

**THE SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF
TEACHING IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY
SCHOOLS**

M.Ed. (Education Psychology) Thesis

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DECLARATION

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

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my parents. They have always been my biggest helpers and have instilled in me the importance of education. They worked so hard to get me where I am today and without them I would be nowhere. To my wife, you have been my rock. Your patience during this time has been tremendous. Thank you for being so supportive and helping me through this.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the primary school trained SNE teachers' experiences of teaching in inclusive classrooms in some selected public secondary schools in Blantyre district, Malawi. These SNE teachers were initially trained to teach at primary school level. Besides having a teaching qualification in primary education level, they were also trained in SNE and were later deployed to teach and assist learners with disabilities in public secondary schools. Purposeful sampling techniques were used to sample the participants in the study. In total, eight participants were selected. One-to-one interviews with the eight participants were conducted using an in-depth interview guide. Data were analyzed using the interactive phenomenological analysis. In general, the findings of the SNE teachers' experience of teaching in inclusive classrooms revealed that for inclusive education to be successful there is need for educators to become more aware of the experiences of the SNE teachers who are the focal point in the implementation of inclusive education. The research participants were generally found to have positive attitudes towards inclusive education. These findings were similar to the results of international studies, which pointed out that the attitude toward inclusion is determined by the teacher's experiences in inclusive settings and the type of disability found. Furthermore, the research participants also unearthed the challenges such as lack of support from all the stake holders, lack of training in all the categories of special needs, and an understanding that inclusion requires teamwork between SNE teachers and regular teachers.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATIES	Attitude Towards Inclusive Education Scale
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational information and Statistics
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DPE & CSID	Directorate of Primary Education & Centre for Services and Information on Disability
DSHE	Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education
EFA	Education for All
ERHEC	Educational research Human Ethics Committee
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoE	Ministry of Education
NDF	National Disabled Forum
NGO	Non- Government Organization
PEDP-2	Primary Education Development project- phase two
SEN	Special Education Needs
SWSEN	Student with special educational needs
TQI-SEP	Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project

UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organization

UNCRC

United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter overview

The purpose of this study was to explore the Special Needs Education teachers' experiences in inclusive classrooms in Malawi. Therefore, this chapter presents the background information, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study and delimitations for the study. The chapter also defines the key terms as used in the study.

1.1 Background information

The British missionaries first introduced special schools targeting learners with visual and hearing impairment in Malawi, around the 1950s and the Ministry of Education then introduced Learning Difficulties Programme upon realizing that for many years, learners with hearing and visual impairments had been catered for in the Malawi's education sector (Chavula, 2008). Learning Difficulties Programme focuses on all learners with intellectual disabilities. The programme aimed to equip specialist teachers with skills on how best to handle children with specific learning difficulties, (Montfort Special Needs College Handbook, 2004). The targeted children include those with behavioral/emotional difficulties, language and communication difficulties, as well as other health related impairments.

In the recent past years, educational provisions for learners with disabilities have changed. More learners with special needs are now studying side by side in regular schools with their peers who do not have disabilities. This concept is known as inclusive education. It is based on the principle that “all children regardless of ability or disability have a basic right to be educated alongside their peers in their neighborhood schools”, (UNESCO, 1994). This concept was started in Western countries in the 1980s, and it has become an issue for the global agenda (Singal, 2005). Malawi is one of the signatories of ‘Education for All,’ as such it is committed to giving access to education to all her citizens, therefore, inclusive education is regarded to be the most effective approach in reaching this goal (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002).

Malawi Government through the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training first introduced a Learning Difficulties Programme in 1996 in Malawi, (Chavula, 2008). This was in fulfillment of the government’s quest to meeting the world’s initiative of Education for All by the year 2015. In spite of the Governments’ efforts in addressing the challenges faced by the specialist trained teachers in Malawi, little has been done to address the specific challenges facing teachers for children with learning disabilities, (Montfort Special Needs College, Malawi, 2004).

Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with disabilities encourages children with disabilities to attend school at all levels (UNESCO, 1994) because education is a human right. Therefore, it is expected that all children, regardless of their social status, gender and physical or any other disability, should have access to

quality education. The government of Malawi recognizes education as a basic human right, and it has adopted many human rights for example Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with disabilities. As such, it has been striving to ensure that all citizens have access to education that is of high quality. This has led to Education for All programme in which all the children are being given the same opportunity to education in an inclusive classroom. However, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the developing countries.

It has been noted that learners with special educational needs are not receiving adequate service provision to satisfy their educational needs in inclusive classrooms because of the shortage of special needs education teachers in public secondary schools in inclusive classrooms, (Chavula, 2008). This is hindering the effective provision of inclusive education. This shortage of SNE teachers in secondary schools has made the government to start deploying primary school SNE teachers to public secondary schools. These SNE teachers were fully qualified T2 primary school teachers who went for special needs training and were teaching in primary schools. These primary school SNE teachers were later deployed to some selected public secondary schools mainly to assist the learners with disabilities and learning difficulties.

Upon arrival in these secondary schools they were assigned to teach subjects they were not trained in. This was done in addition to their sole duty of assisting learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. In other schools these SNE teachers were asked to be form teachers of all the learners in a particular classroom.

Instead of spending much of their time in the resource room assisting learners with disabilities and difficulties, transcribing notes and exercises from the teachers to the learners and helping the other teachers in preparing for the next day's lesson, they are busy familiarizing themselves with the content of a given subject they are to teach on the next day.

Therefore, this research was conducted to explore the experience of Special Needs Education teachers' who were trained to teach in inclusive classrooms in primary schools but were later selected and deployed to teach in some selected public secondary schools in Malawi within Blantyre district to some selected secondary schools within Blantyre District. These teachers were posted to some selected secondary schools in the district. In some selected secondary schools, it's only one or two teachers who have been posted there to assist the learners with special educational needs such as physical disabilities, learning difficulties, health and language problems. As a consequence, there is need for investigations involving the experiences being faced by Special Needs Education teachers. Therefore, this study is designed to address such a shortcoming.

Looking at our country Malawi, it is heading towards the millennium development goals (MDGs) and the Malawi growth and development strategies, (MDGs) Therefore, successful implementation of these government's policies will ensure that all the learners with special educational needs will access and receive adequate quality special educational needs. As such without giving these SNE teachers the much needed support the learners with special educational needs will not be assisted, hence depriving them

their right to education as stipulated by some government policies such as Education for all. With the best of intentions these special education programs are attempts to change a problem within individuals, ‘to fit the demands of what is assumed to be a rational system of education in a good society’’, (Fitch, 2003). Although many schools are moving towards inclusion, there are a number of challenges that need to be addressed. One of the importances of addressing these challenges is that it will lead to good preparing and training of a teacher which is one of the important areas in making special needs inclusive classrooms a success.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In Malawi, in most of the public secondary schools many of the SNE teachers are primary school trained teachers who were also trained in special needs education to assist learners with disabilities at primary schools level but have been deployed to assist the learners with disabilities in inclusive classrooms at secondary school level, in public secondary schools (Chavula, 2008). There are some other SNE teachers who were trained to teach at secondary school level and also trained in Special needs education however this study was focusing on the primary school trained SNE teachers who were deployed to assist learners with disabilities in public secondary schools. Instead of focusing on their sole duty of assisting learners with disabilities and difficulties, they are assigned additional classroom duties and subjects to teach. Consequently, the SNE teachers have heavy and enormous workload (Chavula, 2008). The heavy workload affects the quality of their work as they have no time for consultation and co-operation. Therefore, the heavy work-load hinders effective implementation of inclusive education in secondary schools. According to the literature reviewed by the researcher, no study has been

conducted at secondary school level to explore the primary trained SNE teachers' experience in inclusive classrooms, although research has documented both positive and negative attitudes and beliefs that the general educators have towards inclusion (Ali, Mustapha & Jelas, 2006). Kamchedzera (2010) focused on both mainstream teachers and SNE teachers' experiences and all these teachers were grouped together. Thus, this study would like to explore the primary school trained SNE teachers' experiences of teaching in inclusive classrooms in public secondary schools in order to add new knowledge to the existing knowledge on inclusive education in Malawi.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the SNE teachers' experiences of teaching in inclusive classrooms in some selected secondary schools in Blantyre district.

1.4 Research questions

The following are the research questions which this study attempted to answer:

1.4.1 Main research question

What are the experiences of the primary school Special Needs Education teachers of teaching in inclusive secondary school classrooms?

1.4.2 Sub-research questions

1. What are the perceptions of the primary school Special Needs Education teachers of an inclusive education in secondary schools?
2. What are the challenges encountered by the primary school Special Needs Education teachers in inclusive secondary school classrooms?

3. How do the primary school Special Needs Education teachers cope with the challenges encountered in teaching in inclusive secondary school classrooms?

1.5 Significance of the study

This study will help educators to understanding the SNE teachers daily lived experiences and how those lived experiences may or may not have shaped teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards inclusion. These SNE teachers are teaching in inclusive classrooms at secondary school level yet they are trained to teach at primary school level. In the secondary school their sole role is to assist learners with special needs but due to some other reasons the SNE teachers have other duties and subjects assigned to them to teach. It will also add new knowledge to the existing literature on inclusive education in Malawi. The SNE teachers' experiences toward inclusion of learners with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms could help develop remedies and supportive procedures that could be implemented to improve inclusion programs' outcomes.. The other research studies in Malawi suggested that the progress in inclusive settings in Malawi has not yet gained full momentum, thus further research is needed to stretch the boundaries of inclusive education in Malawi (Chavula, 2008). Therefore, this study as shown by its title gives the need to explore secondary school SNE teachers' experience as implementers of inclusive education policy in Malawi. On the other hand, this study can also provide useful insight into the essential structures of support for teachers in their daily life in the inclusive classrooms at school and can also illuminate the ways in which the students are being included in the school environment.

1.6 Definitions of operational terms

Special education

Special education is the practice of educating students with special needs in a way that addresses their individual differences and needs, (Farrell, 2005).

Experience

In this study, experience means the special needs teachers' practical contact with and observation of facts or events related to the implementation of inclusive education in terms of the challenges they face, the strategies they use to manage the challenges and the support and resources they need (Farrell, 2000).

Inclusion

In this approach, learners with special needs spend all, or most of the school day with learners who do not have special needs, (Farrell, 2000).

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming refers to the practice of educating students with special needs in classes with their peers without disabilities during specific time periods based on their skills (Farrell, 2000).

Segregation in a separate classroom or special school for students with special needs

In this model, students with special needs do not attend classes with their peers without disabilities. Segregated students may attend the same school where regular classes are provided, but spend all instructional time exclusively in a separate classroom for students with special needs, (Clough & Corbett, 2000).

Inclusive classrooms

Inclusive classrooms are a blend of students without disabilities and students with special needs. In almost all cases, student with special needs will be accompanied by a special education needs teacher, who acts as the liaison between the student and the teacher (Farrell, 2000).

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities are defined as “those who exhibit one of several specific conditions that result in their need for special education and related services” (Farrell, 2000). The categories of disabilities includes; learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, visual impairment, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, speech or language impairment, among others.

Perception

Perception is one’s interpretation of stimuli (Slavin, 2006). Perception in regards to this study involves mental interpretation and influenced by one’s mental state, past experiences, knowledge, motivations and many other factors.

1.7 Chapter summary

In summary, chapter one has provided the background information about the conceptual basis for inclusive education in Malawi. It has provided the statement of the problem, the purpose, research questions, significance of the study. It has also defined the operational terms used in the study. Having set the background, research problem and purpose of the study, the next chapter presents a review of literature related to issues of inclusion.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter overview

This chapter gives a detailed discussion on the SNE teachers perceptions of teaching in inclusive classrooms, challenges encountered, how the SNE teachers cope with the challenges encountered in inclusive classrooms and the theoretical and analytical conceptual framework that informs this study. The structure of the chapter is also based on the research questions. It concludes with a summary.

2.1 What is Inclusive Education?

Inclusive education means that all students attend and are welcomed by their neighborhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school, (Farrell, 2000). Inclusive education is about how we develop and design our schools, classrooms, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together.

Neighborhood schools are the heart of our communities, and inclusion believes they are essential for a quality inclusive education system. Therefore, this study feels it's good to explore the SNE teachers' experiences of teaching in inclusive classrooms in public secondary schools.

2.2 History of Inclusive Education

The fundamental right of children with developmental disabilities to receive an education was the first issue to mobilize the community living movement in the 1950s, (Baker & Gottlieb, 1980). At the time, it was widely believed that children with developmental disabilities could not learn. The government, therefore, accepted no responsibility for their education. Parents of children with developmental disabilities, understanding the potential of their sons and daughters to learn and grow, responded by creating their own schools in places like church basements and private homes.

In 1955 parents created a provincial organization, which eventually grew into the BC Association for Community Living, and now, Inclusion BC, (Baker & Gottlieb, 1980). Ever since, families have steadily advocated for changes in government laws and policies so that their children with disabilities would have the same right to be educated as other school-aged children.

Government slowly accepted responsibility for funding parent-run schools and eventually agreed that not just funding, but public schooling, should be available to children with disabilities. Although the first educational programs developed by school boards were segregated, they successfully laid the groundwork for parents and others to call for the inclusion of children in general education classes. The move to inclusive education throughout BC came in the late 1980s. Now, however, reduced funding for public education threatens to erode the gains that have been made in inclusive education, (Chavula, 2008).

2.3 Benefits of Inclusive Education

All children benefit from inclusive education. It allows them to develop individual strengths and gifts, with high and appropriate expectations for each child, and at the same time work on individual goals while participating in the life of the classroom with other students their own age.

Inclusive education as well involves the learners' parents in their education and in the activities of their local schools. This helps the teachers to have a better understanding of the learner and hence give appropriate assistance

On the other hand, inclusive education fosters a school culture of respect and belonging. Inclusive education provides opportunities to learn about and accept individual differences, lessening the impact of harassment and bullying. This as well leads to the development of friendships among the learners with a wide variety of other children, each with their own individual needs and abilities. Lastly inclusive education, positively affect both their school and community to appreciate diversity and inclusion on a broader level.

2.4 The UNESCO Salamanca Statement

This statement calls on the international community to endorse the approach of inclusive schools by implementing practical and strategic changes. The Salamanca Statement was adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality in Salamanca, Spain, from 7-10 June 1994. This report from the UN's education agency

calls on the international community to endorse the approach of inclusive schools by implementing practical and strategic changes.

In June 1994 representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organizations formed the World Conference on Special Needs Education, held in Salamanca, Spain. They agreed a dynamic new Statement on the education of all disabled children, which called for inclusion to be the norm. In addition, the Conference adopted a new Framework for Action, the guiding principle of which is that ordinary schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. All educational policies, says the Framework, should stipulate that disabled children attend the neighborhood school 'that would be attended if the child did not have a disability, (UNESCO, 1994).

2.4.1 Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education

This content is related to the Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action on Special Needs Education that was adopted at the June 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain. Countries around the world have used this framework of action to guide their work in enabling more students with disabilities to access an education.

2.4.2 The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education

This document represents a worldwide consensus on future directions for special needs education. Its purpose is to inform policy and guide action by governments, international organizations, national aid agencies, non - governmental organizations and other bodies

in implementing the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education, (UNESCO, 1994).

2.4.3 Education for all

The Statement begins with a commitment to Education for All, recognizing the necessity and urgency of providing education for all children, young people and adults 'within the regular education system.' It says those children with special educational needs 'must have access to regular schools' and adds , regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system, (UNESCO, 2005).

2.4.4 Call to governments

The World Conference went on to call upon all governments to give the 'highest policy and budgetary priority' to improve education services so that all children could be included, regardless of differences or difficulties, adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education' and enroll all children in ordinary schools unless there were compelling reasons for doing otherwise.

It also called for the development of demonstration projects and encouraged exchanges with countries with inclusive schools to ensure that organizations of disabled people, along with parents and community bodies, are involved in planning decision-making. The

World Conference went on to ask governments to ensure that both initial and in-service teacher training address the provision of inclusive education, (UNESCO, 1994).

2.5 The principles for inclusion

Farrell, (2000,) outlines three principles for inclusion as; setting suitable learning challenges, responding to learners' diverse learning needs, and overcoming potential barriers to learning assessment for individuals and groups of learners.

2.5.1 Setting suitable learning challenges

Teachers are encouraged to teach the knowledge, skills and understanding in ways that 'suit their learners' abilities'. This may mean choosing the knowledge, skills and understanding from earlier stages of the Curriculum so that 'individual learners can progress show what they can achieve'. This may mean that there is sufficient time to teach all aspects of the age- related programmes of study, (Farrell, 2000).

For learners whose attainment fall significantly below expected levels at a particular stage, greater differentiation is necessary, (Farrell, 2000). Teachers may need to use the content of the programmes of study as a 'resource' or 'to provide a content' in planning learning 'appropriate to the age and requirements of the learners'.

2.5.2 Responding to learners' diverse learning needs

When planning, teachers should set high expectations and provide opportunities for all learners to achieve, including learners with SEN (Farrell, 2000,). To help ensure that

they meet the full range of learners' needs, teachers should be aware of the equal opportunities legislation covering race, gender and disability. (Regarding disability, reference is made to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 but teachers should also be aware of the implications of the Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2002, (Farrell, 2005).

2.5.3 *The role of special needs education teachers*

The work of the special needs education teachers was revealed to consist of three elements: teaching, consulting and background work. Teaching, often focusing on giving support to children who had challenges in the main academic subjects, was realized in small groups, in co-operative or individual settings, (Clough & Corbett, 2000).

(i) Lesson Planning

A special needs education teacher works with the subject teacher to make lesson plans for her students, (Farrell, 2005). Children with special needs who are mainstreamed into an inclusive classroom will learn the same things as the rest of the students. Making lesson plans together allows a special education teacher to modify the information to meet the academic needs and abilities of her special needs students while also ensuring that they are staying on track so they can successfully move on to new topics with the rest of the students.

(ii) Classroom Support

Special needs education teachers provide one-on-one help to special needs students, (Farrell, 2000). Once the subject teacher has completed a lesson, the special education teacher will help her students complete any assigned class work, as well as provide additional instruction when necessary. Special needs education teachers often provide support, such as translating what the subject teacher is saying into sign language, depending on the type of disability a student has.

(iii) Behavior Interventions

Some special needs students also have disabilities that can have an impact on how they behave in an inclusive classroom. For example, a student with autism might panic if the classroom gets too loud or if the classroom routine changes unexpectedly. Special needs education teachers are well versed in their students' disabilities and can help calm them or put a stop to poor behavior when it arises. A special needs education teacher usually has the power to remove a student from the classroom so he has chance to calm down and collect himself before returning to his classwork, (Farrell, 2000).

(iv). Additional Responsibilities

Special needs education teachers are often required to give progress reports and updates to parents. This is because the teachers work so closely with the students that they know exactly what's going on in the classroom and how well each student is doing academically. Many special needs education teachers work with subject teachers to assess individualized education programs, also known as IEPs. IEPs are plans schools make

with parents, students and teachers to keep track of academic progress and to encourage success in the classroom, (Farrell, 2000).

2.6 Special Needs Education Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education

Despite the continued movement toward inclusive practices, some studies (Loreman, Forlin & Sharma, 2007) have found that many teachers have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities and their inclusion in general education classrooms. Several studies have shown that primary and high school teachers share similar perceptions regarding inclusive education; some negative, and some positive (Mitchell, 2008; Ross-Hill, 2009). Westwood and Graham (2003) found a significant relationship between high school teachers' perceptions of inclusion and classroom setting. This researcher concluded that teachers with experience in teaching within inclusive classrooms held more favorable perceptions toward inclusive education than those teachers who did not teach in inclusive classrooms. Some studies have shown that much has not changed over the past decade regarding high school teachers' perceptions of inclusive education; in a study which investigated the perceptions of general education teachers' attitudes and perceptions, Malone, Gallagher & Long (2001) revealed that overall, teachers expressed more positive attitudes toward mainstreaming than inclusion. Sharma (2008) found that training in special education appeared to lessen pre-service teacher's concerns regarding inclusive education. Similarly, Subban and Sharma (2001) revealed that teachers who reported having undertaken training in special education were found to hold more positive perceptions about implementing inclusive education. Loreman, Forlin and Sharma (2007) reported similar findings which showed that teachers' perceptions of

inclusive education were negatively impacted by their training, or lack thereof, in special/inclusive education. In contrast, Ali, Mustapha, and Jelas (2006) found that in general, teachers held positive attitudes towards inclusive education. According to the results of their study, on teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education in Malaysia, the teachers agreed that inclusive education enhanced social interaction and inclusion among the students and thus minimizing negative stereotypes on special needs students.

Shade and Stewart (2001), conducted a study of 84 general education teachers in pre-kindergarten through third grade settings and 48 parents of students with disabilities. Surveys were used to generate perspectives of teachers and parents. Of the teachers surveyed, eight were interviewed to better understand results. Shade & Stewart (2001) found that teachers displayed interest and need for coursework, in service training and conferences to help them learn more about inclusive education practices. Shade & Stewart (2001) also found that teachers who had a greater number of years teaching were likely to have more negative attitudes towards inclusion than teachers with fewer years of experience. Positive attitudes toward inclusion improved if teachers had knowledge about accessing resources and had the skills necessary to teach students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms (p. 127). Findings also revealed a positive correlation between teachers.

Soodak, Podell and Lehman (1996), surveyed 188 general educators to determine their perceptions on including students with disabilities in their classrooms. Data were grouped into two main categories. Categorical sorting placed findings into either the "hostility/receptivity" or "anxiety/calmness" classification. These terms refer to the

emotional tension felt by general education teachers who teach students with and without disabilities (Soodak et al., 1996, p. 498). Teachers with more experience teaching were found to display more hostility toward inclusion than teachers with less experience. Receptivity indicated that teachers were more willing to educate students with disabilities if they had a greater sense of teacher efficacy and felt confident using effective teaching practices collaboration skills.

Hammond and Ingalls (2003), conducted a quantitative study to investigate attitudes of teachers and students involved with inclusive education. Results from a survey of 40 special educators and students and 59 general educators from metropolitan and rural settings revealed perceptions of inclusion. The findings indicated negative teachers' attitudes toward educating all students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. General educators believed that full inclusion was unrealistic for all students with disabilities.

Avissar (2000), unlike those previously mentioned analyzed results of the views of general education teachers about inclusion. The study's emphasis was on teachers' "perceptions of and strategies for inclusion." Findings indicated that most teachers held negative attitudes toward inclusion. Results of the study indicated that teachers' negative attitudes might be precipitated by lack of general teachers' training in modifying curriculum and instruction to educate students with and without disabilities in the same classroom. Data from this study confirms the findings of Biddle (2006). All three studies reported similar findings regarding general education teachers' negative attitudes toward inclusion.

Smith and Smith (2000), also reported general educators' attitudes toward inclusion. In their qualitative study, all teachers indicated a positive fundamental value of teaching in inclusive classrooms (n = 6). Similar to Scruggs and Mastropieri's (2000) synthesis, Smith and Smith's (2000) findings showed some correlation between teachers' attitudes and independent variables. As in Mastropieri and Scruggs' review (2000), Smith and Smith (2000) found that teachers who had training felt successful with inclusion. The participants in Smith and Smith's study had 1 to 40 years teaching experience but, despite their wide range in experience all participants, claimed that their undergraduate or graduate training did nothing to ready them for inclusion (p. 165). Smith and Smith found that general education teachers perceived that in service training helped prepare for inclusion more than any other factor. Mushoriwa (2001), reported similar results and indicated that teachers who took courses or had in service training in special education had more positive attitudes toward inclusion than teachers who did not have training (Biddle, 2006).

Kamchedzera (2010) carried out a study on the education of pupils with disabilities in Malawi's inclusive secondary schools. Located within the interpretative paradigm, the study aimed to contribute toward knowledge development and transfer through the exploration of the extent to which IE policy initiatives in Malawi's secondary schools have appropriately responded to the context of practice and the experience of pupils with disabilities and their teachers.

Mowes (2000) also carried out a study on teachers' experiences in implementing inclusive education policy in Namibia. The study suggested what teachers and policy makers can learn from the study when looking into the future of inclusive education in Namibia to create a connectedness between policy and practice is no rhetoric policy proclamation to actual practice. This study was carried out on general teachers only but my study will mainly dwell on the experiences of the Special Needs Education teachers only in inclusive classroomsto explore their perceptions about teaching in inclusive classrooms, the challenges being encountered and how they cope with the challenges encountered in teaching in inclusive public secondary school classrooms.

A study by Mdikana, Ntshangese & Mayekiso, (2007), examined factors that contribute to teachers' ability to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities within inclusive settings. This study, also explored teachers' perceptions towards inclusion, their needs for support and resources to successfully implement an inclusive setting. This study mainly focused on primary school teachers but the current study explores the experience of the Special Needs Education teachers in secondary schools in Malawi.

The studies reviewed above are silent on the experiences of the special needs education teachers in an inclusive classroom. Therefore, the current study was set to explore the experiences of special needs education teachers in inclusive classrooms in secondary schools in Malawi. The study also looks into the essential structures of support for teachers in their daily life in the inclusive classrooms at school and also investigates the ways in which the students are being included in the school environment.

It is important to examine the perceptions of the SNE teachers' experience toward the inclusion of learners with disabilities into regular settings as their perceptions may influence their behavior toward and acceptance of such students (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003; Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2001). The success of an inclusionary program may be at risk if the SNE teachers hold negative perceptions toward the inclusion of learners with disabilities (Van Reusen et al., 2001).

Teachers are perceived to be integral to the implementation of inclusive education (Haskell, 2000). Research communicates the view that teachers are key to the success of inclusionary programs (Heiman, 2001) as they are viewed as linchpins in the process of including students with disabilities into regular classes. Other studies acknowledge that inclusive education can only be successful if teachers are part of the team driving this process (Malone, Gallagher, & Long, 2001).

2.7. Challenges encountered by the Special Needs Education Teachers' in Inclusive Education

The following section presents some of the challenges encountered by the SNE teachers in inclusive education raised by previous researches, which may have influenced teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of learners with disabilities into inclusive classrooms.

2.7.1. Lack of support services

Support services such as professional support, parental support and administrator support were perceived to be critical components in the implementation of inclusive education.

However, these support services were seriously lacking in these secondary schools. On the issues of professional support, in the study by Hammond and Ingalls (2003), teachers felt that professional support services almost do not exist in the educational scenario of Malawi. Teachers argued that learners with SENs need professional help and should be referred to specialists. Unfortunately, there was a shortage of professionals such as educational psychologists, speech-language therapists, and occupational therapists to support learners with disabilities. One of the teachers pointed out that: There is only one centre in Malawi, Montfort Special Needs College which is responsible for assessment and placement.

2.7.2. Gender

Several studies support the view that there is no correlation between a teacher's gender and their attitude toward inclusive education (Avramidis 2000; Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 2000, Kuester, 2000; Van Reusen et al., 2001). Eleweke & Rodda (2002), in a similar study concluded that gender was not a significant factor in determining teacher's attitudes toward inclusive education.

However, other studies that investigated teacher attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular settings, found that female teachers are inclined to have more favorable attitudes (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001) and appeared to have higher expectations of students with disabilities than their male counterparts (Hodge & Jansma, 2000). In this study, the researcher looks at gender as a challenge in the way the male and female SNE teachers handle the learners with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. The

study found that the female SNE teachers were most willingly and more confident than male SNE teachers, in their ability to teach learner with disabilities or they held more positive views about inclusive education. Mushoriwa, (2001) caution that findings linking gender as a variable to investigate reactions to inclusive education, are often linked to cultural factors, with some cultures ascribing the care of students with disabilities to female teachers.

2.7.3. Age, Teaching Experience and Teachers' Qualifications

There are several studies which have investigated whether there is any significant correlation between a teacher's age, years of experience and qualification to that teacher's attitude toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classrooms (Avramidis et al., 2000; Heiman, 2001). Some studies record that older teachers appear to foster less positive attitudes than younger teachers (Avramidis et al., 2000; Heiman, 2001). Younger teachers appear more accepting of inclusive trends than their more experienced counterparts. It would also seem that the most experienced educators have the lowest level of acceptance of inclusion (Monsen and Frederickson, 2003). This study found that older and more experienced SNE teachers are uncomfortable with inclusive practices, because they face an intrusion into the classrooms by regular teachers. The presence of other teachers in the classroom may result in tension and discomfort as the learners with disabilities perceived the teachers as observers and not as additional support.

Heiman (2001) and Kuester (2000) reported that a teacher's level of educational qualification did not significantly influence that teacher's attitude toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classes. To the contrary, Kuester (2000) reported that teachers with high levels of education had less positive attitudes toward inclusion, than those who did not achieve master's degree status.

2.7.4. Class Size

Large classes may be viewed as an obstacle to the successful implementation of inclusive education (Agran, Alper, & Wehmeyer, 2002; Prochnow, Kearney, & Carroll-Lind, 2000; Van Reusen et al., 2001). Larger classes place additional demands on the regular educator, while reinforcing concern that all students may not receive proper time or attention (Kuester, 2000; Van Reusen et al., 2001). Gaad and Khan (2007) make reference to Italian Law 517, regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classes, which says, class sizes cannot exceed 20 if there is one student with a disability in a mainstream class (Gaad & Khan, 2007). Consistency in terms of class size has allowed Italian teachers to be more supportive of inclusive education (Gaad & Khan, 2007). In line with the study by Kearney and Carroll-Lind, the researcher also agrees that large classes are an obstacle to the effective implementation of inclusive education as the teacher already have a lot of work to do in assisting learners with disabilities so this will bring additional work on the SNE teacher.

2.7.5. Level of Confidence

Gaad and Khan (2007) concluded that mainstream educators generally lacked confidence as they attempted to include students with disabilities into their classes. This may be as a result of lacking proficiency about modifying the regular education curriculum to suit students with individual learning needs (Gaad & Khan, 2007). Further, Avramidis et al. (2000) and Briggs et al (2002), support the view that teachers who perceive themselves as competent inclusive educators, often have more positive attitudes toward inclusive education. Teachers acquire increased competence as a result of increased training in the field of inclusive education (Avramidis et al., 2000). Inadequate knowledge with regard to instructional techniques and curricular adaptations, which contributes to decreased confidence, may be factors which influence a teacher's attitude toward inclusive education (Fitch, 2003). In line with other studies the researcher supports the view that teachers are deemed to have confidence towards inclusive education as a result of training in special needs education.

2.7.6. Previous Experiences Teaching Students with Disabilities

Possessing previous experience as an inclusive educator appears to positively predispose teachers toward inclusive education (Avissar, 2000; Avramidis et al., 2000; Hodge & Jansma, 2000). It would appear that previous experience in this field, allows mainstream teachers to feel more comfortable within the inclusive classroom (Avissar, 2000). Direct experiences of including students with disabilities into mainstream settings appeared to be an essential factor in shaping teachers' views toward inclusive settings (Avramidis et

al., 2000). However, Briggs et al (2002) point out that the nature of previous contact should be positive as it is this that results in positive attitudes toward inclusive education. As such this study explored the SNE teachers' experiences of teaching in inclusive classrooms in public secondary school. These SNE teachers were teaching in inclusive classrooms at primary level now they are teaching at secondary school level.

2.7.7 The Severity of a Student's Disability

Teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classrooms appear to be shaped by the type and the degree of the disability of the student concerned (Mushoriwa, 2001). There is concern from teachers regarding the inclusion of students with more severe disabilities (Westwood & Graham, 2003). Teachers view the move to include students with multiple disabilities into the mainstream classroom, as impractical (Gaad & Khan, 2007). The study by Gaad and Khan (2007) found that teacher attitudes were less favorable about including students with multiple and physical disabilities into the regular class. While Avramidis et al. (2002) and Kuster (2000) found that students with emotional and behavioral disorders attract the least positive attitudes from teachers within inclusive classroom.

2.7.8. Support from Administrative Staff

Administrative support has also been cited as a significant factor in determining teacher attitudes toward inclusion, as the teacher feels reaffirmed if the school principal fosters a positive learning environment for both teachers and students (Daane, Beirne-Smith & Latham, 2000). Teachers believe that the support of the Principal and other school leaders

are critical in order for them to implement inclusive practices (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003). Murawski (2005) refers to a "visionary" principal, who will accept the challenge to create an inclusive environment for all students. Principals need to accept ownership of all students and support inclusive placement, in order to inspire these feelings among other school personnel (Murawski, 2005; Daane et al, 2000). However, research suggests that administrators' attitudes toward students with disabilities are negative, thereby impacting on the process of inclusion in schools (Avissar, 2000). Clayton noted that administrative staff, lack sufficient understanding and expertise regarding the delivery of services to students with disabilities (Farrell, 2008). Further some scholars commented that administrators may hold positive views of inclusion as they are further away than mainstream teachers, in terms of actual experiences (Briggs, Johnson & Sedbrook, 2002).

2.8. Coping up with the challenges encountered by SNE teachers in inclusive classrooms

The individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 mandates that students with disabilities be provided an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment, which, for most students, is the general education classroom. Although there is controversy about the inclusive education movement, general classroom teachers are increasingly placed in inclusive classrooms that contain students with a wide range of instructional needs (Avissar, 2000). In addition to challenges faced by the general educator in teaching students with special needs, SNE teachers now play an expanded role, providing classroom instruction, consulting or co-teaching with other educators,

coordinating educational services with other health and human service agencies, and monitoring related services, such as speech therapy. These changes, as a consequence, will influence the management competencies required of both general educators and special educators. There are few studies on the management strategies of teachers who instruct inclusive classrooms, and most of them highlight the limitations that teachers exhibit in this area. For example, Algozzine and Ysseldyke, (2006) reported that during whole-class instruction, teachers make few adaptations to meet the individual learning needs of learners with special education needs. Teachers appear to lack the training and background required to effectively instruct students with disabilities. A survey conducted by Antonak and Livneh (2000) found that although 98% of general educators rated their knowledge and skills in planning for general education students as “excellent” or “good,” only 39% gave a high rating to their planning for special education students. Teachers also express a high level of concern with behavioral problems occurring while instructing students with special needs (Jordan & Stanovick, 2004), but research on the effective management of these behaviors within the context of the inclusive classroom is lacking. Noting that many students with special needs seem to require direct instruction of appropriate behaviors, some researchers (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Loreman, Forlin & Sharma, 2007) suggested what they term an instructional approach to behavior management. In this approach, the focus is on directly instructing students in appropriate behaviors and responses to classroom situations and activities. Similarly, other scholars like Mdikana, Ntshangase & Mayekiso (2007) observe that teachers improve the quality and level of challenge of assignments given to students with mild disabilities to increase student engagement and thereby decrease off-task and disruptive behaviors. These

interventions are not novel approaches to classroom management, rather they promote classic techniques such as developing classroom rules, establishing routines and procedures, and raising the academic expectations of students. Applied behavior analysis is also used to manage specific behaviors of students. Educational psychologists long have had a love–hate relation with applied behavior analysis. On the one hand, for many years, it was one of the few areas in psychology that could directly address the beginning teacher’s concerns about discipline. Well into the 70s, it was the primary source for classroom management content in educational psychology texts. However, many educational psychologists have found fault with using extrinsic reinforcement in classrooms, and the behaviorists’ limited concern for the role of cognition has swum against the philosophic current in recent decades. The emphasis on preventive management strategies also has deflected attention from the management of specific problem behaviors. Teachers, however, may need to implement individualized discipline plans for some included students, and the use of behavior analysis to assist in management through the control of antecedents and consequences may be a necessary component in the management of individual students who do not respond to traditional group-based instructional techniques. A significant recent advance in applied behavior analysis has been the refinement of functional analysis, which attempts to examine systematically a problem behavior’s function as well as the motivation for the behavior (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000). Through examining the environmental factors that evoke and maintain problem behaviors, the “function” or motivation of a targeted behavior is determined and the intervention or instructional accommodation is subsequently designed. Single-case research designs allow for the empirical analysis of these

individualized treatments. Although group-based management strategies are likely to remain a mainstay in the preparation of teachers, educational psychologists should expand their repertoire to adequately prepare regular teachers to deal with the unique challenges of students with disabilities.

Cooperative learning groups are another context which may require modification of recommended management strategies. Some common elements of the various cooperative learning models can be identified: group goals or task interdependence, some form of individual accountability, and good group interaction. Compared to formats that require students to “sit and watch” or that rely extensively on individual seatwork activities, group formats offer greater potential for participation, feedback, and interactive construction of meaning. Several classroom researchers (Jordan, Schwartz, & McGhie-Richmond, 2009) noted the potential for inconsistency between the instructional goals and methods of cooperative learning and teacher-centered management systems. Attempts to adhere to strict limits, for example, on student talk and movement during instructional activities would be counter to the need for discussion and group investigation that many cooperative activities require. Some traditional management functions are likely to continue to be relevant with appropriate modifications: for example, monitoring students in groups, establishing classroom routines, and teaching desirable group behaviors. Some new management skills may also be needed, such as keeping students accountable for individual work in a group context, helping students learn to seek explanations from and to give feedback to other students, or pacing groups working at different rates or different tasks. Some forms of cooperative learning utilize

multiple types of grouping arrangements and emphasize affective outcomes as well as academic outcomes (Smith & Smith, 2000), thus increasing the complexity of management. Most teachers who adopt cooperative learning do shift their role from director to facilitator of student learning (Prochnow, Kearney & Carroll-Lind, 2000), although some teachers prefer to retain considerable control over the structure of these classroom activities (Powers, 2002). When cooperative learning groups are used, teachers continue to be active managers, but the focus shifts to helping students learn the behaviors necessary to work effectively. Management is more complex for the novice teacher who is beginning to use these new formats while mastering traditional ones. In groups whose goal is the active construction of meaning. It is important to realize that most classrooms that utilize cooperative learning will continue to use a combination of formats for instruction, not just the grouping of students.

2.9. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Glasser's (2000) Choice Theory. According to Glasser, teachers are a key component in determining the success or failure of educating students with disabilities in inclusive educational settings. Included in this theory are the teachers' abilities to feel competent in their quality worlds. Glasser's choice theory defines an individual's quality world as a "small personal world which each person starts to create and re-created throughout life through a small group of specific pictures" (p. 45). These pictures fall into three major categories, including "the people [they] want to be with, the things [they] want to own or experience, and the ideas and beliefs that govern [their] behavior" (p. 45). According to Glasser, building strong relationships with

individuals can only foster the quality world of a person. Glasser also concluded that individuals were responsible for their own thoughts and actions. Glasser's concept of a quality world forms the conceptual framework of this study because Glasser proposes that individuals choose to develop attitudes and beliefs about situations based upon lived experiences.

Therefore, SNE teachers' attitudes and beliefs about inclusion may be determined by their experiences in the educational setting. Glasser's concept of a quality world pertains to this study because the goal of this study is to understand the lived world of human experience in relation to the inclusion setting. Inclusion may seem difficult for educators when they are mandated to step out of their traditional roles; therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe the lived experiences of special needs education teachers who provide instruction in an inclusive setting and to describe the impact of these experiences on their attitudes and beliefs about educating students with disabilities, based upon Glasser's concept of an individual's quality world.

In addition to Glasser's choice theory, the theoretical framework for this study is also supported by some research studies conducted by Biddle (2006); Corbin and Strauss, (2007); Keefe and Moore (2004). These studies noted that inclusion can be successful when both the general education teacher and the special needs education teacher have a clear and concise understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The theoretical framework is also supported by other studies conducted by Hemmings & Woodcock (2011); Henning and Mitchell (2000); Murawski (2005); and Aviramindis and Kalyva

(2007), which identified feelings of pride, inadequacy, frustration, and lack of support as reasons why educators like or dislike the phenomenon of inclusion.

In summary, Glasser's choice theory (2000) examined the following three conceptual constructs in relation to an individual's quality world: the people with whom individuals want to be, the things that individuals want to own or experience, and the ideas and beliefs that govern an individual's behavior. Glasser noted that positive interpersonal and personal relationships foster the quality world of an individual. Therefore, Glasser's theory and other current research studies form a theoretical framework for this study because individuals choose to develop attitudes and beliefs about a situation based upon their lived experiences.

2.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed relevant literature on the SNE teachers' experiences of teaching in inclusive classrooms focusing on each and every research question so as to have a clear understanding of the study. Lastly, the theoretical framework and how it informs the study has been presented. The next chapter discusses research design and methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter overview

This chapter also outlines the research paradigm, location of the study, research design, research participants, data generation and data analysis process. It also considers the limitations, ethical considerations and issues of credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

3.1 Research paradigm

Qualitative research methodology was used as it is deemed the appropriate for this study because it has the advantage of employing an inductive research strategy that can facilitate such understandings between the causal relationships of variables that emerge in the study (Cohen, Marion s& Morrison, 2007).

This study used an interpretivist /constructivist paradigm. Interpretive researchers are concerned with meaning. They seek to understand social members' experience and perceptions of their situation from the standpoint of their unique contexts and backgrounds, (Punch, 2009). For the interpretive researcher, causes and effects are mutually interdependent. Any event or action is explainable in terms of multiple interacting factors, events and processes (Denzin, 2010). The interpretive paradigm is a way of studying human experience through an empathetic identification with the

individual. It is essential to understand the experience from the perception of the participant (Cohen, Manion& Morrison, 2007).

Being rooted in the interpretive/constructivist paradigm, the researcher, then, will seek to understand the experience of the special needs education teachers in inclusive setting in some selected secondary schools in Malawi.

In this research study, the interpretive paradigm was used to understand the primary school SNE teachers' experience of teaching in inclusive classrooms in public secondary school. The interpretive paradigm fits with this study as it relies on the participants in-depth to offer responses to questions about their experiences, (Denzin, 2010).

The qualitative research methodology is relevant because it provides the parameter for the participants' perspective to generate in-depth understanding of the factors that constituted a successful or failed implementation of an inclusive education policy in Malawi. In-order to explore the participants' experiences of inclusive classrooms, phenomenological approach will be used.

3.2 Research design

Research design is the plan of the research project. It is important before the research is undertaken to create guidelines that would give it order and direction, and assist in maintaining focus (Denzin, 2010). The research design is a phenomenology. Therefore this study explored the lived experience of the SNE teachers of teaching in inclusive

classrooms in some public secondary schools in regards to their perceptions, challenges encountered and how to cope with the challenges.

The phenomenological approach was used for this study in the belief that inclusive settings are complex and require construction and reconstruction by those who have the responsibility to implement it in inclusive classrooms and their experience is crucial for understanding inclusive education.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), the main emphasis of phenomenological work is the view point of the experiencing person in regard to specific situations occurring in their everyday world.

Therefore, the researcher used the phenomenological approach in exploring the experience of the special needs education teachers in inclusive settings in some selected secondary schools in Blantyre district.

3.3 Location of the study

The study was conducted in government secondary schools, in Blantyre district. Four secondary schools were purposively chosen for the study. These are two National Secondary Schools, and two Conventional Secondary Schools. These schools were selected for the study because of their large student enrolment, full quota of the teaching staff and large number of SNE teachers and Special Needs learners unlike other schools which have one only or none of the teachers and a few.

3.3.1. *Research participants*

Participants in this study comprised of eight special needs education teachers, from the four selected secondary school. They were selected purposively. Two participants were selected from each school basing on the number of years of teaching in the inclusive setting. This category of selecting participants is thought to achieve a small but useful sample, (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Eight participants were invited to participate in this study basing on their years of experience, qualification in special needs education and have been teaching and assisting learners with disabilities in public secondary school for more than three years. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggest that the appropriate number of participants for phenomenological research is six, and Creswell (2008) suggest that 10 participants are adequate.

As Creswell (2008)states, “the phenomenon dictates the method including even the type of participants”. This study focused on primary school trained SNE teachers who were deployed in public secondary schools to assist learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. The eight primary school trained SNE teachers who were invited to take part in this study had experiences relating to the phenomenon and were willing to speak about their experiences. The SNE teachers were approached personally, through visits to their teaching schools using purposively sampling. Participants were selected in this way rather than making the formal approaches to the head-teachers in schools because the SNE teachers were assured that their anonymity would not be compromised and that their

participation in the study would not knowingly impact on their relationship with the school environment.

For this study, a sample size of eight participants was sufficient to capture the significant experiences of the participants in an inclusion classrooms and how these learned experiences have shaped their attitudes and beliefs about inclusion.

3.3.2. Descriptions of SNE teachers' experiences of teaching in inclusive classrooms

The names used in this description are not real names of the SNE teachers. The following names have been used: Tsoko, Tsuro, Katsi, Dacha, Gudo, Njiva, Mbeva, and Gonzo.

Tsoko is a female special needs education teacher in one of the secondary schools in Blantyre district. She teaches Chichewa in form four in an inclusive classroom. This is her fifth year teaching in an inclusive classroom. Tsoko is a specialist in visual impairment.

Tsuro is a male special needs education teacher at another Secondary school .He teaches agriculture in form four in an inclusive classroom. This is his fourth year as a SNE teacher. He has taught as a general education teacher for the past nine years. Tsuro was trained in hearing impairment.

Katsi is a male special needs education teacher in a secondary school. He has worked as a special needs education teacher for ten years. He teaches mathematics in form one and four in an inclusive classroom. Katsi is a specialist in visual impairment.

Gudo is a female special needs education teacher at yet another secondary school. She is highly qualified in social studies and teaches this subject in forms one, two and three in an inclusive classroom. She has been teaching at this school for five years. Gudo was trained in emotion and behavioral difficulties.

Dacha is a male special needs education teacher in the same school with Tsoko. He has been working in the inclusive classroom for eleven years. He teaches English in Form four in an inclusive classroom. Dacha is a learning difficulties specialist.

Njiva is a female special needs teacher at the same school with Gudo. She has been working with learners with disabilities and learners without disabilities in inclusive classroom for eight years. She teaches Bible knowledge in forms one, three and four. She was trained in visual impairment.

Gonzo is a female special needs teacher at the same school with Tsuro. She has been a special needs education teacher for five years and teaches Life Skills to the forms one and two. She is a specialist of language and speech disorders.

Mbeva is a male special needs education teacher in the same school with Tsuro. He has been a special needs education teacher for twelve years. He teaches Mathematics to Forms three and four. He specialized in hearing impairment.

3.4. Data generation instruments and procedures

In-depth phenomenological interviews were used, and the instrumentation included phenomenological interview guide.

The data were collected through the semi-structured interviews with the eight SNE teachers for approximately one and half hours each. The researcher chose the open-ended questions because they allow the respondents to express their thoughts and ideas in their own words and phrasing, which in turn provides the researcher with a more accurate picture of the participants' views and experience, (Punch, 2009) . Secondly, the researcher chose to use the semi-structured interview to allow for greater freedom for the participants to answer as they see fit.

In addition, the researcher felt that the participants would be more open discussing this hot emerging topic if the interview was more conversational and less rigid and formal.

3.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

For phenomenological research, the researcher is often the sole person responsible for data collection and for the design of the instrument that will be used to collect the data. According to Punch (2009), individual interviews are generally the principal source of data collection for phenomenological studies. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggest the use of interview forms or conversational guidelines to help keep the "interview focused and on track". Qualitative interviewing "explores experiences and uncovers meaningful structures which can be obtained from participants by designing interview questions that

are open ended" (Denzin, 2010). According to Punch (2009), "interviewing is an especially important means for data collection because interviewing gives a window to the past". By using interviews, a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the participants emerged.

Interviewing also allows the researcher to enter another person's world, to understand a person's inner perspective to outward behaviors. Interviews also complement observation by adding meaning and elaboration (Patton, 2002). It is necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate or to observe (Merriam, 2009).

The interviews were tape-recorded with the consent of the respondents and notes were taken during the conversations in order to capture the context that the tape recorder is unable to record (O'Donoghue, 2007). Every good interview is also an observation. The interviewer listens and observes. Nonverbal data are still data. Observational data include where the interview occurred, who was present, how the interviewee reacted to the interview and any additional information that could help establish a context for interpreting and making sense of the interview (Patton, 2002).

The major weaknesses of the semi structured interviews are that; the important and salient topics may be inadvertently omitted. Interviewer flexibility in sequencing and wording questions can result in substantially different responses from different perspectives, thus reducing the comparability of responses.

3.5. Data analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively by examining and categorizing the results into themes for further description and analysis. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to guide this study. Firstly, the researcher read the entire description to get a sense of the whole statement by each special needs teacher. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a qualitative method that has particular resonance, meaning it evokes a strong emotion for psychologists, (Forrester, 2010). IPA takes its focus on wanting to understand the meaning of human experience hence being suitable for this study as it is dealing with understanding the Special needs education teachers' experience of teaching in inclusive classrooms. Secondly, came the determination of parts. That is establishing meaning units, and then the transformation of meaningful units into psychologically sensitive expressions. Lastly will be the determination of the structure.

The first stage of the analytical process necessitated gathering all of the data, namely, the documents and the interview transcripts, and organizing these chronologically. The analysis of each interview began with its transcription. After the transcription process, the interview was re-read several times to identify the major categories and themes contained in the transcript. The Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used as it emphasizes both the commonalities and the differences found in the Special Needs Education teachers' response and relates them to the dominant themes found within the research, (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to identify, analyze and report patterns or themes within a set of data.

In order to increase the validity and reliability of the results, data was analyzed by reading and re-reading the responses, assigning codes to portions of data and then identifying emerging themes, (Punch, 2009). This was done until theoretical saturation was reached, when no more new themes emerged from the data, (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Simultaneously, data was read thoroughly and appropriate notes, comments, observations and queries were made, also by a second independent person to ensure reliability. The aim of this exercise was to produce concepts that fit the data (O'Donoghue, 2007). Classifying the data is an integral part of the analysis, and it is done for a purpose, guided by research questions. Described above is how the researcher identified regularities and patterns in the research data (Punch, 2009).

3.6. Ethical consideration

The researcher adhered to the ethical standards for research which involves human beings. Ethical considerations are of the utmost importance in this study, and for the process of ethical clarification to begin. The participants gave informed consent to participate in the study. The participants were fully informed about the research in which the interview was used. They were told that their privacy and sensitivity will be protected and what is going to happen with their information after recording. In a letter of consent, the participant gave consent to these and other ethical issues that were to be relevant (Forrester, 2010, p 108). Participation within the study was voluntary and one could withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences such as victimization. Confidentiality and anonymity was respected since identifying information was not asked for from the participants.

3.6.1. Credibility and trustworthiness of the study

There are a number of features that have been built into this study to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the results. The first feature is triangulation. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), triangulation entails drawing from several data sources, methods, investigations or theories to inform the same question or issue. In this study, there was triangulation of qualitative method to strengthen the conclusions that have been made in this thesis. In addition data were generated from many sources, for example, through interviews, focus group discussion and from documents.

The second feature was the use of critical friends. From the beginning of this study through to data generation, analysis and reporting, critical friends were used to critique the ideas of the study. Most of the researcher's critical friends were those in the psychology class.

However, total reliability is difficult to achieve since human beings are not static. One cannot expect to have the exact findings in subsequent data generation procedures even though the sample is the same. Nevertheless, researchers need to strive towards achieving validity and reliability in research, (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

3.7. Limitations

Purposeful sampling allows for an in-depth analysis of the perceptions of a group (Merriam 2009). This method was used to explore SNE teachers' experiences of teaching in inclusive classrooms in public secondary schools in Blantyre District, South West

Education Division. The study was limited by the nature of qualitative research in which data generated represent the experiences of the participants in the study, and cannot be generalized beyond the scope of the study. This study was conducted in four secondary schools from one division in the Southern region of Malawi, and the sampling technique used was purposeful. As such, the results cannot be generalized to the entire nation though there are possibilities of applying the results to other similar cases in the country. That is to say, the secondary schools chosen have some similar characteristics with other secondary schools in Malawi, and even in other developing countries, so the results of this study, though not generalized, can be applied to other similar cases in Malawi and beyond.

3.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the methodology for the study. This includes description of the research paradigm, research design, sampling, data generation methods and procedures that were employed in the study. The chapter ends with the discussion of ethical considerations and guidelines in the gathering of data. As explained above the research design for this study was phenomenological, it focused on exploring the SNE teachers' experiences of teaching in inclusive classrooms. The participants used in this study were a sample of SNE teachers, about eight of them selected from some public secondary schools. Data was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews. Once the data was collected it was analyzed qualitatively by examining and categorizing the results into themes for further description and analysis.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0. Chapter overview

This chapter presents and discusses findings on the experience of SNE teachers of teaching in inclusive classrooms following the three research questions which are: (1) What are the SNE teachers' perceptions of teaching in inclusive classrooms? (2) What are the challenges encountered by the Special Needs Education teachers in inclusive education? (3) How do the Special Needs Education teachers cope with the challenges encountered in inclusive education?

4.1. Perceptions of the SNE teachers of an inclusive education

This study found that different SNE teachers had different or attached different meaning to the concept, 'inclusion'. These perceptions can be classified into three categories namely, positive, negative, and ambiguous perceptions.

Data obtained during the interviews appear to suggest that the SNE teachers in public secondary schools may generally hold positive attitudes toward the inclusion. These positive views may be attributable to an increase in the awareness of learners with disabilities among the respondents, possibly due to the experience they had of teaching in

inclusive classroom at primary school level and the training they had in special needs education. The categories highlighted during the review of literature directed the following analysis. Quotations by participants cited in this study are the best representations of common emerging themes of all respondents that is positive perceptions towards inclusive education by the SNE teachers, negative perceptions on special needs education by some school administrators, inclusive classrooms are a good learning ground.

4.1.1. Positive perceptions towards inclusive education by SNE teachers

This is exemplified in the speech of the participants as stated below in response to the question, “What are the SNE teachers’ perceptions of inclusive education. From this question significant themes emerged from the participant responses. SNE teachers’ perceptions on inclusion come from their understanding of the definition of inclusion. For instance this is what Dacha said:

“Inclusion is making sure that all learners despite their needs and disabilities are included in the same classroom. Inclusion is the practice of including learners with disabilities into regular education classrooms and meeting their specific needs”.

Five participants agreed that, " inclusive classroom means placing and educating learners with learning disabilities in the general classroom setting with their peers without disabilities with ample support and special education modifications to obtain their set goals and be successful. Responses which emerged from participants were similar and

demonstrated SNE teachers' ideas that inclusion means including all learners without and with disabilities in their classrooms. From the responses, one can see that the SNE teacher's perceptions on inclusive education are similar and that they have a positive attitude towards inclusion. Positive attitude here is referring to the willingness of the SNE teachers to assist learners with disabilities in inclusive classrooms in public secondary schools. This is due to having knowledge in inclusive education through the training in special needs education. The knowledge in inclusive education has made the SNE teachers to know what to do in inclusive classrooms.

Therefore, SNE teachers' positive attitudes and beliefs about inclusion may be determined by their experiences in the educational setting. Glasser's (2000), concept of a quality world pertains to this study because the goal of this study is to understand the lived world of human experience in relation to the inclusion setting.

The findings of this study are in line with, Westwood & Graham (2003) who found a significant relationship between high school teachers' perceptions of inclusion and classroom setting. Westwood and Graham (2003), concluded that teachers with experience in teaching within inclusive classrooms held more favorable perceptions toward inclusive education than those teachers who did not teach in inclusive classrooms.

4.1.2. Negative perceptions on inclusive education by some administrators

From this study, it was found that some administrators hold different views in regards to teaching of all learners in inclusive classrooms. This is shown by the participant's responses when they were asked to answer the question, "What kind of experience do

you have in implementing inclusive education in your classroom in regards to the school administrators?” Under this question the participants came up with the following responses;

Tsoko said that,

”Some administrators are not concerned with what is going on in the classroom but only focuses on office work. She further went on to say maybe this is being attributed to lack of knowledge in special needs education”.

Gudo went on to say that,

“Some administrators lack knowledge about inclusive education, so they fail to help. Some administrators show sympathy but the problem is inclusive education itself, as it is very hard to fully implement it in our schools,”

The findings of this study agree with the findings of Daane, Beirne-Smith & Latham (2000) where Administrative support has also been cited as a significant factor in determining teacher attitudes toward inclusion, as the teacher feels reaffirmed if the school principal fosters a positive learning environment for both teachers and students. Teachers believe that the support of the Principal and other school leaders are critical for them to implement inclusive practices (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003). Principals need to accept ownership of all students and support inclusive placement, to inspire these feelings among other school personnel (Murawski, 2005; Daane et al, 2000). However, research suggests that administrators' attitudes toward students with disabilities are negative,

thereby impacting on the process of inclusion in schools (Avissar, 2000). Daane et al (2000), noted that administrative staff, lack sufficient understanding and expertise regarding the delivery of services to students with disabilities. Further research commented that administrators may hold positive views of inclusion as they are further away than mainstream teachers, in terms of actual experiences (Briggs et al, 2000; Biddle, 2006).

Glasser's choice theory, states that inclusion can be successful when both the SNE teachers and administrators have a clear and concise understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The theoretical framework is also supported by other studies conducted by Monahan, Marion and Miller (2001); Henning and Mitchell (2002); Murawski (2005); and Aviramindis and Kalyva (2007), which identified feelings of pride, inadequacy, frustration, and lack of support as reasons why educators like or dislike the phenomenon of inclusion.

4.1.3 Inclusive classrooms are a good learning ground

Further, the inclusive classrooms appear to suit the needs of most learners, with each individual being accepted as different, unique beings, each with their distinct abilities and disabilities. In response to how inclusive practices had impacted on students in her class, In Gudo pointed out:

‘If inclusive education is to be fully effective in schools, it would be in a positive way, because the way everybody's treated equally and everybody understands that everybody's different and also everybody in this room understands that there are

experts in different areas.... . That's like real life, you know, the learners with learning difficulties or disabilities just fit into the normal workings of the classroom, it doesn't matter.

4.1.4 Inclusion brings unity

The inclusion of learners with disabilities into regular classrooms brings unity as it is evident that it increases the feelings of tolerance and respect. The belief is that students without disabilities become aware of differences among people. There is, moreover, a feeling that individual strengths are valued, within inclusive settings. Tsoko remarked:

I think they learn some respect, some cooperation, actually seeing...I mean people that are different and the same, some in different ways and I think everybody has to respect other people and be tolerant of other people and as I said we're different and I just think that our kids really see – okay it doesn't matter how this particular child handles this or can't do it or whatever ... still they should be respected as a person... hopefully, they'll take that through their lives. Oh, I think it makes us all better people.

In a similar study Croll and Moses (2000) found that individuals who have family members or close friends with a disability, may have more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classrooms. Shippen & Crites (2005) also speak of the altered perceptions of educators toward students with disabilities once these educators have had sustained interaction with people with disabilities. This is supported by the investigation by Carroll, Forlin and Jobling (2003), who found that Australian pre-service teachers experienced improved degrees of comfort and coping

skills in their perception of people with disabilities, if they had had some previous frequent contact with such individuals.

4.2. Challenges encountered by SNE teachers in inclusive education

This study has found out that there are a number of challenges faced by the SNE teachers in inclusive classrooms. Some of these challenges are; lack of teamwork spirit, lack of support, lack of training for teachers and support staff, lack of resources, lack of statistics of the number of learners with disabilities.

4.2.1. Lack of teamwork

Six participants out of the eight who participated in this study reported that there is no teamwork between the SNE teachers and Regular teachers. It is as if, the regular teachers and SNE teachers are parallel lines yet, they all teach the same learners. However, the collaboration between these teachers would heavily assist in the inclusive classrooms. Some of the participants reported that they saw teamwork as an issue for successful inclusive classrooms;

Tsoko said that

“being closed minded” hindered successful incorporation of inclusion. She stated, “Having the mindset that your way is the only way leads to a weak support system for the children.”

However, a good collaboration between the SNE teachers and Regular teachers could exist if both of them are reflective, autonomous, lifelong learning teachers and embrace learners' diversity.

This idea agrees with Tsuro's response in which he said,

“not taking advice or not accepting assistance from others or resistance of accepting new ideas, suggestions, criticism, and just plain advice; whether it is from a seasoned veteran teacher or from a newly qualified one. We are all in this and we need to work together as a team.”

Katsi stated that,

“Teachers that are not flexible and unwilling to make modifications for students with disabilities make it difficult for inclusion to work. They don't want to be bothered with this extra work. They can't see how they are hurting the children with this attitude.”

These findings are in consonance with the findings of Biddle (2006); Corbin and Strauss, (2007); Keefe and Moore (2004), observe that inclusion can be successful when both the General education teacher and the Special needs education teacher have a clear and concise understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The findings also agree with the findings of Hemmings & Woodcock (2011); Henning and Mitchell (2000); Murawski (2005); and Aviramindis and Kalyva (2007), which identified feelings of pride, inadequacy, frustration, and lack of support as reasons why educators like or dislike the

phenomenon of inclusion. This study as well has unearthed closed minded, not taking advice or accepting assistance from others or resistance of accepting new ideas, suggestions and criticism as hindrances to successful incorporation of inclusion.

4.2.2. Lack of training for the teachers and staff

The study found that there is lack of training for the general teachers and non-teaching staff. For instance, one of the SNE teachers in an interview stated that:

“Regular classroom teachers are not trained to accommodate or differentiate instruction based upon specific disabilities and felt proper training needs to be given to staff members who will be working with special needs students”, said Dacha.

It was clear from the above statement that the SNE teachers are deeply concerned about the issue of training for the regular teachers and themselves in inclusive classrooms. They highlighted the need for professional development and workshops.

This study noted that some teachers may resist inclusive practices on account of inadequate training. It would appear that teachers perceive themselves as unprepared for inclusive education because they lack appropriate training in this area. Inadequate training relating to inclusive education, may result in lowered teacher confidence as they plan for inclusive education. Teachers who have not undertaken training regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities, may exhibit negative attitudes toward such inclusion.

The findings of this study are in line with the studies by Briggs, Johnson, Shepherd, & Sedbrook (2002); Powers, (2002); Van Reusen et al.,(2001) which found out that, training was associated with more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. Training in the field of special education appears to enhance understanding and improve attitudes regarding inclusion (Kuester, 2000; Powers, 2002). Introductory courses offered through Teacher Training programs may sometimes be inadequate in preparing the general educator for successful inclusion.

4.2.3. Lack of experience in dealing with severe and profound disabilities

This study found out that some SNE teachers lack experience in dealing with severe and profound disabilities. Students with severe and profound disabilities require more adaptation and medical attention than the average student. Teachers must be skilled in handling severe disabilities and create lesson plans based on individual abilities and adhere to dietary needs of the child, (Aviramidis & Kalyva, 2007). Lack of experience can lead to the child not progressing with skills or cause of adverse medical incidents.

In this study, it has been noted that possessing previous experience as an SNE teacher appears to positively predispose teachers toward inclusive education. It would appear that previous experience in this field, allows mainstream teachers to feel more comfortable within the inclusive classroom. Direct experiences of including students with disabilities into mainstream settings appeared to be an essential factor in shaping teachers' views toward inclusive settings (Avramidis et al., 2000). However, the nature of previous

contact should be positive as it is this that results in positive attitudes toward inclusive education.

On this point, the study suggest, that the special needs education teachers need to have workshops on how to deal with these severe and profound disabilities. The government and educational authorities needs to provide these workshops to the teachers now and again for them to be fully equipped with knowledge on how to teach such learners

4.2.4. Lack of support

This study, found out that lack of support is another challenge being encountered by the SNE teachers in inclusive classrooms. This was exemplified by the participants' responses as stated below;

Tsoko said that,

“Some administrators are not concerned with what is going on in the classroom but only focuses on office work. She further went on to say maybe this is being attributed to lack of knowledge in special needs education”.

Katsi stated that,

“Some administrators are willing to assist when we need help”

Gudo went on to say that,

“Some administrators lack knowledge about inclusive education, so they fail to help”.

Njiva said that,

“Some administrators show sympathy but the problem is inclusive education itself, as it is very hard to fully implement it in our schools,”

From this study it was found that some administrators hold different views in regards to teaching of all learners in inclusive class rooms.

Gudo said that,

“Some administrators were saying that inclusive classrooms should only be handled by the SNE teachers, and it is hard for the regular teachers to handle the class”.

Based on the studies by other researchers it was found that administrative support is a significant factor in determining teacher attitudes toward inclusion, as the teacher feels reaffirmed if the school Head-teacher fosters a positive learning environment for both teachers and students. Teachers believe that the support from the Head-teacher and other school leaders are critical in order for them to implement inclusive practices (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003). Murawski (2005) refers to a "visionary head-teacher", as the one who will accept the challenge to create an inclusive environment for all students and accept ownership of all students and support inclusive placement, in order to inspire these feelings among other school personnel. However, research suggests that administrators' attitudes toward students with disabilities are negative, thereby impacting on the process of inclusion in schools (Avissar, 2000). This study noted that administrative staff, lack

sufficient understanding and expertise regarding the delivery of services to students with disabilities.

4.3. Coping with the challenges encountered by SNE teachers in inclusive classrooms

The study found that the SNE teachers encounter a number of challenges when teaching in inclusive classroom, as such, this section wants to describe how they can cope with the challenges.

4.3.1 Lack of teamwork

Based on this challenge, “lack of teamwork”, the participants came with the ways of coping with it. Katsi suggested that the best way to assist is for the Special Needs Education teachers to collaborate with the regular teachers in the classroom. The theme emanating from lack of team work is that there is need for collaboration with the regular teachers. This is what Katsi said;

“We should collaborate with the regular teachers daily. The SNE teachers should give support to regular teachers in their lesson plans in order to accommodate all the learners in the inclusive classroom to meet individual needs, ”

“I feel there should be team teaching with the regular teachers. Being a SNE teacher has the role to assist the regular teachers so that inclusion education is

effectively implemented”, stated Mbeva. The theme here is unity for the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Participants agreed that teamwork was a major support for successful inclusion. Looking on teamwork it can be suggested that regular and SNE teachers must work together, along with anyone else involved in order to effectively implement inclusive education and for the inclusion process to be deemed successful.

This study, has also found out that, lack of teamwork has made life hard for specialist teachers for learners with difficulties. The regular teachers refuse to assist learners with learning disabilities on the pretext that they do not have expertise on how to handle children with disabilities. Sometimes the reason given is simple and straight forward “*I am not paid to do that*”. In addition learners with learning difficulties are left unattended to whenever their teachers is sick or is absent, (Chavula, 2008).

This study has established that there is a lack of coordination among teachers, special educators, parents, and professionals. Stakeholders should be encouraged to participate in the implementation of inclusive education. Parent Teacher Associations might play a pivotal role in strengthening the teamwork. It can be proposed that the regular teachers must be prepared to work with the Special Needs Education teachers as their fellow teachers. The second suggestion is that the regular teachers must be provided with in-service trainings so that they are also well versed with special needs education.

4.3.2. Lack of experience in dealing with severe and profound disabilities

Lack of experience in dealing with severe and profound disabilities is another challenge that the SNE teachers and regular teachers were concerned about. Below is what Gudo said;

“At college we were only trained in one category, for example I specialized in visual impairment and my other friends in hearing impairment, so it will be difficult for us to cater for all the categories in one class”

There is concern from SNE teachers regarding the inclusion of students with more severe disabilities. SNE teachers view the move to include students with multiple disabilities into the mainstream classroom, as impractical. This concern can be solved by using cooperative learning groups. Cooperative learning is a social construction of understanding and participating in a learning community (Mushoriwa, 2001). Some common elements of the various cooperative learning models are group goals or task inter-dependence, some form of individual accountability, and good group interaction.

When cooperative learning groups are used, SNE teachers need not to continue to be active managers, but the focus should shift to helping students learn the behaviors necessary to work effectively in groups whose goal is the active construction of meaning.

The researcher suggests that, another way of solving the challenge of lack of experience in dealing with severe and profound disabilities is by using management skills, such as keeping students accountable for individual work in a group context, helping students learn to seek explanations from and to give feed- back to other students, or pacing groups working at different rates or different tasks.

4.3.3. Lack of support

In this study it was found that, the availability of Special Needs Education support, would effectively and successfully enhances the implementation n of inclusive education. The SNE teachers observed the following;

“The availability of special education support can foster the effective implementation of inclusive education in schools”,(Dacha).

“Effective communication is the best key to the implementation of inclusive education”, (Tsuro).

This study found that, support services were serious lacking in these secondary schools. However, support services such as professional support, parental support and administrator support were perceived to be critical components in the implementation of inclusive education.

4.4. Chapter summary

All in all, the study has established that SNE teachers’ experience have a positive attitude towards inclusion. This study has identified several challenges encountered in inclusive

education, such as; lack of support from all the stake holders, lack of training in all the categories of special needs, and lack of team-work, lack of experience in dealing with severe and profound disabilities. The next chapter discusses conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the summary of the findings, and conclusions. The chapter also highlights the implications of the study and proposes possible areas for further research.

5.1. Study summary

The study was aimed at exploring the experiences of SNE teachers in inclusive classrooms in some selected secondary schools. Experience and views were sought from eight SNE teachers working in an inclusive classroom in some selected secondary schools in Blantyre regarding inclusion and how they feel inclusion can be effective and the barriers to inclusion.

The themes noted were views regarding inclusive education in secondary schools, the effectiveness of inclusive education, the supports that facilitate inclusive education, and barriers to successful incorporation of inclusive education. The participants had various views towards inclusive education. Attitude is an influential factor in inclusion programs, (Keefe & Moore, 2004).

5.2 Conclusions

This study attempted to explore the perceptions of the Special Needs Education teachers of teaching in an inclusive education. From the SNE teachers' perceptions, the results suggest that the SNE teachers in the schools involved in this study generally hold positive perceptions toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into inclusive classrooms, however some negative perceptions were reported. These positive views may be attributable to an increase in the awareness of students with disabilities among the respondents, possibly due to the training they had in Special needs education at Montfort school of the blind regarding their roles as Special needs education teachers. On the part of the regular teachers the study suggests that it would be good if they are also trained on the aspect of inclusion.

It is evident that the inclusion of learners with disabilities into regular classrooms brings unity as it increases the feelings of tolerance and respect among all learners within the inclusive setting. However, a student's level of disability may emerge as a factor shaping the attitudes of teachers to the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Further, the responses of participants revealed that previous experience with learners with disabilities into regular settings appears to better prepare teachers for inclusion. Bearing these views in mind, it would appear prudent for a mandatory segment on teaching within inclusive settings be introduced into teacher training programs to prepare trainee teachers for their roles as inclusive educators.

5.3 Implications of the study

The results imply that the SNE teachers are positively inclined towards the philosophy of inclusive education, perceiving the process as beneficial to all participants within the inclusive setting. However, they remain cautious about the inclusion of students with more severe disabilities.

Understanding the interrelationships between SNE teachers' attitudes, their effective teaching practices and impact on learners' development can inform higher education institutions in providing appropriate teacher education in inclusive education

5.3.1 Recommendations for practice

The findings of this study should be interpreted in the light of the following limitations. Findings were largely based on self-reports by the SNE teachers; there will always be some doubt as to whether SNE teachers' responses reflect their true perceptions and concerns regarding the inclusion of learners with disabilities into inclusive classrooms. Responses should therefore be interpreted with caution. This study only investigated a limited number of variables related to the perceptions and concerns of the SNE teachers regarding the inclusion of learners with disabilities into inclusive classrooms. There are undoubtedly other variables that should be considered, when ascertaining such perceptions and concerns.

In addition, the Malawian government must put into consideration community mobilization for the Malawians to be able to buy this new concept of inclusive education

as an observation has been made that some educators, learners and parents are not fully educated about inclusive education. It seems as if there is an assumption that the community would readily accept inclusion.

5.3.2 *Recommendations for Further Research*

The purpose of this study was to explore the SNE teachers' experience of teaching in inclusive classroom. However, an observation has been noted that the regular teachers, learners, and parents are not fully educated on inclusive education. It seems there is an assumption that learners and the regular teachers would readily accept inclusion. Such an assumption could be dangerous since some learners and regular teachers might have negative views towards inclusive education. A study on learners' experiences in inclusive education is envisaged.

5.4 Chapter summary

Chapter five has presented the study summary, conclusions, implications and recommendations of the study. In summary from this study which attempted to explore the SNE teachers' experiences of teaching in inclusive classrooms the results suggest that the SNE teachers in the schools involved in this study generally hold positive perceptions toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into inclusive classrooms. Participants identified barriers as a lack of teamwork, time restraints, and a heavy workload. In conclusion it is evident that the inclusion of learners with disabilities into inclusive classrooms brings unity within the inclusive classroom. The results imply that the SNE teachers are positively inclined towards the philosophy of inclusive education, perceiving

the process as beneficial to all participants within the inclusive setting. However, they remain cautious about the inclusion of students with more severe disabilities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A : Semi-formal interview with the special education needs teachers

Interview question 1

For how long have you been teaching in inclusive classroom at secondary school level?

Interview question 2

What is your definition of inclusive classroom?

Interview question 3

How should the Special needs education teachers assist in the teaching of learners with disabilities in inclusive classrooms?

Interview question 4

How can Special education teachers meet the needs of learners identified with disabilities in inclusive classroom?

Interview question 5

What types of instructional skills are regular-teachers lacking to teach both learners with disabilities and those without disabilities?

Interview question 6

What kind of experience in terms of curriculum do you as a SNE teacher have while implementing inclusive education in your classroom?

Interview question 7

How do you manage your classrooms while implementing inclusive education?

Interview question 8

What kind of experience do you have in implementing inclusive education in your classroom in regards to the school administrators?

Interview question 9

What kind of behavior does regular teachers show while you are implementing inclusive education in your classrooms?

Interview question 10

Explain the factors that can lead to successful implementation of inclusive education?

Interview question 11

Explain the factors that can hinder successful inclusive education.

Interview question 12

How would you describe the learners' attitudes towards you?

Interview question 13

Do you have a lot of learners with disabilities here?

Interview question 14

How did you experience the transition from being a general teacher to a special needs education teacher?

Appendix B: Chancellor College -University of Malawi

Permission to take part in research

(Due to the nature of the participants disabilities, this form will be explained/ discussed step-by-step to each individual special education needs on the day of the interview.

Research topic

Investigating the experience of the special education needs teachers in inclusive classrooms, in some selected secondary schools in Blantyre Urban district

You are asked to take part in a research study which is being done by LemaniTwaya, MED. Psychology student from the Faculty of Education at Chancellor College, the University of Malawi. The results will form part of a thesis for the MED.-Psychology degree. You are chosen as a possible participant for the study because you are one of the teachers who is teaching in an inclusive setting.

1. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore the experience of the special education needs teachers teaching in an inclusive setting.

2. Procedures

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to do the following:

Answer questions about your experience in teaching in an inclusive setting – for example, how you are socially included in the school. You will also be required to provide any other material (such as letters, pictures or documents) which will explain your experience. A minimum of one interview will be held and you will be informed of the venue where this will take place.

3. Possible risks and uncomfortable issues

You are expected to be honest. It might be uncomfortable to discuss matters which can point out possible flaws at your school.

4. Possible advantages for the community

Through your participation you can contribute to a better understanding of inclusive education in Malawi in inclusive setting. Social inclusion is not only about placing the learner in a main-stream classroom, but also takes a lot of other aspects into consideration and there are a lot of adjustments that needs to occur. You can also give advice on how to make this process easier for other teachers, administrators, the community and ministry officials about inclusive education in Malawi.

5. Remuneration for participation

There will be no remuneration for your participation.

6. Confidentiality

Any information which is shared with me will be completely confidential and will only be made known with your permission or as required by law. The participants will stay

completely anonymous. The information will be kept in a safe place. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the information.

7. Participation and withdrawal

You can decide if you want to participate in the study. If you have any questions regarding the study, feel free to ask me. If you decide not to participate in the study, you can withdraw at any time, without any ramifications for you. You may also refuse to answer certain questions, but still participate in the study. I may also withdraw you from the study if circumstances make it necessary.

8. Identification of researcher

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, you can contact me, Lemani Twaya at 0888521495 or 0996024382.

9. Rights if Participants

You may withdraw from participating at any time, without any negative consequences for you. By participating in the study you do not distance yourself from any of your rights, claims or procedures.

Appendix C: Declaration by participant / legal representative

The above information was given to me, [name of participant], _____ and explained by [name of person involved] _____ in (Chichewa / English) and (I am / the participant is) fluent in the language or it was satisfactorily translated. (I

/ the participant) was given the opportunity to ask questions and the questions were answered adequately.

I hereby give permission to take part in the study / I hereby give permission that the participant take part in the study. A copy of this form was given to me.

Name of participant

Name of legal representative (if applicable)

Signature of participant or legal representative

Date

Declaration by researcher

I declare that all information in this document has been explained to (name of participant / legal Representative) _____. He/she has been encouraged and given enough time to direct any questions to me. The conversation was in (Chichewa/ English) and no translator was used.

Signature of researcher

Date

Appendix D: Chancellor College -University of Malawi, Permission to take part in research

Research topic

Investigating the experience of the special education needs teachers in inclusive setting, in some selected secondary schools in Blantyre Urban district

You are asked to take part in a research study which is being done by Lemani Twaya, MED. Psychology student from the Faculty of Education at Chancellor College, the University of Malawi. The results will form part of a thesis for the MED.-Psychology degree. You are chosen as a possible participant for the study because you are one of the teachers who is teaching in an inclusive setting.

1.0. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore the experience of the special education needs teachers teaching in an inclusive setting.

1.1. Procedures

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to do the following:

Answer questions about your experience in teaching in an inclusive setting – for example, how you are socially included in the school. You will also be required to provide any other material (such as letters, pictures or documents) which will explain your experience. A minimum of one interview will be held and you will be informed of the venue where this will take place.

1.2. Possible risks and uncomfortable issues

You are expected to be honest. It might be uncomfortable to discuss matters which can point out possible flaws at your school.

1.3. Possible advantages for the community

Through your participation you can contribute to a better understanding of inclusive education in Malawi in inclusive setting. Social inclusion is not only about placing the learner in a main-stream classroom, but also takes a lot of other aspects into consideration and there are a lot of adjustments that needs to occur. You can also give advice on how to make this process easier for other teachers, administrators, the community and ministry officials about inclusive education in Malawi.

1.4. Remuneration for participation

There will be no remuneration for your participation.

1.5. Confidentiality

Any information which is shared with me will be completely confidential and will only be made known with your permission or as required by law. The participants will stay completely anonymous. The information will be kept in a safe place. Only I and my study leader will have access to the information.

1.6. Participation and withdrawal

You can decide if you want to participate in the study. If you have any questions regarding the study, feel free to ask me. If you decide to participate in the study, you can withdraw at any time, without any ramifications for you. You may also refuse to answer certain questions, but still participate in the study. I may also withdraw you from the study if circumstances make it necessary.

1.7. Identification of researcher

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, you can contact me, Lemani Twaya at 0888521495 or 0996024382.

1.8. Rights if Participants

You may withdraw from participating at any time, without any negative consequences for you. By participating in the study you do not distance yourself from any of your rights, claims or procedures.

Appendix E: Declaration by participant / legal representative

The above information was given to me, (name of participant), _____ and explained by [name of person involved] _____ in (Chichewa / English) and (I am /the participant is) fluent in the language or it was satisfactorily translated. (I /the participant) was given the opportunity to ask questions and the questions were answered adequately.

I hereby give permission to take part in the study /I hereby give permission that the participant take part in the study. A copy of this form was given to me.

Name of participant

Name of legal representative (if applicable)

Signature of participant or legal representative

Date

Declaration by researcher

I declare that all information in this document has been explained to (name of participant / legal Representative) _____. He/she has been encouraged and given enough time to direct any questions to me. The conversation was in (Chichewa/ English) and no translator was used.

Signature of researcher

Date