE Policy Guidelines that advocate for IE?; and What strategies can be used to address the challenges? At the outset, the chapter gives the findings on the characteristic of respondents: teachers as well as learners with SEN and their types of SEN. It is worth-noting that the presentation of the findings and discussion will also be in line with the theoretical framework that guided the entire study.

4.2 Background information of teachers and characteristics of learners

The first section describes the characteristics of the teachers and the next one the characteristics of the learners.

4.2.1 Background information of Teachers

The study findings revealed that there are seven teachers and all of them are qualified to teach, that is, they have Teaching Certificates (TC). One male and one female teacher-respondents have Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) representing fourteen percent respectively. One male teacher and four female teacher-respondents have the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) representing fourteen percent and fifty-seven percent respectively. Despite such qualifications none of the teacher-respondents received special training (Sp. Tr.) in SNE. These characteristics are shown in the following graph.

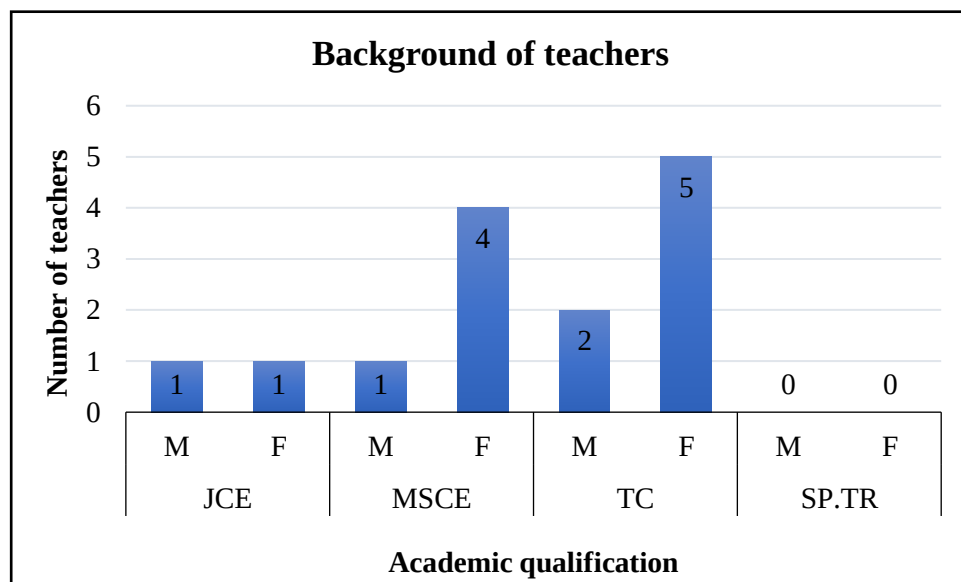


Figure 3: Background of teachers showing academic qualifications.

Source: Findings from research site

The teachers at Luntha Primary School have different numbers of years of teaching experience. Two (2) teachers have served for a period of between one to five (1-5) years, one (1) teacher has served for over sixteen (16) years and four (4) have served for over twenty-one (21) years. The following graph shows the teaching experiences of the teachers.

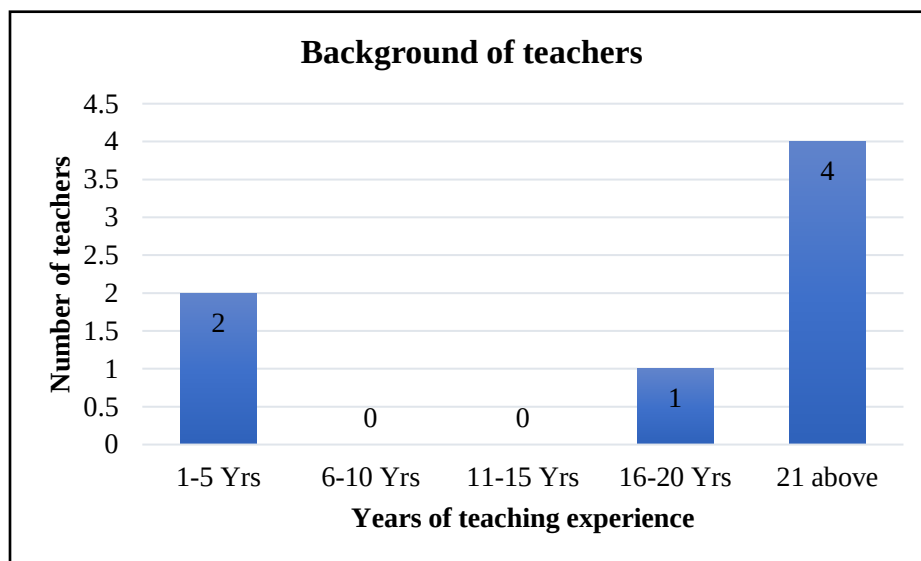


Figure 4: Background of teachers showing years of teaching experience

Source: Findings from research site

4.2.2. Characteristics of learners

Evidence from Questionnaire showed that out of four hundred and three (403) learners, twenty-five (25) were learners with disabilities. Of these learners with disabilities Luntha Primary School has more and equal number of learners with hearing impairment (7) and speech impairment and those with low vision (7) which represent (28%). There are very few of those with albinism (1) and emotional behaviour disorders (1) representing (4%).

Learners with physical disabilities (3) share 20% of the total of learners with SEN and those with learning difficulties (4) share 16% of the total of learners with SEN. The following graph illustrates the characteristics of the learners.

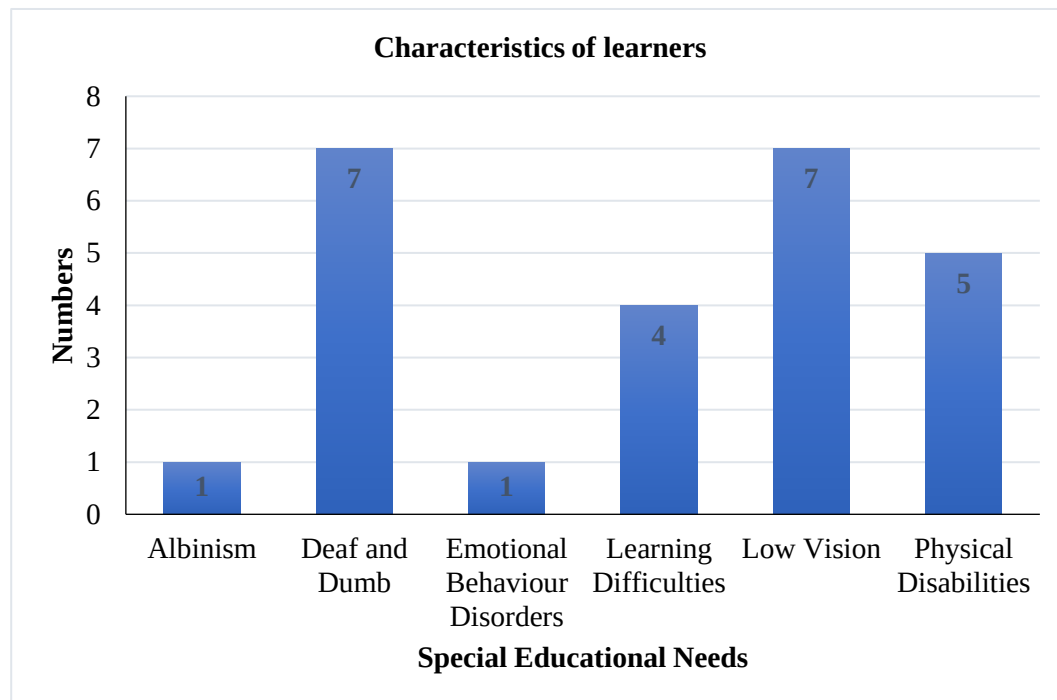


Figure 5: Numbers of learners with SEN at Luntha Primary School

Source: Findings from the research site

This demonstrates that, despite unequal numbers of learners with disability, Luntha Primary School welcomes all learners regardless of their type of disability. It is also a clear indicator that “most classrooms of today are inclusive classrooms which have a blend of learners with special needs and general education learners” (DuPaul, Gormley & Laracy, 2013). It brings home the point that “all children can learn” (UNESCO, 2015).

Hence the teachers, School Management Committee and the Parents and Teacher Association seem to adhere to the human rights approach to the social model which states that:

The social model of disability, combined with a rights-based approach recognizes persons with disabilities as rights-holders who should determine the course of their lives to the same extent as any member of society... (Handicap International, 2012)

4.3. How Teachers Understood Inclusive Education

The findings of the study revealed that almost all respondents had similar understanding of IE. For example, the evidence from the questionnaire to teachers revealed that the definition that came out clearly was IE is *“the learning together of children with disabilities and those without disabilities”*. Such a simplistic and narrow definition demonstrates a shallow understanding of IE consequent of lack of knowledge about what IE entails. This definition is a bit close to that of Walker (2012) already cited in chapter two of this thesis,

“all children learning together in mainstream classrooms in their locality or community, irrespective of the different range of abilities and disabilities, with teaching methods, materials, and school environments that address the needs of all girls and boys” (p.53).

Although the definition is close Walker’s, it does not mean that his is also shallow. Walker’s is concise and includes crucial areas in IE. However, the definition in the findings is deficient of how crucial methodology, teaching and learning materials and school environment are to the effective implementation of IE. The definition also does not provide further the demands of IE such as those given by UNESCO (2005). For example, changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies.

Such shallow understanding has negative implication in the implementation of IE as observed by Lukhele and Nxumalo (2012). Depeller et al. (2010) have also noted that “IE works best with teachers who understand (what IE is all about) and demonstrate effective teaching and learning practice within a framework of collaboration and support from the school...”

4.4 Current Practices of the implementation of National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that Advocate for IE

The study revealed that learners with various disabilities are welcome to learn at the school. This is in tandem with the principle which stipulates that “All students can learn...” (UNESCO, 2015). However, their presence in the school did not necessarily mean that they are learning according to the demands of IE. All learners with disabilities were subjected to the same conditions as those without disabilities. For example, the evidence from the observations revealed that learners with disabilities and those without disabilities used the same infrastructure and text books. This poses a challenge to the implementation of the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines. For example, one teacher had this to say regarding the text books:

“These are text books that we have at this school. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology did not send any special text books meant for the learners with visual impairment. All text books have standard font size and style. I do not even know whether there are any special text books for those with visual impairment.” (Interview with TR1, 18th May, 2015)

As regards the infrastructure, the head teacher with eighteen years of teaching experience wished if school managers could have a say on the construction of school infrastructure.

“You know very well that contractors are just sent to places to build school blocks. They have the plans for the school blocks. The role the headteacher and other members of staff is to mobilise community members to mould bricks and collect river sand. The rest is done by the contractor in conjunction with the proprietor. This is why you see that there are no ramps and the sanitary facilities favour learners without disabilities more than those with disabilities”. (Interview with TR1, 18th May, 2015)

The findings from the observation also revealed that parents did not help much in the education of their children with disabilities. None of the parents of learners with disabilities was seen around the school on a single day apart from the days when they were called for a special purpose by the researcher or the head teacher. The head teacher explained:

“The role of parents is not such a big one as regards education of children with disabilities. They just brought them on the day we were enrolling them and from then on, we have seen them either during PTA meetings or when one of them has been called for a special reason. None of them comes here just to check on how their children are doing in their education”. (Interview with TR 1, 18th May, 2015).

Therefore, much as the learners with disabilities are accepted in school, parents do not play a big role on their education. Mariga et.al. (2014:40) have explained that IE cannot be a success if parents are not involved. The importance of parental involvement in IE has been emphasised by Mariga et al. (2014) who explained that:

“Inclusive education cannot come about without the involvement and cooperation of families. Children do their best at school when families take a close interest in their schooling. Equally parents and grandparents are likely to be the people who know the children best”.

On the other hand, findings from the observations showed that learners were engaged in peer tutoring. A teacher in standard five could ask a learner without disability to help explaining a concept to a learner with hearing and speech impairments using some sign language. When the teacher was asked why the learner had to do that he responded:

“Ophunzirawa amatha kumamvetsetsana bwino okhaokha chifukwa nthawi zambiri amakhala ndi kumasewera limodzi. Choncho amatha kudziwa bwino mmene angamlankhulirane ndi anzao amene ali ndi vuto la kumva ndi kuyankhula pogwiritsa ntchito zizindikiro. Nchifukwa chake ndinaona kuti ndi chinthu chabwino kuwagwiritsa ntchito ana omwewo kuti aphunzitse mnzawo amene ali ndi mavuto a kumva ndi kuyankhula.

(The learners can understand each other better since they are together most of the times and they know the signs that are commonly used in their societies if they are communicate to the learners with hearing impairment effectively. Therefore, it is better to use them sometimes so that these learners with hearing impairment should be seen to participate in class.)
(Interview with TR 3, 21st May, 2015.)

The use of peer tutoring has been applauded by Depeller et al. (2010) who stated that “research has consistently demonstrated that peer support has academic, as well as interpersonal and social benefits for a range of learners, including those with disabilities”. Depeller et al. (2010), therefore, is calling upon teachers to use peer tutoring as one of the methods that they can use when teaching a class which has learners with special educational needs. There are more challenges that are faced in implementing the NSNE Policy Guidelines that advocate for IE as discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.5 Challenges faced in the implementation of National Special Needs Education

Policy Guidelines that advocate for IE

The findings of the study revealed that the challenges that were identified related to the challenges faced by learners and the teachers. According to the study findings, learners faced such challenges as negative attitude from peers and teachers, inadequate learning resources, lack of trained teachers in SNE and disability unfriendly infrastructure. Teachers on the other hand explained that they face similar challenges including overcrowding.

4.5.1 Challenges that learners face

The evidence from interviews, focus group discussions and observations revealed that learners face a number of challenges in their learning depending on their special educational needs. These challenges include negative attitude, inadequate learning resources, inadequate trained teachers in SNE and disability unfriendly infrastructure. The magnitude of the challenges is illustrated in the following graph.

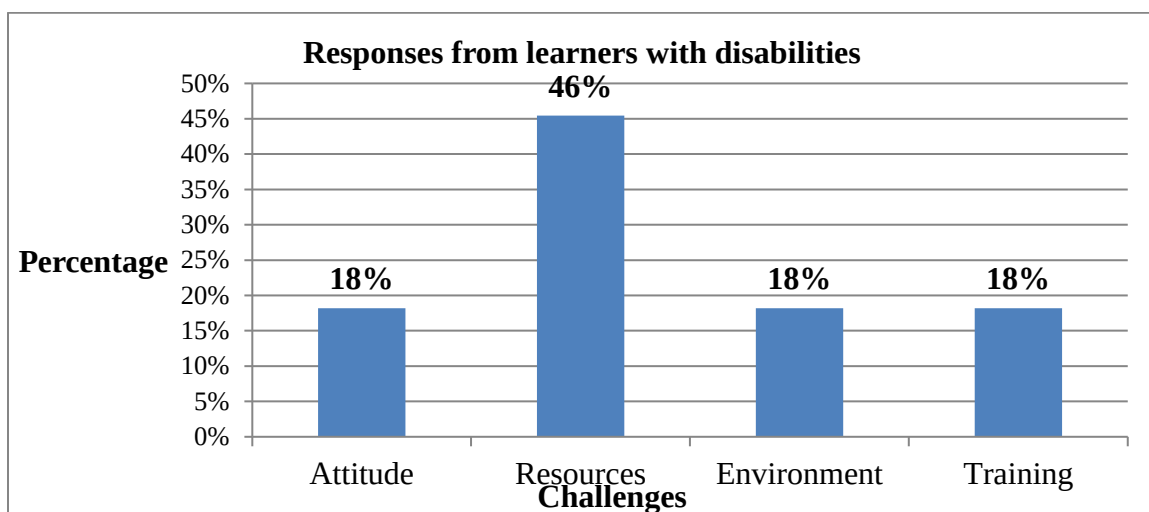


Figure 6: Challenges learners with disabilities face

Source: Findings from research site

4.5.1.1 Attitude

The negative attitudes that learners with SEN face come from both, their peers and teachers. Their peers mock them and see them as strangers in their midst. As a result they are segregated. One parent whose child has a hearing impairment explained how her child was mocked by her peers in the following way:

Vuto limene mwana wanga ali nalo linayamba ali ndi zaka ziwiri. Iye anadwala malungo amu ubongo. Pamene anachira tinangoona kuti mafinya akutuluka kukhutu. Izi zakhala zikuchitika kwa nthawi; kuchipatala analephera kumchiza. Tsiku lina anandiuza modandaula za mmene anzake amamutonzera chifukwa cha vutoli.... Iwe, tawauza aphunzitsi zimene anzako amakunena.

(My daughter developed her problem when she was two years after suffering from cerebral malaria. Some stuff leak from her ears. One day she complained to me about how her peers mock her in relation to this problem). (Interview with a parent, 25th May, 2015)

Then the mother urged her daughter to say how her peers mock her. “Can you tell sir what your friends say...?”). The daughter stated clearly:

Anzanga amandinena kuti ndine Namathotho. Mtima wanga umandipweteka kwambiri kotero ndimamenya aliyense ndingamupeze akundinena. Nthawi zina ndimangikhala chete.

(My friends call me ‘*namathotho*’ (one with leaking fluid). I do not feel at home with this labelling... I beat whoever calls me such and is close to me”. Or sometimes I chose to be silent.”) (*Interview with parent and her child, 27th May, 2015*)

The tendency of labeling among learners breeds hateful feelings and segregation. This is contrary to the stipulated provisions of article 24 of the CRPD as recorded in the Literature Review chapter:

“Education must support the full development of human potential to foster individual talents, while instilling a sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity.”

A learner with emotional behaviour disorders resolved not to go school the following day because of how her teacher handled her when she was just playing outside when her classmates were in class. She reported to her mother saying:

Amayi, ine sindidzapitanso ku sukulu.... Aphunzitsi amafuna kundimenya chifukwa ndimasewera panja anzanga akuphunzira. Ndine mwana wawo kuti azindimenya. Sindidzapitakonso...

(“Mum, I will not go to school again”. She began. “Why, my daughter?” Her mother asked. “Madam wanted to beat me because I was playing outside when my friends were in class. Am I her daughter that she should beat me up?” I will never go to school...” (*Interview with parent and her child, 27th May, 2015*)

Children with emotional behaviour disorders do whatever they think at any time. The following picture illustrates such a behaviour displayed by a learner who is standing when a class was in session.



Figure 7: A Standard 1 learner with EBD (standing) while her classmates are writing an exercise

Source: File photo with permission from parents and teachers

If such children are not handled with care they may absent themselves from school. Consequently, they dropout from school thereby increasing illiteracy rate. This is echoed by Reiser (2012) who noted that “children in mainstream schools receive less attention from teachers and there is an overemphasis on academic achievement and examination as opposed to all round development of children.”

Evidence further revealed that it was not very easy for learners to accept a fellow learner with albinism. One of the teachers reported that the learners treated him like a stranger.

“He is an odd one out”, the teacher said. “You know, their skin is different from our skin. His dressing is different from the other learner. He is allowed to wear pair of trousers, long sleeved shirts and a hat unlike her fellow learners. The standard one learners were very estranged upon seeing him. “Napweri”, “Mzungu” (white boy)! They exclaimed. Very sad...” “The good thing, however is that he is intelligent and hardworking.

When asked aside, the learner with albinism had this to say:

“Indedi, anzanga anamanditonza. Ndimakhumudwa ndiponso ndimakwiya. Komambe sindimawasasmala. Palibe chimene ndingachite kuti ndisinthe maonekedwe anga. Nchifukwa chake nthawi zambiri ndimasankha kukhala ndekha”.

(“Yes, my peers say a lot of bad thing regarding how I look. I get disappointed and angry. However, I choose to ignore them. There is nothing I can do to change my looks. That is why most of the times I choose to be alone.”) Said the learner with albinism, downcast.

(Interview with TR2 and learner with albinism, 27th May,2015)



Figure 8: A learner with albinism reading a book silently and alone

Source: File photo with permission from parents, teachers and learners

The evidence from the observations show that learners are reading books in pairs while the learner with albinism is reading alone. The classmates may have the chance of sharing ideas from what they have read, helping each other on how to read some words or sentences correctly; but it may not be the case with the learner with albinism. When such isolation continues the learners with disabilities will be affected negatively to the extent that they may not participate in learning fully or absent themselves from classes.

Reiser (2012) noted that children with disabilities face many challenges in education. Three of the most serious involve institutionalised discrimination, stigmatisation and neglect, from the classroom to the local community and in the home. Discrimination, stigmatisation and neglect of learners with disabilities impact negatively on these learners. They feel as if they are not important in the school or community. As a result, they develop a poor self-image of themselves. They do not participate. A parent thus suggested that teachers should not be in the fore front to discriminate learners.

Ndikadakonda aphunzitsi akanakhala ndi mtima womvetsa kuti ana amene amawaphunzitsa siofanana. Anawa ali ndi mavuto osiyanasiyana motero aziwamvetsetsa ndikumawathandiza malinga ndi mmene mwanayo alili. Powathandiza asamasiyanitse kuti mwana uyu ndiwalunga winayu ali ndi ulumale. Asamakhale patsogolo kuchita sankho.

(I wish the teachers could understand that their learners are not the same. They should assist the learners considering their SEN. On the other hand, they should not be in the fore front to discriminate. Otherwise these learners will not be participating in the lessons).
(Interview with a parent of a learner (27th May, 2015))

The importance of recognising learners with SEN is replicated by Reiser (2012)

“But participation also involves being recognised for oneself and being accepted for oneself. I participate with you when you recognise me as a person yourself, and accept me for who I am.”

UNESCO’s action in the field of IE has been set explicitly with the IE’s framework adopted in the Salamanca Statement in 1994:

“Regular schools within inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building inclusive societies and achieving education for all...” (Salamanca Statement, Article 2).

4.5.1.2 Resources

Evidence from the focus group discussion with the learners revealed that inadequate resources is a big challenge as compared to negative attitude, unfriendly environment and lack of trained teachers in special needs education which are at equal footing. Although such is the case, each challenge has equally important impact in the education of the learners with SEN. In the following paragraphs each challenge is analysed in detail.

The study found out that learners with hearing impairment (HI) lack hearing aids, those with visual impairment (VI) lack magnifying glasses or spectacles and the one with albinism lack proper skin oil. Hearing aids assist the learners with HI to be able to get what the teacher is saying when teaching though it is partial. They enhance communication between the teacher and the learner with HI.

Subsequently, the learners with HI will be involved in class activities and thereby participate actively in the learning process just as all other learners without such a disability. Without the hearing aids the learners with hearing impairment do not hear what their teacher is saying when teaching. They just look at the teacher and their classmates. They make effort to get information by reading the lips of the teacher. However, when the teacher is speaking so fast the learners are unable to get the information.

The problem of language and lack of expertise in managing learners with SEN have been also reported by Mapondera et. al. (2013) who cited poor communication with learners and inadequate training among teachers as some of the challenges.

Learners with visual impairment find it difficult to read information on the board and chart especially when the letters are small or written with ink which is difficult to see. Spectacles or magnifying glasses help in reducing such problems. Unfortunately, no learner with visual impairment had either spectacles or magnifying glasses. Although the learners are encouraged to sit in front during lessons to enable them see properly on the chalk board they may not sometimes like it. Sitting in front means sitting close to the chalk board. When the chalkboard is being cleaned the dust is likely to get to the learners faster and easily. This will cause respiratory infections in the learners leading to coughing and sneezing.

Being airborne, such infections are likely to spread to almost all learners in the classroom and if not treated quickly they may lead to absenteeism. The problem of lack of assistive devices such as spectacles and magnifying glasses has been reported by Alindiamao, et al. in their report about the baseline survey they carried out in Shire Highlands Education Division in 2008.

In a focus group discussion some learners with SEN suggested that government intervention would help solve their problems.

Ife tikupempha kuti boma litiganizaire. Makolo athu sangakwanitse kutigulira magalasi. Aphunzitsi amene amabwera kudzatiyendera azikatinenera kulikuluko za mavuto athu kuti tiziphunzira mosavuta.

(We would like to ask the government to consider us. Our parents cannot afford to buy spectacles for us. The itinerant teacher should carry our concerns to the relevant authorities). *(Focus group discussion with learners with disabilities (2nd June, 2015).*

Such suggestion implies that the government, through the Ministry of Health, should take the initiative of identifying and assisting rural children with SEN. The itinerant teacher will complete his or her job when the findings are taken to relevant authorities for proper intervention.

Albinism is a disability that largely affects the skin and also sight to the extent that such people have low vision (Lynch & Lund, 2011). People with albinism require special oil for their skin to prevent it from sunshine and glare dryness and cracking. This skin oil is expensive since it is not commonly found. It was observed during the study that a parent of a learner with albinism shed tears of gratitude when she received two tubes of skin oil for her child from a well-wisher who found the researcher in the head teacher's office planning for the day's activities. He was the contractor building the school blocks. He had this to say:

“Papita nthawi yaitali mwa wanga osadzola mafuta oyenera khungu lake. Ndakhala ndikupita kuchipatala chathu chaching’ono nthawi zambiri kuti ndikapeze mafutawa koma sindimawapeze. Nthawi zones amangondiiza kuti ndibwere pambuyo pa masabata awiri. Kenano ndinangoupanga ulendo wopita kuchipatala chachikulu ku Zomba. Kumenekonso sindinawapeze. Basi ndinangofooka... Zikomo kwambiri bambo chifukwa cha mafutawa, amuthandiza. Mutamuona pano muona kuti akusuwa.”

(“It has been long since my child applied this oil onto his skin. I have been visiting our health centre more often than not to get the oil but to no avail. Every time I went there, I was told the oil was not available I should go again after two weeks. Then I went to the General Hospital, I did not find it as well. I got tired. (Silence).... Thank you, sir for these two tubes. They will make a difference on my son... If you look at him you will see that he was sloughing.”) (Interview with a parent of a learner with albinism, 4th June 2015)

When asked how much he bought the tubes of oil, the well-wisher did not disclose the amount.

Mafutawa ngodula kwambiri ndipo sapezekapezeka. Mtengo wake sungafanafanane ndi wa mafuta ena alionse. Anzathuwa (akhungu la chialubinowa) akuvutika. Nchifukwa chake nditapeza mafutawa ndinamgulira mnyamatayu.

(“The tubes of oil are very expensive and rarely found. You cannot compare the price with any other skin oil. These friends of ours are suffering. That is why when I found these tubes I did not hesitate to buy for this boy”.)(Interview with building contractor, 4th June 2015)

The study findings concerning problems affecting people with albinism concur with those who have been described by Lynch and Lund (2011) in their study on “*the plight of learners with albinism in Malawi*”. The two reported that “learners with albinism lack skin oil, low vision devices such as monocular telescopes, magnifiers and sun glasses.” These dermatological and visual challenges for learners with albinism demonstrate how much the Ministry of Health must do on health care. They call for the intervention of MoH and other well-wishers to address them. MoH should make sure that they have the oil for people with albinism in stock in the health facilities just like any other essential drug. Similarly, low vision devices have to be made available for such people to access easily. In addition to this, MoH personnel should make routine visits to communities to identify people with albinism, their health needs and assist them accordingly.

All in all, as UNESCO (2015) has put it,

“The issue of poverty is a very important issue and government needs to take measures to provide education for children living in poverty without disadvantaging parents and families who are unable to meet the additional costs...If the cycle is to be broken support must be provided to these families to enable their children to attain an education which should provide a pathway to a better life.”

4.5.1.3 Environment

The findings from the observation checklist further revealed that disability unfriendly environment is another challenge that learners with SEN face. The infrastructure had no access in terms of ramps to allow easy mobility of learners with physical disability. The gutters are deep. Hence those learners who use wheel chairs have to be carried into their classrooms by their sympathetic peers daily when they come to school. The picture below is a good illustration of disability unfriendly infrastructure.



Figure 9: Classroom blocks with deep gutters

Source: File photo with permission from the school headteacher

While the learners with physical disabilities who use wheel-chairs may be helped by their peers to go into classroom or toilet they themselves feel that they are a burden to their fellows. They feel sorry for their being. As a result, they resort to absenteeism in order to relieve their peers.”

The problem of inaccessible infrastructure is also reported by Lebona (2013) in his study about *The Implementation of Inclusive Education in Primary Schools* who found that “many schools, particularly those in remote areas or slums are physically inaccessible to some learners with disabilities in Free State Province in South Africa. Mwangi and Orodo (2014) also reported as a challenge that “learners with disabilities used the same facilities that their counterparts used.” In addition to the school infrastructure, learners with physical disabilities face problems when going and coming from school especially during the rainy season. They have to use a long winding route school to avoid rivers that have feeble or no bridges. Since they travel with their schoolmates, a good number of learners report late to school. The school head expressed with dismay on the plight of learners with disabilities in the following way:

“We had one learner who was using a wheelchair. During the rainy season he seldom came to school. It is not a very long distance from his village to this school but due to rivers in between he had to use a long winding route. He was always accompanied by his school mates and together they were reporting late for classes. By and by we saw that he was not reporting for classes. When I asked his guardian, I felt sorry to hear that he had dropped out of school because the guardian had felt that the child was a burden to his friends. She would not want the child’s being to be a burden to others therefore she felt it better to relieve his peers.”
(Interview with TR 1, 23rd May 2015)

The findings suggest that such unfriendly environment repels learners with physical disabilities. These conditions are creating inequality in accessing education among learners because it is only learners without physical disabilities who will be reporting daily to school to learn. The unfriendly environment has rendered education inaccessible for learners with disabilities thereby failing to achieve one of the four A's which is Accessibility. Chilemba (2013) has explained that one of the overlapping dimensions of accessibility requires that there must be physical accessibility (p.6). This inequality therefore makes it hard for the learners with physical disabilities not to progress. The result is that they will be repeating classes and finally give up due to age.

The view of the parent which is a reason for not sending her child with disability to school is not different from what was recorded in the REFIE report of 2015 about *the status of education in Malawi*. It explains:

“Parents’ view regarding their child’s disability do influence their willingness to send their children to school. They think that their children are stigmatised by their peers as well as the perception that it is not worthwhile to send their children to school as they would in any case be unable to learn anything.”

Other studies have also reported a lot on inaccessible infrastructure and physical environment (Cheshire & Montfort, 2008; Chilemba, 2013; Lebona; 2013; Mwangi & Orodho, 2014).

4.3.1.3 Training

The study found out that the learners with hearing impairment complained that sometimes they do not get what their teachers say when they are teaching. This is because there is communication gap between the teachers and themselves. A parent of one learner who had both speech explained:

“Ine ndi mwana wanga timayankhulana bwinobwino popanda vuto. Timagwiritsa ntchito zizindikiro zimene zimathindiza kumvana mosavuta. Koma ndikaona makope ake ndimazindikira kuti samatola zimene amaphunzira m’kalasi. Samakhoza. Iye anati vuto lake samamva zimene aphunzitsi amaphunzitsa chifukwa sagwiritsa ntchito zizindikiro monga timachitira kunyumba. Iwo amayankhula mwachangu ndipo iye amalephera kuwatsatira. Chidwi chawo chimakhala pa ana alunga. Iye samawerengedwa konse”.

(“I have no problems to communicate with my child. We use sign language. However, looking at her exercise books I have the impression that she does not understand what is taught in class. Her performance is poor. She said that she does not understand what the teachers say. They do not use sign language. They speak fast and she cannot read their lips well to get what they are saying. Their focus is to the other learners without hearing impairment. She is ignored.”) (*Interview with a parent, 4th June, 2015*)

What the parent reported is attested in following picture:



Figure 10: A lady teacher in the course of teaching

Source: File photo with permission from the teacher and learners

The study found that the way the teacher was delivering her lesson shows how any teacher using the same method can ignore learners who have hearing impairment. The picture shows that some learners are behind the teacher one of whom is a girl with hearing impairment. In this case she cannot read the lips of the teacher and decode any sign language if the teacher uses any.

As such there is communication breakdown between the teacher and the learners of such SEN. Thus Chilemba (2013) has put it: “The attribute of acceptability entails that the form and substance of education, curricula and teaching methods are relevant.” When that does not happen the learner notices that he or she is not being involved in the learning process. Consequently, they direct their focus to other things or begin to disturb other learners.

When the teacher ignores the learners with SEN continuously the learners will decide not to attend the classes nor go to school because they do not find reason to do so. Their absence from classes will affect their performance negatively at the end of term.

What the study found out echoes the findings of Reiser (2012) that “learners (with disabilities) in mainstream schools receive less attention” (p.199). Mariga et al. (2014) have reported about the problem of inadequate and poorly trained teachers as one of the challenges in implementing IE in Uganda. In addition, the findings of Mapondera et al. (2013) spelt the lack of expertise in managing learners with SEN among the challenges in implementing IE in Malawi.

The challenges that learners with SEN face at this school indicate the plight of learners with disabilities. While current national education policy guidelines and programming documents in Malawi seem to fairly streamline the requirements of universal access to quality primary education the learners with SEN are sidelined. However, this may not be conclusive before we appreciate the challenges that teachers face in the process of implementing IE. The following section appreciates and analyses such challenges.

4.5.2 Challenges that teachers face

The challenges, that teachers face, were categorised into psychological, economical or financial and political. The psychological challenge had to do with negative attitude towards learners with SEN. The economic challenges included lack of funding for teaching and learning resources, training of teachers and overcrowding. The intensity of the challenges is illustrated in figure 11.

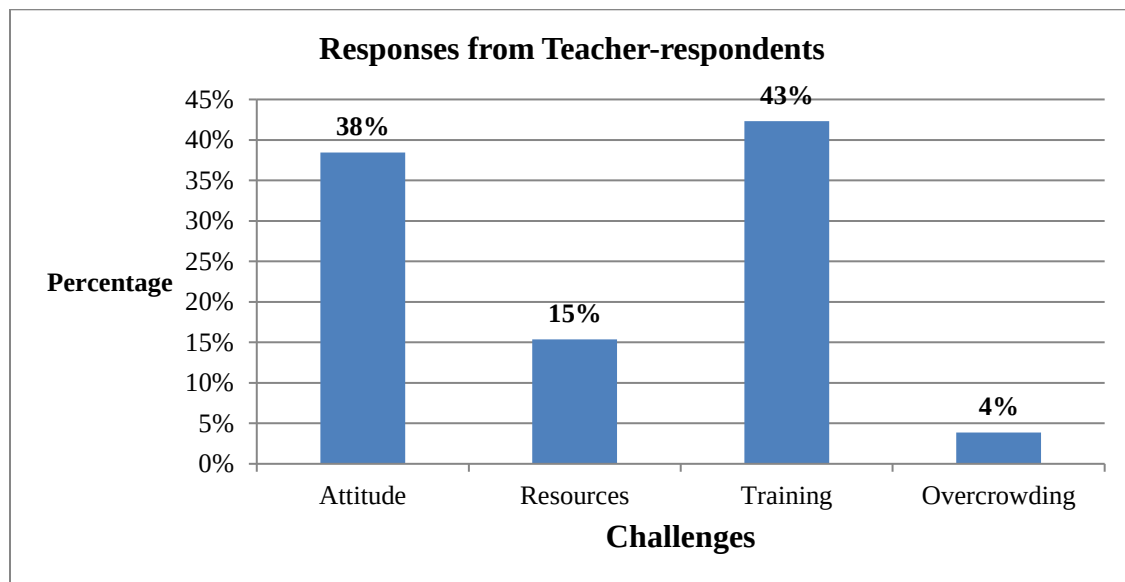


Figure 11: Challenges that teachers face

Source: Researcher

Evidence from the responses on the questionnaire administered to the teachers revealed that lack of training is the biggest challenge as it has recorded 43%, seconded by attitude, 38%, then lack of resources, 15% and finally overcrowding, 4%. Of course, Mariga et al. (2014) have reported about the problem of inadequate and poorly trained teachers as one of the challenges in implementing IE in Uganda.

Reiser (2012) has noted that negative attitude towards learners with disabilities is rooted in tradition and leads to stigmatisation and discrimination. The challenges do not give hope to implement the social model of disability. They are push factors since the learning environment is not transformed to accommodate learners with disabilities.

4.5.2.1 Training

Luntha Primary School had six teachers with teaching experience ranging from 2 years to 22 years. None of these teachers has been trained in SNE. Of course, it is only one teacher in the whole zone who was trained in SNE with specialization in visual impairment (VI).

Due to lack of training in SNE among teachers, it was found out that the teachers have inadequate knowledge on how best to handle learners with SEN, how to communicate with them especially the learners with HI and how to help learners with VI.

One teacher with four years of teaching experience gave up teaching in standard 5 because there was a learner with HI. This is how she reported:

Nditangobwera kumene pa sukulu pano, ndinapatsidwa sitandade 5. Ndinali wosangalala kuti ndiziphunzitsa kalasi imeneyi. Koma kenako nditazindikira kuti munali mwana amene samamva ndipo samayankhula ndinasokonezeka. Kunali kovuta kwa ine kuyankhulana ndi munthu ngati ameneyu. Ndinapita kwa aphunzitsi aakulu ndikuwalongosolera za nkhawa zanga. Ndinawapempha kuti andipatse kalasi ina. Mwamwayi anamvera pempho langa ndipo anandipatsa sitandade 4 mmene mulibe mwana wa vuto ngati limeneli.

(“When I reported here I was allocated to Standard 5. I was very happy to be teaching in that class. Nevertheless, when I noticed that there was a learner who was deaf and dumb I felt uncomfortable. It was a big challenge for me to communicate effectively with one who is deaf and dumb. I went back to the headteacher and expressed my sentiments. I asked him to allocate me to another class. Fortunately, he listened to my concerns and reallocated me to standard 4 where there was no pupil with HI. I exchanged with a colleague.”) (Interview with TR 4, 28th May, 2015).

Turning to the teacher (also with four years of teaching experience) with whom she exchanged and asked her how she felt teaching standard 5 she explained that:

“Although I have not received any training in SNE I took the challenge to teach this class because I feel pity for the learners with SEN. I have a sister who deaf and dumb. She went only up to form two and dropped out she failed Junior Certificate Examinations after repeating. She could not hear what the teachers were saying because they, too, did not know how to communicate with learners with such SEN. At home we communicate with my sister well using sign language. The little sign language that I know, I use to communicate with the learner. However, the challenge is that sign language is not common. Sometimes there is communication breakdown. Frankly speaking, I feel the deaf community is a neglected society because I do not think there are many teachers in schools who are able to handle them effectively.” (Interview with TR 6, 28th May, 2015)

The finding suggests that teachers who have inadequate knowledge in SNE tend to shun learners with SEN because they feel they are difficult to handle. They concentrate on teaching those learners without SEN or those who have no problems in communication. When learners with SEN notice that they are being neglected by their teachers they disturb the class as try to seek attention from their classmates. They also do not do well in class since they are not involved in class activities like reading and group discussions.

In the end, they do not do well in their end of term tests and end up repeating. This is consistent with the finding of Abongdia et al. (2015) who rightly explained that:

“Absence of proper knowledge of the problems that learners with disabilities encounter may deny educators a chance to address barriers. Educators may regard these learners’ lack of achievement as a result of stubbornness, laziness or lack of motivation” (p.21).

Again, Global Campaign for Education (2012:3) argues: ‘... high quality education requires sufficient recruitment of teachers who are trained, supported, paid and managed as professionals’. Teacher training both pre-service and in-service is essential to develop skills necessary to teach successfully in inclusive setting and it leads to more inclusive attitude (Cogran & Schmidt 2011). The NSNE Policy Guidelines admit that:

“Effective delivery of SNE is negatively impacted by an acute shortage of specialist personnel at all levels within the education system. There is limited capacity to provide training to SNE specialist...This problem is compounded by attrition” (Section 1.5.4)

Therefore, training of teachers is very crucial to the implementation of inclusive education. Teachers should have the knowledge of IE. The curriculum for teacher training should contain topics on IE. However, containing such topics is one thing, and teaching those topics is another. A four-year experienced teacher reported:

When I was in college many topics on IE were skipped. The tutor just told us that we would learn much about them in future. I got the impression that not many of the tutors knew about IE hence could not ably handle the topics. A bit of sign language should be taught so that we can at least communicate with those learners with hearing impairment. (Interview with TR 4, 29th May, 2015)

This demonstrates that Teacher Training Colleges should have well trained tutors who are well versed in IE so as to impart knowledge to the students. Ambogdia (2015) has observed that:

Absence of proper knowledge of the problems that learners with disabilities encounter may deny educators a chance to address barriers. Educators may regard these learners' lack of achievement as a result of stubbornness, laziness and lack of motivation.

The need for teacher training has been emphasised by Reiser (2012, p.15) when he observed that:

Due to lack of educational philosophy, pedagogy and training based on a social model of disability, millions of teachers feel disempowered when confronted with children with disabilities in their class. The social model suggests that it is not people with disabilities who should have to change to fit society's ideas about 'normality', rather it is society that needs to change, to get rid of ideas about normal and abnormal, and to be more respectful towards and inclusive of diversity

In addition,

“Teacher training, both pre-service and in-service is essential to develop skills necessary to teach successfully in inclusive setting and it leads to more inclusive attitude.” (Cogran & Schmidt, 2011).

Hence, the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines stipulate that MoEST “will train and deploy adequate qualified specialist teachers at all levels” (Section 4.5.2.2.1) as a strategy to solve the problems related to inadequacy of trained teachers. Due to inadequate training in SEN teachers have another challenge in handling learners with SEN which has to do with attitude.

4.5.2.2 Attitude

The study found that most teachers at the research site have negative attitude towards learners with SEN. For instance, 38% of the responses revealed that. The learners with SEN are looked at as unteachable, dullards and children who drag the schemes of work and lesson plans. A teacher with 22 years of experience did not have kind words for learners with SEN. He described them as children who waste his time when teaching.

Kuphunzitsa kalasi yomwe muli ana a ulumale makamaka amene ali ndi mavuto a muubongo ndi kusamva nkovuta. Amachedwetsa phunziro lako. Choncho pofuna kuti ndimalize mu nthawi yake zimene ndinakonzera sindimawalabadira amenewa. Ine ndimafuna ndiphunzitse zambiri kuti ndidzapeze pofunsa mayeso. Komanso mutha kuona kuti ana aulumalewa ngochepa kwambiri poyerekeza ndi omwe ali alunga. Choncho sindilabada ngati alephera kapena ayi.

(“Sir, teaching a class where there are learners with SEN especially those with learning difficulties and hearing impairments is an uphill task. They drag your lesson. So, if I have to cover what I planned to teach I ignore them. I am concerned with how much content I have covered so that I have a number of topics from where to pick questions for the end of term test. Moreover, they are a very small percentage as compared to those who do not have disabilities. Therefore, I do not mind whether they fail or not.”) (Interview with TR 7, 29th May 2015)

Asked whether these learners with SEN have remedial lessons or not another teacher respondent was quick to say “no”. He narrated:

Ine sindimakhalira pa sukulu pano. Ndimaweruka hafu thwelofu masana. Sindimachedwa kunyamuka kuti ndikafike ku nyumba nthawi yabwino kuti ndikayambe kugwira ntchito za pakhomu kenako kuyamba kukonzekera ntchito yaku sukulu ya tsiku lotsatira. Ndikudziwa kuti ndikofunika kumawaphunzitsa anawa mwapadera komabe ndimaona ngati kungotaya nthawi yanga chifukwa sindimadziwa kuti ndingawaphunzitse motani. Sindingataye nthawi pomwe ndikudziwa kuti ntchito yanga siibereka zipatso.

(“One of the reasons, for example in my case, is that that I do not reside on campus. When I knock off at 12:30 p.m., I start off right away so that I should reach home in good time, rest, do my household chores and prepare the lessons for the next day. While it is good to have remedial lessons with learners with SEN I feel it is a waste of time because I do not know how best I can handle them and they are difficult to teach. I should not waste my time with them when I know my work will not bear fruits.”) (*Interview with TR 5, 25th May, 2015*).

Reiser (2012) has reported that learners (with disabilities) are widely described as ‘useless and not capable of learning, stubborn, lazy, or willfully disobedient’ He traces the roots of this negative attitude towards learners with disabilities by teachers to tradition.

“The challenge is rooted deep in traditional values and stereotypes about physical and mental difference; ideas of normality; deficit thinking implicit in concepts such as ‘special educational needs’ and ‘medical model’ approaches to impairment which focus on what people with disabilities cannot, rather than what they can, do. Due to the lack of educational philosophy, pedagogy and training based on a social model of disability, millions of teachers feel disempowered when confronted with children with disabilities in their class” (p. 27).

The NSNE Policy Guidelines (Sec. 1.5.3) concur with Reiser (2012):

“Negative attitudes are a major barrier to the development of SNE in Malawi. Children and youths with SEN face discrimination, lack of parental responsibility, neglect, rejection, abuse and over-protection by parents. This could also be aggravated by cultural practices, beliefs and values.”

The negative attitudes demonstrate clearly that the teachers have place disability onto the impairments of the learners. The social model of disability advocates for the change of mindsets where school heads and teachers should see the ability of these learners with disabilities and not their impairment as something that is going to impede them from achieving their intended goals of education.

Therefore, in order to address teachers' and learners' negative attitude towards the learners with disabilities participants suggested that there should be civic education, guidance and counselling, as well as cooperation between teachers and parents.

Accordingly, the findings revealed that civic education brings awareness to both teachers and learners without disabilities. The causes and effects of disabilities can be suffered by any child. A teacher with twenty-two years of experience of teaching reported:

“Ana amene ali alunga pamodzi ndi aphunzitsi ayenera kudziwa kuti mwana aliyense atha kudwala matenda ngati malungo amubongo omwe angampangitse kukhala wosamva ndi wosayankhula kapenanso kukhala ndi ulumale wina ulionse. Motero ana amene ali ndi ulumale sayenera kusankhidwa kapena kusolidwa. Ayenera kutengedwa ngati munthu wina aliyense”.

(Any child can suffer from, let's say, cerebral malaria or meningitis which can cause deafness or muteness or any other disabilities. The learners without disabilities and even teachers should know this. It is not out of choice that they should be like that. As such these children should not be discriminated against nor stigmatized. They should be treated as everybody else) (Interview with TR 6, 26th May, 2015).

In addition to civic education, learners with disabilities ought to receive counselling. This is important in the sense that it will help them accept their conditions and improve their self-image.

“Ana aulumalewa akamapatsidwa maina, akamasalidwa, ndi kusankhidwa amakhala okumudwa pamoyo wao wa maphunziro komanso chikhalidwe. Amadziona kuti sali ofanana ndi anal. Mapeto ake amasankha kumakhala okha. Nkuthekha amaganiza zoipa; angadziwe ndani? Choncho nchinthu chabwino koposa kuwapatsa uphungu kuti moyo wawo ukhale ndi thanthauzo”.

(You know, when these learners with disabilities are labelled, stereotyped, discriminated against and stigmatized they get affected very much socially and academically. They feel they are not part of their peers. Consequently, they feel lonely. Who knows they can be nurturing evil thoughts...? Counselling, therefore, is of paramount importance so that they are given meaning of their existence. (Interview with TR 4, 26th May, 2015)

Finally, the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) should not only discuss development issues but also the welfare of such learners with disabilities. Parents should be free to tell class teachers about the disabilities that their children have and teachers and the teachers should be also free and ready to learn more about the disabilities of the learners and welcome them in their class.

“Vuto lomwe lili ndi makolo ambiri ndilakuti samawauza aphunzitsi za mavuto amene ana awo ali nawo. Motero pamapita nthawi yaitali kuti mphunzitsi azindikire ulumale wa mwanayo. Aphunzitsi akamadzazindikira kuti mwana uyu ali ndi ulumale makhala kuti amutonza kale. Makolo ndi aphunzitsi asamangogwira ntchito limodzi pankhani za chitukuko zokha komanso paza moyo wa ophunzira”.

(The problem among many parents is that they do not tell teachers about the problems of their children. As such it takes long for the class teachers to identify the disability in a learner. By the time the teacher learns that the learners has such or such a disability he or she must have ill-treated the learner in one way or the other. Collaboration between teachers and parents should not be on school projects only but also in the welfare of a learner). *(Interview with TR 5, 30th May 2015).*

This has also been observed by Kamchedzera (2015) who expressed that school committees, parents and teacher associations, given the autonomy, should come up with innovative ways to deal with school-specific challenges.

4.5.2.3 Resources

Luntha Primary school is no exception as far as the problem of inadequacy of resources is concerned. Respondent 1 with 18 years of teaching experience reported that the school requires adequate resources for teaching and learning to be effective.

“Our learners do not have adequate text books. They share the text books in class. Some text books in some classes are shared in pairs while in some classes they are shared in groups of five. The books that all learners use have the same font size. This is a disadvantage to those learners with visual impairment.

We do not have raised apparatuses so that those learners with visual impairment can feel with their fingers some of the diagrams or drawings. In addition to these our learners with SEN do not have assistive devices such as hearing aids for learners with HI and spectacles for learners with VI. Lack of these resources poses a big challenge to teaching and learning.” (Interview with TR 1, 23rd May, 2015)

It was indeed observed that learners sit in circles or groups of five or six and place a text book in the middle as illustrated in the picture. The positioning of the book poses challenge to group members to view the texts properly. The class becomes noisy when each learner wants the book to be positioned in his or her favour.



Figure 12: Standard 5 learners writing exercise from one text book

Source: File photo with permission from parents and teachers.

While sharing of books in class may facilitate group discussions, it is necessary that each learner should have a book for each subject and be allowed to take them home. This will enable the learners to continue learning at home on their own to supplement what they learn at school and do their homework easily. Otherwise becomes difficult for the learners to continue learning at home and do their homework.

“We do not have enough books at this school. I find it hard to teach with few books available for my class. Writing the exercise on the chalk board may disadvantage those learners with visual impairment.” (Interview with TR 6, 30th May 2015)

Assistive devices such as spectacles will help learners with VI not to lose their sight fast. If they lose their sight fast their learning will be affected negatively. They will need to learn braille writing and reading if they are to continue reading and writing or they will be learning by listening only without reading and writing. Hence, they will be passive learners. Their performance in class will be affected negatively as well and this will result in failing, repeating and consequently dropping out of school since age will not be on their side. The problem of inadequacy of resources has also been noted by Kamchedzera (2010), Mukhopadhyay et al. (2012) as well as Maganga, et al. (2013).

As a strategy to address the challenge of scarcity of resources in the implementation of IE the participants suggested that something must be done at the local level. For instance, one of the teachers explained that:

Much as the government and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology have the onus to address the problem of scarcity of resources, we must do something at the local level to avert this problem. We, teachers should be innovative to come up with visual aids that can advantage learners with special educational needs such as those with visual impairment. We can ask the learners themselves to mould numbers and letters of the alphabet during Expressive Arts so that they can be used during Mathematics and English lessons. We can also build maps on the school grounds using pieces of bricks for illustrations during Social Studies lessons.

UNESCO (2015) clearly explain that children learn in a number of ways hence teachers should consider these ways when preparing and for and delivering their lessons. The NSNE Policy Guidelines outline the following strategies regarding scarcity of resources: developing alternate curriculum for students unable to access the regular curriculum (Section 4.8.2.1.1) and providing relevant teaching, learning and assessment resources for learners and teaches with SEN (Section 4.8.2.1.3)

4.5.2.4 Overcrowding

The study found out that there are more learners in the infant section than the other sections. In standard 1, for example, one teacher with 22 years of experience handles approximately 120 learners 8 of whom are learners with various SEN. The teacher respondent explained that:

Sichinthu cha pafupi kuphunzitsa kalasi ya ana ambiri (monga 1). Awa ndi ana aang'ono ndipo ambiri mwa iwo sadziwa chifukwa chobwerera ku sukulu. Nkuvuta kuonetsetsa kuti mwana aliyense wadziwa kuwerenga pakutha pa phunziro. Ndikapereka ntchito ndimatenga nthawi yaitali kuti nditsirize kuchonga. Sindimaona phindu lomatsatira ndondomeko yophunzitsira ngati ndikufuna kuonetsetsa kuti ophunzira atolepo kanthu pakutha pa phunziro. Mutha kuona kuti ndikupeza mavuto pophunzitsa kalasi yaikulu choncho mavuto angachulukirekire ngatimkalasimo muli ana a ulumale. Kuonjezera apo ndilibe luso lina lililonse la mmene ndingawaphunzitsire ana ngati amenewa.

(“It is not easy to handle such a big class. These are children and most of them do not even know why they are here. It is difficult to make sure that each pupil has read by the end of the lesson. When I give an exercise, it takes long for me to finish marking and make corrections. I do not see the need to follow the lesson plan to detail if I am to ensure that the learners have gained something by the end of the lesson. So, you can imagine how challenging it is that despite such a big class some learners have various disabilities and I do not have the necessary skills to handle them...”)
(Interview with TR 2, 20th May, 2015)

With the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994 pupil-teacher ratio increased hence overcrowding has been inevitable (REFIE, 2015: 10). The MPalawi Government through MoEST is doing all it can to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio to 60:1 by training more primary school teachers. Programmes such as Integrated Primary Teacher Education (IPTE) and Open and Distant Learning (ODL) have been put in place to tackle the problem of shortage of teachers (p.15). However, due to economic hardships that Malawi is facing the teachers who are completing their training are taking long to be employed. This delay to have them employed by the government has delayed the process of reducing the pupil-teacher ratio. Such a situation makes effective teaching difficult. There is insufficient or no clinical supervision

The impending Compulsory FPE will see every school going child in school. This will call for teachers to be equipped with necessary skills and knowledge to handle learners with SEN to make IE successful. If such will not be the case, IE will bear little or no fruit thereby making the learners with SEN neglected. When they are neglected at school these learners will not acquire necessary knowledge and skills to lead independent life. Consequently, they will be a burden to the nation. The effect of large classes has been replicated by Mukhopadhyay, et al. (2012) that large classes increase teachers' workload.

To address such a challenge the Primary Education Advisor and the Head teacher of the school suggested that:

It would be proper if classes that have a hundred plus learners could be divided into two or three streams so as to reduce the teacher-pupil ratio. Although this means having a good number of teachers at the school the teachers on the ground can be the best people to suggest on how best they can run the double stream strategy.

Of course, Mukhopadhyay et al. (2012) have noted in their study that teachers have large classes which increase their workload. This is why Global Campaign for Education (2012) emphasizes on “sufficient” recruitment of well trained teachers.

4.6 Chapter summary

The study found out that all teacher respondents are not trained in special needs education although they are all qualified to teach. The study also found out that there are more learners with visual, speech and hearing impairments than other disabilities. The challenges that both learners and teachers face in implementing IE include negative attitude towards learners with SEN, inadequate learning resources, lack of trained teachers in SNE and disability unfriendly infrastructure. It also found that the challenges that teachers face include overcrowding, inadequate teaching resources, lack of training in SNE and negative attitude towards learners with disabilities.

The challenges, as the findings have unearthed, are not quite different from those that extant literature has recorded. This shows how real they are and how long these challenges have been there before being addressed. Therefore, the present findings serve as a reminder to the stakeholders to take necessary action if inclusive education is to be successful in Malawi.

The presence of such barriers demonstrates the great need to shift from medical model to social model of disability. With the social model, the focus will have to shift from viewing the problem in the person and their permanent impairment to examining the barriers of attitude, organisation and environment that deny peoples with disabilities access to an ordinary life in the culture and society in which we live (Reiser, 2012).

The next chapter draws conclusions on the findings that have been discussed in this chapter. It also explains the implications of such findings and provides possible areas for future study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the conclusions and implications of the findings of the study and ends with suggestions for further study. It has answered the main research question: What are the challenges faced in the implementation Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that advocate for inclusive education? Its subsequent research questions such as:

1. How is IE understood?
2. What are the current practices in the implementation of National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that advocate for IE?
3. What challenges are faced in implementing National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that advocate for IE?
4. What strategies can be used to address the challenges?

5.2 Conclusions

The thrust of the study was to explore the challenges faced the implementation of NSNEPG which advocate for IE in Malawi's basic education.

On the understanding of IE, UNESCO (2005) provide a broader definition of IE and what it entails. It is not only having learners with diverse special educational needs in one school or class but also modifying the learning environment to befit their learning need.

The findings on how IE is understood in this study, however, have revealed that there is a shallow understanding of IE by the respondents. They think that IE only means allowing all learners with and without disabilities to learn together. The reasons for such minimalist approach to the understanding may be lack of awareness through in-service training or refresher courses.

This, therefore, calls for a robust awareness on the meaning and implications of National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines as well as IE. The deep understanding of IE as well as the social model of disability will help the teachers on how best to handle learners with SEN.

The findings on the current practices in implementation of IE at local level have revealed that learners with disability do not enjoy the right to education in the same way as their fellow learners without disabilities, learners with disabilities use the same facilities with their fellow counterparts without disabilities and all teacher respondents are not trained in SNE although they are all qualified to teach and some have served for a long period of time. Hence, use the same teaching methodologies which are biased towards the learners without disabilities.

While the social model requires that there should be modification of facilities to accommodate learners with disabilities, the impression is that the principle of “majority should rule” is used so much so that the learners without disabilities are the ones who are considered more than those with disabilities. It was evident that the teaching and learning materials are to the advantage of learners without disabilities. Similarly, the teaching methods do not favour the learners with disabilities.

Parents as well as teachers are very much concerned with the infrastructural development (which is also disability unfriendly) unlike the welfare of learners with disabilities. In addition, responses obtained from teacher respondents and interviews with parents indicated that parents play very minimal or no role in the education of their children. They just take their children to school and have them registered and do not check with the teachers on how they are performing in class thereafter. This gives the impression that the learners with disabilities are among the marginalised in the society as a whole and school in particular. They are taken as people who have nothing to contribute to the nation thereby putting disability on their impairments.

In fact, parents should be on the fore-front to educate their children with disabilities. They are to help teachers by telling them the type of disability that their children have and how best to handle them. Without their involvement in the education of the children, IE will be difficult to implement. This, coupled with poorly trained teachers makes the implementation of IE a far-fetched idea.

The findings indicate that the identified challenges that are faced in the implementation of the IE relate to challenges faced by learners with disabilities themselves and challenges faced by teachers. These challenges have been categorised into psychological, economic and political.

The study findings revealed that some of the learners with disabilities are labelled by the peers without disabilities as *namathotho* (one with leaking stuff), *napweri* or *mzungu dala* meaning one with albinism. Inadequate trained teachers in SNE and learning materials as well as disability unfriendly environment are other challenges that learners with disabilities face.

Labeling has resulted into stigmatisation and discrimination. This psychological problem of negative attitude goes back to the societies where the learners come from and that is where it can best be resolved. Parents of children without disabilities and society in general should learn to accept those the parents of children with disabilities and their children as well. Treating each other as equals should be taken as one of the social values. With such acceptance the learners will be together as equals. The study believes that without change of people's mindset and proper training of teachers on social model it is envisaged that it will be difficult to walk the talk of IE.

The inadequacy of teachers trained in SNE has big negative impact on learners with SEN. Teachers cannot communicate effectively with learners with disabilities because they do not have the skills to teach such learners. Apart from training, lesson planning, classroom arrangement and management as well as teaching strategies are crucial to the implementation of IE (Depeller et al., 2010; UNESCO, 2015). Through observation, learners with disabilities were rather excluded than included in learning. Desks were in rows (as seen in the pictures above) rather than in squares; teachers did not vary the methods of teaching and the fonts for writings on the flip charts were small and faint. All this demonstrated that learners with SEN were not considered during lesson planning.

When teachers do not have in their minds the learners with disabilities during lesson planning it is difficult to include them during lessons. As a result, the learners with disabilities will be included in class only by their presence therein and not in any other way. This is made worse by not providing extra lessons to the learners with disabilities. The right to education is, therefore, biased towards learners without disabilities. This is the more reason why Cogan and Schmidt (2011) have underscored the importance of pre-service and in-service training as crucial to successful teaching in inclusive setting.

Both learners and teachers faced the challenge of inadequacy of teaching and learning resources. This put learners with disabilities at a big disadvantage. Learners with VI cannot see the letters in standard font that teachers write on chalk boards or flip charts and those with HI cannot hear properly what their teachers are saying without assistive devices. Books were not adequate, either.

Therefore, even if teachers are well trained but if there are inadequate resources they will definitely face problems in teaching. Without teaching materials, the lessons were more teacher-centred than learner-centred. They were more theoretical than practical and teaching methods were more of banking than praxis. As a result, learners will retain less content. The training of teachers and acquisition of learning resources are economic challenges which call for the government and various stakeholders to mobilise financial resources in order to deal with them.

Disability unfriendly infrastructure limited the mobility of learners with physical disability and frustrated them somehow. The impression was that parents and teachers did not have a say on the design of the school blocks so as to provide for easy accessibility to learners with physical disability. Hence, parents, as key stakeholders to IE, should also be given the autonomy on design of infrastructure as suggested by Kamchedzera (2015).

Overcrowding in classrooms was yet another challenge that teachers face. It is an inevitable challenge since Free Primary Education policy was implemented. Learner-teacher ratio is very high. As a result, teachers fail to pay close attention to individual learners let alone learners with SEN. Hence, more teachers need to be trained and deployed equitably. Although more TTCs have been opened in the recent past and different teacher training programs such as ODL and IPTE have been devised to improve the learner- teacher ratio, there is only one college in Malawi that trains teachers in SNE.

The output does not match the increasing number of learners with SEN and also the increasing number of primary schools in the country. This explains the shortage of specialist/ itinerant teachers in educational zone in general and the school in particular. Hence, the government, through the Parliamentary Committee on Education and the Directorate of SNE should express the political will to improve the education of learners with SEN.

5.3. Implications

The findings of the study have theoretical, policy and practice implications which are explained in the following paragraphs.

5.3.1 Theoretical implications

The theoretical cases for IE therefore need to be revisited in order to further understand the dynamics of the learners with disabilities and how they can be included in the classrooms successfully. The study has revealed that children with disabilities receive less attention from teachers and there is an overemphasis on academic achievement and examination as opposed to holistic development of the children. This view is consistent with what is presented by Reiser (2012) whose study in Ghana revealed that children with disabilities in mainstream schools receive less attention from teachers and there is an overemphasis on academic achievement and examination as opposed to all round development of children.

Another view that is consistent with that of Mariga, McConkey and Myezwa (2014) is that IE faces infrastructural challenges and this makes it difficult to promote education for all. While IE is fully supported by the Directorate of SNE in Malawi this contradicts the pattern of Mukhopadhyay, Nenty and Abosi (2012) whose study reveal that IE is not supported fully by the Division of Special Education in Botswana to the extent that there are inadequate resource materials and appropriate infrastructure. The theoretical understanding of IE in general needs to be emphasized in order to appreciate the challenges that both teachers and learners face. Such understanding would help the IE policy framers as well as implementers and beneficiaries. Policy framers will be enlightened on how best they should develop the policy document so that it should not distance itself from the practice.

The implementers will be guided by the policy goals while being informed by the challenges so that they can have good policy outcomes. Finally, the beneficiaries who are mainly the learners with disabilities will enjoy the policy outcomes and have meaningful education after the policy has been implemented successfully.

5.3.2 Policy Implications

One particular policy that stands out with close relevance to IE is the Free Primary Education (FPE) that was implemented in 1994 by the United Democratic Front (UDF) led Malawi Government. Another important document is the National Strategies for Equalisation of Opportunities (2011) which ensures that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system at all levels and have access to quality and compulsory primary education (Section 8 paragraph a).

In order to come up with the IE policy and for its successful implementation the following issues have to be taken into consideration. There is little or no collaborations among government ministries, parastatals, institutions and even non-governmental organizations. It has been found out that there are disability unfriendly environments. The Ministry of Education should express its designs of schools to the National Industry Construction Council and other building construction companies so that learners with disabilities accommodated as far as infrastructure is concerned. MoEST should, for example, state outright before awarding contract to a construction company such conditions as presence of ramps within school buildings and sanitary facilities which are conducive to learners with disabilities.

It has also been found that there is only one specialist in the whole zone in which Luntha Primary school is found. The person is specialized in visual impairment. Such being the case it is difficult to identify, assess and manage those children with other disabilities such as HI and LD.

The Ministry of Health, with its specialists, therefore, should work hand in hand with MoEST and make routine visits to primary schools where they can identify, assess and share knowledge with teachers on how to manage learners with different sensory impairments. The MoH, Non-Governmental and other charitable organizations should also be able mobilise resources and to provide assistive devices to learners with VI such as monoculars and magnifying glasses and HI such as hearing aids. They should also assist learners with albinism with appropriate skin oil.

All teachers expressed that they never had training in SNE. This shows that the curriculum for teacher training is deficient of SNE or if it has, then it is not taught with the same weight as other courses. In addition, there are few or no refresher courses or INSETS on SNE. This has left teachers with no skills to handle learners with disabilities. Coupled with the need to mainstream SNE in the curriculum for teacher training is the need to deploy teachers of different specialties equitably to all education divisions and zones.

The study has adopted the social model of disability which requires that the learning environment should fit the learners with disabilities other than the medical model which demands that learners with disabilities should fit the environment. Although the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that drew from the social model of disability advocate for IE, the people's mindset is fixed on medical model. This explains the reasons for negative attitude towards learners with disabilities by their peers as well as teachers in this study. There is need to prepare teachers psychologically about the presence of learners with various disabilities in their class and how to handle them. This should be done during teacher training at the TTC. These teachers will in turn be able to help learners without disabilities to accept their fellow learners with disabilities. They will also be able to provide guidance and counselling to learners with disabilities when they experience stigmatization, isolation and discrimination.

Lack of teaching and learning resources is one of the challenges that has been highlighted in the study. While teachers are taught to use a methodology of "teaching and learning locally available resources" (TALULAR) when teaching there is need to have innovative minds. School Management Committees should work hand in hand with local artists to come with raised teaching and learning materials such as maps and other visual aids which will assist learners with VI to depict the shapes of such visual aids.

5.3.3 Implications on practice

The deficiency in the knowledge and understanding of IE has a bearing on its practice. Parents of learners with disabilities will always send their children to school just for them to pass the hours away and to relieve themselves of the burden of providing care. While in school the learners with disabilities will not achieve the intended goals of education due to the inadequacy or lack of trained teachers in IE in a particular school. Hence their repetition will be high. This high rate of repetition defeats the government policy that no learner should be allowed to repeat a class. This may be contradictory as the reality on the ground for learners with disabilities is not as the policy on repetition stipulates. In the end age will catch up with them and the alternative solution will be to drop out. Therefore, Parents of Children with Disabilities Association of Malawi (POCDAM)³ should make robust countrywide awareness campaign to the rural communities to lobby them to change their mindset /attitude towards their children with disabilities.

Teachers should always consider learners with disabilities when preparing for their lessons. This however goes back to the training where the tutors should provide them with skills to write a lesson plan that is inclusive. Their teaching methods should demonstrate that they are not sidelining learners with disabilities. They should display expertise on how to impart knowledge to learners with disabilities.

³The original name of the association is Parents of Disabled Children Association of Malawi (PODCAM) but here it has been coined to suit the social model of disability.

5.4 Chapter Summary

Education is key to national development and it is a right that everybody should enjoy regardless of whether one has a disability or not. Despite the availability of the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that advocate for IE, there is a lot that Malawi needs to do to prepare a good ground for IE policy and implementation. In theoretical and policy debates IE proves to be a non-discriminatory system of education. It treats all learners as equals and with abilities. However, successful implementation of IE will have to be devoid of mismatch between the policy itself and practice.

5.5 Suggested areas for further study

Based on this study, the following recommendations are made for further study:

- Having deployed teachers of various areas of specialisation in a primary school, a comparative study on the performance of learners with disabilities in special and inclusive schools should be conducted.
- Since the study was specifically conducted in primary school, further study should be conducted in centers of early childhood development (ECD).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Introductory Letter 1

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

Acting Principal: Richard Tambulasi,
B.A. (Pub Admin), BPA (Hon), MPA, Ph.D

P. O. Box 280, Zomba, MALAWI
Tel: (265) 01 524 222
Telex: 44742 CHANCOL MI
Fax: (265) 01 524 046

Our Ref.: EDF/6/19
Your Ref.:

5th May, 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR MASTER OF EDUCATION (POLICY PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP)

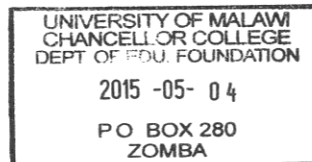
Mr. Francis Nkhoma is a student of Education in the Department of Educational Foundations at Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

Mr. Nkhoma is working on his thesis, "*Analysis of the Challenges faced in the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Malawi's Primary Schools*". This is meant to be a request to your institution or organization to assist our student in his endeavor to collect data.

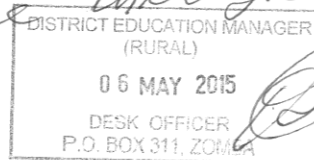
Thank you

Symon E Chiziwa, PhD

HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS.



*THE PEA - songani zone
will you please assist Mr. Nkhoma
to collect data in your zone.
Your assistance will greatly be
appreciated*



Appendix 2: Letter to Primary Education Advisor

University of Malawi
Chancellor College
P.O. Box 280
ZOMBA
Mobile: 0 881 685 400
0 999 321 818
e-mail: francisvinnkhoma@gmail.com

4 May 2015

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam

RESEARCH STUDY ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

I am a student at Chancellor College doing post-graduate studies. Currently I am doing research on *Analysis of the Challenges Faced in the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Malawi's Primary Schools*.

Your zone has been chosen as one of my research sites and by implication you are automatically one of the participants in this study. Other participants I would like to meet in your zone are: headmaster of any school in your zone, teachers in whose classes are learners with any disabilities and learners with disabilities themselves. Yourself and these will help me collect the necessary data for my study.

I, therefore would like to ask your good office if you may allow me to carry out my study in your zone.

I will be very grateful if my request is considered favourably to enable contribute to the building of our Malawi nation in educating its citizenry.

Yours faithfully



Francis Vincent Nkhoma

Appendix 3: Introductory Letter 2

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

Acting Principal: Richard Tambulasi,
B.A. (Pub Admin), BPA (Hon), MPA, Ph.D

Our Ref.: EDF/6/19
Your Ref.:

P. O. Box 280, Zomba, MALAWI
Tel: (265) 01 524 222
Telex: 44742 CHANCOL MI
Fax: (265) 01 524 046

5th May, 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR MASTER OF EDUCATION (POLICY PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP)

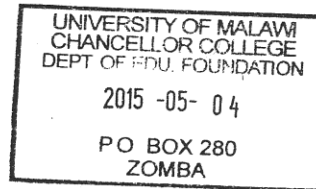
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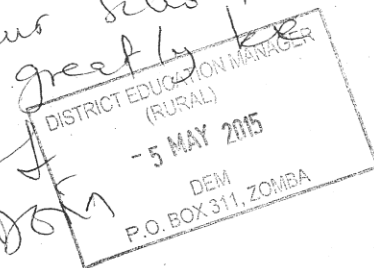
Thank you

Symon E/Chiziwa, PhD

HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS.



Head teacher Chimpeni School
Will you please assist Mr Nkhoma to collect data at your school. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated.
ASP
DEM



Appendix 4: Invitation Letter to Parents

06 June, 2015

Mayi / Bambo,

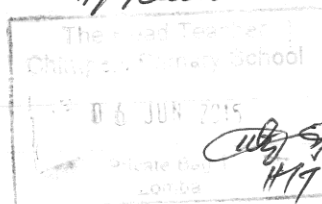
Mulikwetaniidya Kuno ku Sukulu
Komwe tapemphedwa ndi bambo
Francis Nkhoma kuti adzakambirane
nanu pa nkhami yokhudza maphungiro
a mwana wanu mogwirizana ndi vuto
lomwe ali nalo.
Iwo akuchita kafukufuku wofuna kudziwa
zomwe zingathandize kuti ophungiro
omwe ali ndi zilemwa zosiyarasiyana
angaphungirire ndi ophungira alunga
popanda chovuta.

TSIKU: lachisanu {12-06-15}
NTHAWI: 8Kolo ko mawa

Ine,

W. Chilima

H/Teacher.



Appendix 5: Letter of informed consent

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

University of Malawi- Chancellor College

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to find out the challenges faced in the implementation of the national special needs education policy guidelines that advocate for inclusive education

In order to collect required information, I will ask you some questions which will need to be responded. You are asked to answer the questions in English but you are free to use Chichewa.

This study will contribute positively towards policy, knowledge and practice of Inclusive Education. It will help various stakeholders such as Malawi Government, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Directorate of Special Needs; parents, teachers and learners to appreciate the challenges Inclusive Education is facing in Malawi and chart the way forward to make it successful.

The research will highlight changes and modification in content, approaches, structures and strategies to be made in order to offer quality education to all learners. It will also enable readers and other citizens appreciate that Inclusive Education is the most effective means of building solidarity between children with disabilities and their society.

Rest assured that your identity and name will not be revealed in the write-up. Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may refuse to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may decide to withdraw from the study without penalty.

Consent

I have read this statement. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction. I accept to take part in this study.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 6: Interview Guide

EXPLORING CHALLENGES FACED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION POLICY GUIDELINES THAT ADVOCATE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A CASE OF ONE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN ZOMBA RURAL

Name of school:

Zone:

District:**Division:**

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name:

Sex:

Teaching experience:

Highest academic qualification:

Other qualifications:

.....

.....

A. STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What do you understand by Inclusive Education?

2. What are the current practices in the implementation of National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that advocate for IE?

3. What challenges are faced in implementing National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines that advocate for IE?

4. What strategies can be used to address the challenges?

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

5. (i) How many learners with disabilities do you have in this school?

(ii) What are the types of disabilities do these learners have?

6. How many teachers in this school are trained in Special Needs Education?
- _____
7. What challenges do teachers in this school face when teaching the learners with disabilities?
- (i) _____
- (ii) _____
- (iii) _____
- (iv) _____
8. What challenges do learners with disabilities face in this school?
- (i) _____
- (ii) _____
- (iii) _____
- (iv) _____
9. What strategies are put in place to mitigate the challenges you have mentioned?
- (i) _____
- (ii) _____
- (iii) _____
- (iv) _____

Appendix 7: Observation checklist

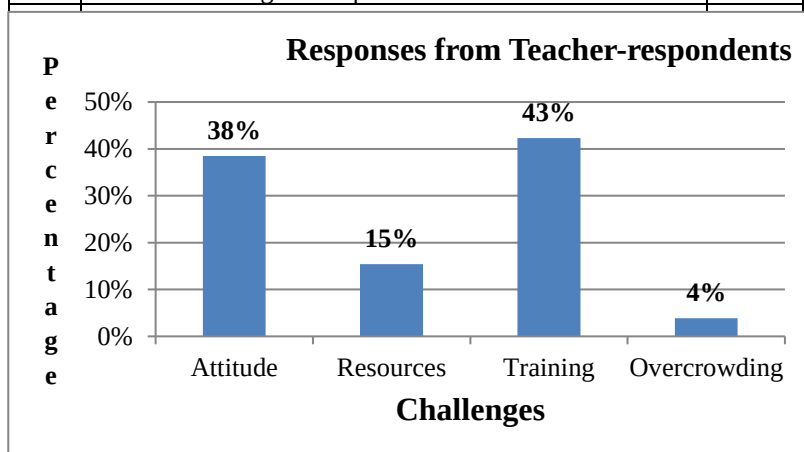
EXPLORING CHALLENGES FACED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION POLICY GUIDELINES THAT ADVOCATE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A CASE OF ONE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN ZOMBA RURAL

SN		YES	NO	PARTIALLY
1	Are there specialist teachers at the school?			
2	Are there special teaching and learning materials for learners with disabilities?			
3	Teachers are able to use sign language for the benefit of learners with hearing impairment			
4	Text books contain pictures of people with disabilities to motivate learners			
5	Are there resource rooms?			
6	Is the physical environment accessible?			
7	Is there interaction between learners with disabilities and teachers?			
8	Is there interaction between learners with disabilities and learners without disabilities?			
9	Are learners with disabilities given support?			

Appendix 8: Sample of data analysis using Microsoft Excel

Challenges that teachers face in implementing IE

SN	Responses	Codes	Themes	Codes	Statistics Frequency
1	Absenteeism of learners	A			
2	Inadequate teaching and learning resources	R	Attitude	A	10
3	Difficulties in communicating with SEN learners	T	Resources	R	4
4	Lack of teaching skills	T	Training	T	11
5	Segregation among learners	A	Overcrowding	O	1
6	Lack of knowledge on how best to communicate with SEN learners	T	Total		26
7	Shortage of special needs education assistants	T	Proportions		
8	Lack of sign language interpreters	T			
9	Overcrowding	O			
10	Shortage of instructional materials	R			
11	Time consuming to teach SEN learners	A			
12	Slow learning	A			
			Attitude	38%	
			Resources	16%	
			Training	42%	
			Overcrowding	4%	
			Total		100%
13	Difficulties in communicating with SEN learners	T			
14	Discrimination among learners	A			
15	Lack of teaching and learning resources	R			
16	Low self-esteem in learners	A			
17	Lack of teaching skills	T			
18	Absenteeism	A			
19	Low self-esteem among learners	A			
20	Absenteeism	A			
21	Lack of teaching techniques	T			
22	Lack of experience	T			
23	Lack of teaching and learning resources	R			
24	Absenteeism	A			
25	Lack of teaching techniques	T			



Appendix 9 : Arrangement of desks in an inclusive classroom

