Policy and Practice of Inclusive Education for Mainstream Secondary Teachers Supporting Learners with Physical Disabilities in the Lower Shire, Malawi

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By

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ABSTRACT

The Government of Malawi and its education partners are currently implementing the National Education Policy (2016) and the National Strategy on Inclusive Education (2017-2021). My study explored how mainstream secondary teachers interpret policies and strategies, and transition to the practice of supporting learners with physical disabilities. Previous studies revealed policy-to-practice disparities in the Malawian inclusive secondary education but did not proffer teacher-oriented strategies that can mitigate the disparities and enhance inclusive education. My study argued that effective strategies that could lessen policy-to-practice mismatches and advance inclusive education primarily rest with mainstream teachers, as they mediate policy and practice. This study drew on Clough and Corbett's disability studies critique and Urie Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems perspective to form theoretical and analytical frameworks for understanding the problem and discussing the findings. The study generated primary data from the Lower Shire districts of Chikwawa and Nsanje in Malawi. Thirty-three teachers, randomly selected from four schools, responded to questionnaires. In-depth, face to face interviews were conducted with purposely selected teachers from the same four schools. The study also generated secondary data from a review of policy documents. The findings showed that policy directives are shifting inclusive education from social perspectives to political perspectives, whereby mainstream teachers regard national policies and strategies as political responses to demands for inclusion. The findings further showed that teachers' practices are moving away from the provision of special needs to the promotion of inclusive needs, whereby inclusive education benefits all learners. The study found that some teachers are resisting inclusive education, and would like learners with physical disabilities to return to special schools, thus controverting policy directives. As a way forward, this study recommended that future policy formulation and implementation in the Malawian mainstream secondary education should consider the bioecological systems approach, whereby policymakers systematically interact with the mainstream secondary teachers to improve their perspectives, competencies and practices on inclusive education.

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DEDICATION

I wholeheartedly dedicate this work to my mother Ezelina Njola Souza. I will always remember my late father Al-bin Edwin Souza, known as Chairman Souza in his lifetime, for his contribution towards my education. Unfortunately, he never lived long enough to witness my strides. May your soul continue resting in peace.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work, except where duly acknowledged. The thesis has never been submitted to any other university for examination apart from Rhodes University.

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ACRONYMS

ACHPR	:	African Charter on Human and People's Rights
ACRWC	:	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AU	:	African Union
BSP	:	Bioecological Systems Perspective
CDE	:	Convention against Discrimination in Education
CDT	:	Critical Disability Theory
CTPD	:	Continuous Teacher Professional Development
DRWC	:	Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
DSC	:	Disability Studies Critique
ECD	:	Early Childhood Development
EDM	:	Education Division Manager
EFA	:	Education for All
EMIS	:	Education Management Information System
HI	:	Hearing Impairment
IE	:	Inclusive Education
LPD	:	Learners with Physical Disabilities
LWA	:	Learners with Albinism
LWD	:	Learners with Disabilities
MGDS	:	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MoEST	:	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NDMSIP	:	National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan
NEP	:	National Education Policy
NESIP	:	National Education Sector Investment Plan

NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPEOPD	:	National Policy on the Equalisation of Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities
NSIE	:	National Strategy on Inclusive Education
NSNEP	:	National Special Needs Education Policy
NYP	:	National Youth Policy
PPCT	:	Process Person Context Time
PWA	:	Persons with Albinism
PWD	:	Persons with Disabilities
PWPD	:	Persons with Physical Disabilities
RUESC	:	Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee
SDG	:	Sustainable Development Goals
SE	:	Special Education
SEN	:	Special Educational Needs
SNE	:	Special Needs Education
SWED	:	South West Education Division
UN	:	United Nations
UNCRC	:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDHR	:	United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNOHCHR	:	United Nations Office of High Commissioner on Human Rights
VI	:	Visual Impairment

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction to the entire thesis; introducing motivation, background, context, purpose, questions, objectives, concepts, rationale, theories and methodology for the study. The issues build on each other to answer the research questions and achieve the study objectives. The chapter also presents the organisation and aims of subsequent chapters.

1.2 Brief History of Inclusive Education

Initially, educational systems *excluded* learners with disabilities (LWD). Through the 1800s, neither particular model of disability nor international policy supported the education of LWD (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011; Boroson, 2017). After that, educational systems *segregated* LWD to special education (SE), supported by the medical model of disability. The medical model of disability perceived disability as a medical condition. International declarations such as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) of 1948 also supported SE (Rossa, 2017; Block et al., 2019). Afterwards, schooling systems *integrated* LWD into mainstream education. With the psycho-medical model of disability in the 1950s to 1990s, LWD spent a limited time in mainstream schools but later returned to their special schools (McIntyre, 2018; Hodkinson, 2019). In the United States, for example, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 supported the integration system. From then on, some educational settings *included* LWD in mainstream education. The inclusion was from the 1990s when the social model of disability advocated for the removal of barriers that hindered the inclusion of LWD. International policies such as Education for All (EFA) of 1990, Salamanca Statement of 1994 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) of 2006 spearheaded inclusive education (IE).

Since the inception of IE, theorists proposed new models of disability to conceptualise IE and inform its policy and practice. The models include human development, human rights and policymaking. The new models of disability challenged the social model of disability but sustained the practice of IE. For example, one tenet that the political model of disability propounds is that political situations influence the realisation of IE (Venditti, 2019); beyond social barriers. Beyond this contest, the current tight spot is whether inclusion matters.

1.3 Why Inclusive Education?

Inclusion matters. In the book *Inclusion is dead: Long live inclusion*, Imray and Colley (2017) instigated a controversial discussion on the status of inclusion globally. The title of the book is a paradox – a statement seemingly contradictory but proves clear. On one part, 'inclusion is dead', the authors offered despair that in a way, the inclusion of LWD in mainstream schools is a dead end. Contrarily, 'long live inclusion', the authors alluded to a hope that somehow inclusion is likely to flourish and achieve its intentions of educating all learners together regardless of factors that may result in some form of discrimination such as physical disability.

In a critical response to the book, Slee (2018a) replied, beginning with the title of the book itself that *Inclusive education isn't dead: it just smells funny*. In essence, Slee denied the argument that 'inclusion is dead' and counter-argued 'long live inclusion' in that, whatever is happening within inclusion calls for a critical appraisal. As a way forward, Schuelka, Braun, and Johnstone (2020) argued that contradictions like the aforementioned support evidence that inclusion needs strong consideration within mainstream education. The presupposition is that "when students in need of support through special education are meaningfully included in schools, academic and social outcomes improve for all students" (Choi, McCart, & Sailor, 2020, p. 8). The assumption resonates with the Global Education Monitoring Report of 2020, which emphasised that "all means all" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2020, p. 1).

1.4 Background and Motivation for the Study

Inclusion is a highly contested yet vital concept in modern living. Within the spheres of human life such as sexuality, information, knowledge, technology, development and education, inclusion remains a contentious issue as noted in the following literature (Polivara et al., 2017; Tsiplakides, 2018; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2019; World Bank, 2020). The research revealed that social disparities continue to manifest in modern societies at a startling rate (Tsiplakides, 2018). When it comes to education, the issue of inclusion becomes more intricate and complex. The World Bank (2020) observed that the foremost concern is whether mainstream education is suitable for all learners. The predicament on whether mainstream education is appropriate for all learners has somehow led to continued exclusion. This situation contradicts a supposed ideal situation that inclusive schools should fulfil the

educational aspirations of all learners (Choi et al., 2020). In response, countries took numerous retorts in the form of policies and practices toward the implementation and realisation of IE.

Worldwide, there are policies and strategies aimed at accelerating efforts of educating all learners in mainstream schools, regardless of physical disabilities and any other potentially discriminatory factors. However, what policies and strategies stipulate is not what usually happen in mainstream schooling practices. For instance, Kamchedzera (2010) reported that "the findings confirm the mismatch between the policy and practice" (p. 11). The situation of IE in Malawian secondary schools warranted policies and strategies that would strongly encourage inclusive teaching and learning practices (Kamchedzera, 2010). Chimwaza (2015) concluded that Malawi has more work to do in the implementation and realisation of IE. My study was one of the efforts toward the understanding of IE implementation in Malawi.

There were several reasons for undertaking this study. Firstly, living in a family with a sister with Visual Impairment (VI) fuelled the curiosity about IE. My sister did her primary education at a special school in the Southern district of Nsanje in Malawi. The existence of a special school for VI raised many questions. The interest was to find out why there would be a special school for learners with VI. There are ongoing debates on the rationale of having special schools versus inclusive schools. One of the recurring discourses is that some disabilities are beyond the capabilities of inclusive schools hence a need for special schools to cater for such disabilities (de Beco, 2018; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). My sister did not have any complications beyond VI. Still, the system placed her in a special school. After primary education, my sister continued to secondary education at a mainstream secondary school in Blantyre. At that time, special schools were mainly for primary and vocational education. There was no assurance before the 1990s that a learner with a disability would go beyond primary education. At the mainstream school, my sister dropped out due to lack of teacher support and inclusive strategies. As such, personal circumstances motivated this study. The motivation may, at first glance, imply researcher bias. Contrary, personal motivation is part of qualitative research. In essence, when one considers conducting research based on personal circumstances, it ensures that the motivation emphatically grounds the arguments (Dawson, 2007; Mason, 2017; Cooksey & McDonald, 2019).

Personal motivation is strengthened when supported by "a gap in the research literature" (Dawson, 2007, p. 1). It would be a misrepresentation to claim that the personal background

entirely motivated the study. The study partly grounded itself on research done before it was started. Research showed that IE missed its implementation intentions in Malawian schools. The research reported that some children with physical disabilities, including albinism, were not attending school at all (Lund & Lynch, 2012). The situation is contrary to the fact that Malawi is a party to several world declarations, including the UNCRPD, and has put in place policies that aim at providing equal educational opportunities for all learners (Chavuta et al., 2008; Chilemba, 2013; Ishida, Maluwa-Banda, Moyo, & Mgogo, 2017; Soni et al., 2020). Thus, the personal experiences resonate with research findings on the policy and practice of IE in Malawi.

Working for a local non-governmental organisation (NGO), which advocated for equal education in Malawi, helped to confirm the personal experiences and findings of previous studies. During this time, the NGO would be deployed in vulnerable communities to sensitise communities on the right to education for all learners. Beyond what project objectives would stipulate, my analysis indicated that mainstream education excluded learners with physical disabilities (LPD). The brief time I spent teaching in both secondary schools and universities within Malawi also contributed to the finetuning of the study ideas as deduced from personal circumstances and prior studies. Teaching experiences in schools and universities gave me first-hand experience on how LPD struggle to be accommodated within mainstream education. Importantly, working in the education sector confirmed that IE is a multifaceted educational and national agenda that warranted intersectional analysis and interventions. Armstrong (2003) expressed that "inclusion is concerned with countering oppressive and marginalising values and with understanding how these connect to practices and policies wherever they take place and in whatever form" (p. 4). Based on that understanding, the study design took two strands within IE: policy and practice.

My first degree in education was a breakthrough in realising the firm conviction in IE. During my undergraduate studies, there was a course on Special Needs Education (SNE) that strengthened the desire to pursue IE at a postgraduate level. The exposure to disability literary studies further ignited the interests in IE. In training as a mainstream secondary teacher, my primary teaching subject was English, including literature. Within the literature, my passion was on the representation of disability in fiction. Whether in literature or education, my interest has always been on the treatment of minority groups. As a mainstream secondary teacher, the

aspiration was to find the relevance of disability studies within mainstream education. It was in that context that the interest in IE began and consequently, the materialisation of this study.

My prior knowledge on IE did not necessarily influence what received attention during this study as one may speculatively argue. Instead, the prior knowledge and experiences kept the motivation on the topic. This observation points back to the earlier argument raised on personal motivation and researcher bias. Notwithstanding the speculation mentioned above, the levels of my education should be explicitly brought forward and purposively acknowledged especially in qualitative research. In essence, the researcher needs to ask themselves "whether [they are] well equipped in terms of [the] background to carry out the research?" (Kothari, 2004, p. 26). Accordingly, my educational background and previous qualifications helped to refine the study ideas and conceptualise the research aims. The gap in the literature, as earlier indicated, substantiated my intuitions as informed by experiences.

1.5 Problem Statement

Some research done on IE in Malawi recommended that education of LPD should be holistic. Teachers put great effort into achieving the success of the LPD in the classroom, which often does not yield the intended results (Chimwaza, 2015). Previous studies indicated that IE is far from being a reality in Malawi. Parity between policy and practice is generally unheeded (Kamchedzera, 2010; Chimwaza, 2015; Hummel & Werning, 2016). In a way, the policy-to-practice disparities have to do with mainstream teachers' classroom practices. Still, the disparities may not necessarily arise from the teachers' knowledge. Moreover, the disparities have nothing to do with whether mainstream teachers support LPD. Instead, the disparities have to do with how the teachers use national IE policies and strategies to prepare themselves for inclusive classes. Ntombela and Raymond (2013) argued that mainstream teachers do not regard themselves prepared and supported for inclusive schooling. As such, they seem to concentrate on physical (dis)abilities instead of the educational needs of all learners. In essence, the disparity between policy and practice has left Malawi far from realising meaningful IE at all levels of education. My study gave attention to the gap between policy and practice within mainstream secondary education.

1.6 Thesis Statement

The study argued that meaningful IE in Malawian secondary schools should initially concern itself with whether mainstream secondary teachers are sufficiently prepared to manage inclusive classes and support LPD that need extra educational support. Unquestionably, well-developed policies and strategies are ideal for the success of IE. Equally relevant, are changes to curricula and school infrastructure for disability accommodations. However, IE policies for LPD should provide an enabling and interactive environment for mainstream teachers to interpret policy and implementation strategies to strengthen their preparedness for inclusion.

1.7 Research Sites

The study carried the fieldwork component in Malawi. The fieldwork focused on the South West Education Division (SWED). Within the SWED, the study selected the Lower Shire districts of Chikwawa and Nsanje, with focus on two mainstream secondary schools in each district. In total, the study involved four purposely selected schools (see the fourth chapter).

1.7.1   Malawi

Malawi is a small landlocked country located within southern Africa with a population of approximately 18 million (2018). Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia border Malawi. The specific area for the fieldwork is the Lower Shire – Chikwawa and Nsanje districts (see Appendix 1 for a map of Malawi).

1.7.2   South West Education Division

Malawi has six secondary education divisions covering all the three regions of Southern (South West, South East and Shire Highlands), Central (Central West and Central East) and Northern (North). The study took place in one division, namely SWED, as stated earlier. The education statistics given herein are from the 2019 Education Management Information System (EMIS); the figures may change in the 2020 EMIS. As of 2019, Malawi had 1105 public secondary schools. The study excluded private secondary schools as they were not the focus. As of 2019, SWED had 149 public secondary schools, 2572 teachers and 888 learners with special needs. The SWED, like other divisions, consists of several districts.

1.7.3   Lower Shire: Chikwawa and Nsanje

The study focused on two districts located in the Lower Shire, namely Chikwawa and Nsanje (see the fourth chapter for the rationale behind the choice of the districts). The two districts are a part of the consortium of districts forming the SWED; other districts are Blantyre, Chiradzulu, Mwanza and Neno. The Education Division Manager (EDM), based at division headquarters in the commercial city of Blantyre, remotely manages the secondary schools in the districts. However, headteachers run the daily affairs of the secondary schools. In each district, there are both conventional and community day secondary schools.

1.7.4   Mainstream Secondary Schools

The study involved two schools in each district, making it four schools in total. Alphabetical letters A, B, C and D represented the four schools. The first two schools (A and B) were those in Chikwawa and the other two schools (C and D) were those in Nsanje. On public secondary schools, EMIS (2019) did not specify the number of mainstream schools compared to special schools for secondary education. The categorisation was based on conventional schools against community day schools. Most of the conventional schools may enrol LPD, as they have resource centres and accessible infrastructures.

1.8 Study Participants

At each school, the research involved the same type of participants, the mainstream secondary teachers. Factors such as teaching subjects, gender and teaching loads varied from one secondary school to another. The participants were homogenous as they had the same obligation of teaching all learners together regardless of factors such as physical disabilities. In essence, other factors, apart from inclusive teaching, did not play any significant role in the selection of the participants. Patently, teacher training, age and place of teacher training form important aspects of the teachers' experiences. These aspects were considered throughout the study. At each school, several participants received questionnaires, but the returned questionnaires determined the final sample size. For the questionnaire method, the total sample size was 33 mainstream secondary teachers. Out of the 33 participants who completed the questionnaire, eight participants sat for individual interviews (see Appendix 2 for participant selection process). Chapter three provides more details on the recruitment of the participants.

1.9 Purpose, Objectives and Questions

The concept of IE aligned the purpose, objectives and questions for the study. As the purpose, objectives and questions guided the study, these three elements steer this thesis as well. Thus, matters pursued in this thesis will keep on alluding to the three elements. The sections below explain the overall purpose, specific objectives and research questions.

1.9.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore mainstream secondary teachers' interpretation of national IE policies and strategies into schooling practices for supporting learners with physical disabilities in the Lower Shire, Malawi.

1.9.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Analyse national policy directives and strategies on IE in mainstream secondary schools.
2. Assess practices that mainstream teachers translate from national IE policies and strategies.
3. Proffer strategies to mitigate policy-to-practice disparities and enhance IE.

1.9.3 Main Research Question

The study sought to answer this question: How do mainstream secondary teachers interpret national IE policies and strategies into schooling practices for supporting learners with physical disabilities in the Lower Shire, Malawi?

1.9.4 Sub-questions

The study intended to answer the following sub-questions:

1. What are national policy directives and strategies on IE in mainstream secondary schools?
2. How do mainstream teachers translate practices from national IE policies and strategies?
3. What strategies can mitigate policy-to-practice disparities and enhance IE?

1.10   Concepts for the Study

In terms of key concepts, the study described inclusion within the education sector. It also described what IE policies and strategies seek to achieve. It further explored how mainstream secondary school teachers use the policies and the strategies in their preparations for mainstream classes in supporting LPD. The key concepts largely guided the review of related literature in the second chapter. The sections below briefly discuss the key concepts of the study (see Appendix 3 for a concepts map).

1.10.1 Inclusive Education

Debates about what IE is and is not, have over the past few decades, led to the establishment of several schools of thought. The debates have even led to a controversial position that attempting to define IE does not serve any purpose (Schuelka et al., 2020). Instead of belabouring with defining IE, perhaps the best thing to do is to focus on the "conceptualisation of inclusion and diversity in education" (Schuelka et al., 2020, p. 1). Still, my study found it relevant to present different opinions offered on the definition of IE. Defining IE served the purpose of distinguishing it from its competing concept of SE.

United Nations Office of High Commissioner on Human Rights [UNOHCHR] (2016) argued:

> Placing students with disabilities in mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to, for example, organisation, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion […]. The right to inclusive education means transforming culture, policy and practice in all formal and informal educational environments to ensure education is for all learners […]. Enabling inclusive education requires an in-depth transformation of education systems in legislation, policy and the way education is financed, administered, designed, taught and monitored. (Web)

From the UNOHCHR opinion above, it is evident that there is no single definition of IE. There are varied but closely related descriptions when it comes to IE (Clough & Corbett, 2000). Palmer and Williams-Diehm (2020) expressed that the definition of IE is very fluid as it goes by changes in the broader education sector.

According to the South Africa Department of Education [DoE] (2001), IE is "recognising and respecting the differences among all learners and building on the similarities" (p. 17). In agreement, Peters (2004) described IE as the activity of letting learners access knowledge together regardless of factors such as disability. In the same vein, the Namibia Ministry of Education [MoE] (2013) described IE as the "means of ending segregation or the deliberate exclusion of individuals or groups on the grounds of academic performance, gender, race, culture, religion, lifestyle, health conditions or disability" (p. 6). In the Malawian education system, IE refers to educating all children together without prejudice of their inadequacies based on factors such as disabilities (Malawi. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [MoEST], 2016).

My study understood IE as a process of supporting LPD to receive equal opportunities for epistemological access as their peers in a mainstream class. The study used the terms 'inclusive education' and 'mainstream education' interchangeably to mean equal and supported educational opportunities for epistemological access. The definition of IE is often focused on access, "end goals of inclusivity are assured within the definition of education itself" (Schuelka, Johnstone, Thomas, & Artiles, 2019, p. 2). In essence, the elements of IE speak to the notion of education in general and how to support diversity (Palmer & Williams-Diehm, 2020). In a narrow sense, IE involves bringing together learners with different abilities for the same learning goals (see Appendix 4 for a picture of an inclusive class).

1.10.2 Learners with Physical Disabilities

The LPD are a group of learners that face a limitation in education due to physical disabilities that present specific learning barriers. Many scholars defined physical disability narrowly. For example, Mpu (2018) defined physical disability as "associated with mobility and movement limitation, the inability to use limbs and trunk effectively because of paralysis, stiffness, pain, etc." (p. 27). Mpu's definition is too narrow and too limiting in terms of what physical disability entails. Possibly, Mpu used the narrow definition to suit the purpose of their study only. Other sources attempted to define physical disability differently. Physical disability is an occurrence when a person is limited in body functions due to a particular physical deformity (Nkabinde, Obiakor, Offor, & Smith, 2010; Scully, 2014; O'Reilly et al., 2015). According to the United States Department of Education [DoE] (2004), physical disability is reduced physical performance due to permanent injuries.

My study understood physical disability as a permanent defect as opposed to a temporary physical injury. The concept of physical disability implies a visible defect or physical damage to a learner's body, which requires some support to fully participate in school life. The study identified physical disabilities as visual impairment, hearing impairment, albinism and reduced mobility, among others. In that case, the classification of disabilities was not exclusive. For example, VI would include sensory disability since it involves visual senses. The argument for defining physical disability as visible defects or physical damage to a body speaks to a continued contestation on the classification of (physical) disabilities. For example, hearing impairment, deafness, and hard of hearing are primarily sensory disabilities, but they are caused by physical damage to the ears, designating them physical disabilities. When a person with such a disability puts on a hearing aid or uses sign language, it becomes even more physical and visible.

Categorising disabilities takes many twists depending on the context of the categorisation (Hallahan, Pullen, Kauffman, & Badar, 2020). My study borrowed the cited authors' categorisation of disabilities to come up with the focus of disabilities as physical. However, many physical disabilities alluded to in my study could also be identified as primarily sensory disabilities, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Categories of Disabilities

Cognitive and/or behavioural disabilities	Sensory and/or physical disabilities
• Specific learning disability • Intellectual disability • Emotional disturbance • Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder • Autism spectrum disorders	• Blindness • Deafness • Traumatic brain injury • Cerebral palsy • Muscular dystrophy

Source: Hallahan et al. (2020)

1.10.3 Mainstream Secondary Teachers

In Malawi, mainstream teachers are professionals teaching the primary or secondary phases, that is grade 1 to 8 and grade 9 to twelve, respectively. In a mainstream school, it is common to find mainstream (regular class) teachers and specialist (learner support) teachers. The

classification clearly shows their differing roles and areas of specialities. The latter mainly work in resource centres to support the former. In this regard, the mainstream teacher develops the learner's cognitive competencies rather than focuses on excluding factors such as physical abilities (UNESCO, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2018; Lucas, Strom, Bratkorich, & Wnuk, 2018). Hence, my study defined and understood mainstream teachers as those teachers in secondary schools who work in classrooms where LPD combine with their peers who do not have physical disabilities. The teachers are crucially "at the heart of ensuring a good quality of life for learners with additional learning needs, regardless of where their education takes place" (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020, p. 1). Thus, IE expects the mainstream teachers to affect inclusive strategies that would help LPD to experience the curricula and other schooling activities as their abled peers would.

1.10.4 Policy-to-Practice Disparity

The policy-to-practice disparity is a mismatch that exists between what the policy stipulates and what teachers practise. In the context of the study, the mismatch was between what IE policy required mainstream secondary teachers to do and what the teachers did. Meaningful education for LPD is customised, rigorous and organised (Hallahan et al., 2020). As such, policies and strategies stipulate that classroom practices should recognise the diverse needs of all learners. When a teacher does not conform to the dictates of a diverse class, it entails disparity between policy or strategy and practice. Thus, my study explored how mainstream secondary teachers interpret national IE policies and strategies. Then, the study ascertained how the teachers' practices bring (dis)parities together to be able to teach all learners. Lastly, the study explored ways of mitigating the mismatches and enhancing inclusivity.

1.10.5 Inclusive Strategies

The study understood and defined inclusive strategies as the means that teachers develop to provide LPD with the same learning opportunities as their peers. In that case, inclusive strategies included the initiatives for the teachers to engage and include all learners with all distinctions of disabilities. For instance, the inclusion of a video or an audio clip in an inclusive class with VI learners would require further thought or adaptations. Hence, the study pondered on how the mainstream teachers implement inclusivity in the real classroom practice, but the scope did not permit the inclusion of lesson observations at this point. The inclusive strategies

that mainstream teachers devise are an essential step towards mitigating policy-to-practice disparities and enhancing inclusivity.

1.11   The Rationale for the Study

Several studies conducted in Malawi in the field of IE focused on the education of LWD in both special schools and mainstream classes (Chavuta et al., 2008; Kamchedzera, 2010; Lund & Lynch, 2012; Chimwaza, 2015). Anecdotal evidence suggested that the studies did not pay attention to how mainstream secondary teachers implement national IE policies and strategies with specific reference to LPD. Notably, most of the studies focused on classroom learning processes but not the teachers' transition from policy to practice. In this study, the focus was the interpretation of national IE policies and strategies in terms of supporting LPD within mainstream secondary education. Hence, the study had some value since it helped mainstream secondary teachers in the research schools to understand the interpretations of national IE policies and strategies for pedagogical proficiency in supporting LPD.

Secondly, many studies in the past preoccupied themselves with the issue of teachers' attitudes towards IE. Nonetheless, many barriers to IE, as well as policy development, are more 'systemic' and less 'attitudinal' (Pather & Nxumalo, 2013). Chimwaza (2015) found out that most of the teachers in Malawi were of the view that the provision of physical accommodations in the schools guaranteed educational success to LPD. This finding spoke more to the systems within the schools than the teachers' attitudes towards diversity and inclusion. As such, my study went beyond the mainstream teachers' presuppositions to interpretations of the IE systems as inclusion needs a holistic approach (Eksteen, 2019).

Past studies showed that mainstream teachers approached the implementation of policies in education as a linear process. Teachers did not realise the complexity of the process of policy implementation. Often, teachers failed to realise that they engaged with national IE policies and strategies on behalf of the learners, including LPD (Chimwaza, 2015). There was no doubt that teachers' interpretations of the national IE policies and the strategies were critical for pedagogical proficiency. Therefore, my study enabled mainstream secondary teachers to reflect on their preparedness for inclusive classes and help in maximising the benefits of IE for LPD in the four research schools in the Lower Shire districts of Chikwawa and Nsanje.

1.12   Theoretical Framework: Overview

Two theories informed and underpinned the study: Clough and Corbett (2000) – disability studies critique (DSC) and Bronfenbrenner (2005) – bioecological systems perspective (BSP). The DSC is the latest in a series of historical developments in IE and disability studies. For convenience, below are the five historical developments that Clough and Corbett (2000) identified, in this order though not exclusive: the psycho-medical legacy, the sociological response, curricular approaches, school improvement strategies and disability studies critique. The DSC was appropriate for the study as it perceives policies as a political response to exclusion in education. Thus, the DSC spoke to the study purpose of ascertaining how mainstream teachers interpret national IE policies and strategies.

The study used BSP by way of adaptation of the five bioecological systems: Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem and Chronosystem. The third chapter justifies why the study centralised the teacher instead of the learner (child) as Bronfenbrenner initially did. The BSP was useful to the study since it is concerned with the interactions with the physical environment, thus, aligning with the intentions of IE. The BSP "explicitly situates human development within a particular cultural context in which family, peers and learning settings are regarded as key in responding to" IE (Soni et al., 2020, p. 8).

In essence, DSC and BSP built a more explanatory platform that articulated the research problem and its context. The study did not pick the two theories randomly for convenience. Instead, the study carefully probed the theories to establish their interrelatedness. Although the tenets of the two perspectives speak to the research problem, purpose and questions, the theories are entangled naturally. For example, the issue of policy, which is central in DSC, is also part of the Macrosystem in BSP. DSC regards policy as a political response while BSP perceives policy as a blueprint for IE implementation, realisation and evaluation. The third chapter discusses these matters and other theoretical arguments.

1.13   Organisation of Thesis

The thesis has six chapters. The present chapter explained what the study is about as well as the background, motivation and rationale behind it. The first chapter introduced the research questions and theories that preoccupied and guided the study. The second chapter reviews

literature related to the study with the main thrusts on contextual and conceptual frameworks. Central to the review of literature is IE policy-to-practice disparity in Malawian secondary education. The third chapter is about the theoretical framework. This chapter discusses two theories used in the study – DSC and BSP. The fourth chapter is about methodology. This chapter reports the procedures, methods and tools used in the study. The fifth chapter presents the research findings. This chapter includes reflections on the fieldwork in the Lower Shire, Malawi. The sixth chapter discusses the study findings. This chapter employs the theories, literature and findings to answer the research questions. The chapter also summarises key points raised in the entire thesis, serving as a conclusion. The chapter further suggests areas for further research.

1.14   Conclusion

The chapter brought out key issues that channel down the thesis. The study aimed at exploring how mainstream secondary school teachers in Lower Shire, Malawi interpret national IE policies and the strategies for supporting LPD. The interest, which led to designing and conducting the study, was to find out how national policies and strategies enhance IE within mainstream secondary schools. In doing that, the study reviewed some IE policies and strategies. In addition to the document review, the study administered a questionnaire and conducted interviews with mainstream secondary teachers in four schools in the Lower Shire, Malawi. The subsequent chapters expand on the issues introduced in this chapter, starting with the literature review.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is twofold. Firstly, the chapter examines literature that contextualises IE both globally and in Malawi. In the context section, the chapter discusses the history of IE and the strides made in its implementation and realisation. Secondly, the chapter expands on the conceptualisation of the study. The conceptualisation is the key terms that shaped the study. The chapter reviews the literature on IE policies and practices by way of categorising and synthesising. With the foci outlined above, the literature review in this chapter serves a dual purpose: probing the gap in knowledge on policy and practice of IE in Malawian secondary education and analysing some documents that form part of research findings in the fifth chapter.

2.2 Remarks on the Literature Review

This section firstly reflects on the process of the literature review before unpacking the key concepts. A literature review is essentially the bedrock of a study. Randolph (2009) observed that there are a few sources that provide writers with comprehensive guidance on conducting a literature review. The shortage of sources is partly due to many authors ignoring the significance of reviewing the literature. An investigator could not claim to be acquainted with discourses and contestations in a particular field of study without initially immersing themselves in a critical review of all the available relevant literature (Hart, 2018).

The literature review enabled the framing of research findings from previous studies into the presentation and discussion of my study findings (Randolph, 2009). In the sixth chapter, the reader would appreciate that the discussion of the research findings keeps referring back to the arguments raised in this chapter. The title of the study "policy and practice of inclusive education for mainstream secondary teachers supporting learners with physical disabilities in the Lower Shire, Malawi" aided the search criterion to find relevant literature. The criterion used key search terms and phrases such as 'inclusive education', 'physical disability and education', 'mainstream secondary schools', 'mainstream education', 'inclusive education in Malawi' and 'policy-to-practice disparity in inclusive education' to collect relevant literature from accredited sources. The review primarily focused on the outcomes and recommendations of the literature sources. The chapter categorises the literature into themes and sub-themes.

2.3 Inclusive Education: Promises, Realities and the Future

The early 1990s saw increased discussions and activism on the inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWD) in societies in general and in schools in particular. Before that, societies regarded PWD as outsiders. Societies, including family members, disowned, persecuted and cast out PWD. Notably, persons with physical disabilities (PWPD) often lived indoors or in forests as a result of the unacceptance by their societies and families (Munyi, 2012). Societies and families widely believed that a physical disability was a source of misfortune or an indicator of a curse, based on traditional beliefs and biblical allusions. Thus, the belief institutionalised the exclusion of PWPD. Even though in the 1940s, after World War Two, the issue of human rights was of major concern, the matter did not apply to PWPD. As George Orwell satirised in *Animal Farm*, all people were equal, but some people (non-disabled ones) were more equal than others (disabled ones). Thus, against such inequality, the concept of inclusion was advocated within mainstream education both globally and nationally – in the case of Malawi.

2.3.1   The Policy and Practice of Inclusive Education: A Global Agenda

Since exclusion extended to education, as explained above, the system denied children with physical disabilities educational opportunities (Ishida et al., 2017). The initial education of LPD was in special schools and often far away from their homes and peers (Dalton, Mckenzie, & Kahonde, 2012). As explained in the first chapter, my sister would travel in an open vehicle for about one hundred kilometres to reach her special school, yet there was another primary school just five hundred metres from our home. Such situations increased advocacy on children's rights. The continued practice of placing LPD in special schools, when mainstream schools could accommodate them, became a problem on the educational agenda. Consequently, the concept of IE was born (Valle & Connor, 2019; Magumise & Sefotho, 2020). Though a relatively new practice, IE is now a top priority for many governments and organisations worldwide; placing it prominently on the global agenda.

Countries and organisations are taking perceptible actions for IE to succeed internationally as well as in African countries, including Malawi (Kamchedzera, 2010; Braathen & Loeb, 2011; Chilemba, 2013; Chimwaza, 2015; Hummel & Werning, 2016; Mgomezulu, 2017; McLinden et al., 2018; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018; Chitiyo et al., 2019; Soni et al., 2020).

Internationally, countries adopted several treaties in support of IE. The treaties included the EFA (1990), Salamanca Statement (1994), Dakar Framework (2000) and UNCRPD (2006). The treaties declared that every learner should be able to access education regardless of their sex, race and disability (UNESCO, 2009). Due to international commitments, national governments integrated IE in the development of national education policies and strategies. In Africa, a few examples include South Africa's Department of Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education – Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (2001), Namibia's Ministry of Education Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) and Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Education National Policy on Inclusive Education (2016).

As a global agenda, policies and strategies on IE guide and facilitate inclusive practices in educational spaces. Vlachou (2004) asserted that

> Inclusion has become a global issue while in different countries we can find a number of stated intentions and written policies to move towards its achievement. However, despite the magnitude of the debate towards inclusion efforts to create more inclusive schooling communities, [teachers] are fraught with multiple difficulties, dilemmas and contradictions that often result in piecemeal or sequential reforms. (p. 3)

Vlachou (2004), quoted verbatim above, captured a two-sided situation of IE in general and in its relation to policy development in particular. Put differently, policy development in IE is a universal programme with its successes and setbacks (Stofile, 2008; Ladbrook, 2009; Maguvhe, 2015; Ball, 2017; Haug, 2017; Teodoro, 2020). Developed countries, especially in the Global North, channel considerable economic resources towards the implementation of IE policies and practices (Slee, 2013; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018; Walton, 2018). The response to IE in developing countries, particularly in the Global South, has been a challenge (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Pather & Nxumalo, 2013; Dart, Matemba, & Gunnell, 2018; Wickenden, 2018; Fiala-Butora, 2019; Pather, 2019; World Bank, 2020). In the African context, and indeed in the Malawian context, the slow response is related to the policies and strategies that guide the implementation of inclusion in mainstream education.

International policies and strategies on IE, especially those developed by organisations such as the United Nations (UN), largely influence their national counterparts. Still, national policy or strategy on IE has to, among other things, try to appreciate and embrace the needs of immediate

socio-political contexts (Pather & Nxumalo, 2013; Vislie, 2018; Slee, 2018b). Chimwaza (2015) observed that most national policies and strategies on IE lack context compatibility and relevance. The policies and strategies do not usually facilitate the aim of education in a specific educational setting. For example, the educational needs of a developed country may not necessarily replicate in a developing country. Nevertheless, national policies and practices on IE in developing countries have, for a long time, been confined to the limits prescribed by their international counterparts, which model practices in the developed countries (Ainscow, Dyson, & Weiner, 2013; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). The international frameworks of action on IE aim at enhancing diversity in education. However, the frameworks are also capable of misleading countries from meeting the goal of IE, if implemented uncritically.

In many African countries, the issue of inclusion in education is contentious. Much as "disability has been included in various targets [such as quality and equal education] and as a cross-cutting issue in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", (UN. Department of Economic and Social Affairs [DESA], 2019, p. 31), little is done to formulate policies and strategies that are unique to the needs of specific countries. Policies that articulate inclusive strategies divorced of the contextual needs, have the potential to foster exclusion (Kamchedzera, 2010; Youdell, 2011). For example, many international policies and strategies on IE, especially those developed or supported by the UN, stipulate that countries may provide IE where possible. Some countries, such as Malawi, may have the capabilities of educating LPD together with their peers in mainstream education. Since international stipulations make IE optional, mainstream schools may sustain exclusion through educational practices that model special schools on a pretext of impossibility. Engelbrecht and Green (2007) observed that IE "is well established in a number of southern African countries but there are many challenges to its implementation" (p. v). One of the challenges is mainstream teachers' lack of understanding of national IE policies, leading to a disparity in practices (Chataika et al., 2012; Wiazowski, 2012; Walton et al., 2014; Engelbrecht & Green, 2007). The challenge contributes to continued exclusion in mainstream schools.

The implementation of IE globally has been a back-and-forth endeavour, especially since the inception of the Salamanca Statement (Reindal, 2016; Pather, 2019). Much as IE in the Global South is not meeting the expectations immediately, the efforts made cannot be understated (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; McMillan, 2008; Kett, Deluca, & Carew, 2018; Walton, 2018). With all the positive developments registered and challenges anticipated, IE "can now be seen as a

response to a global social concern" (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007, p. 8). The task is now for individual countries, such as Malawi, to contextualise global perspectives to achieve IE.

2.3.2   Inclusive Education in Malawi: Trends and Setbacks

In the preceding section, the main thrust was a critical review of the policy and practice of IE globally. The section argued that IE is now a global agenda, which prompted countries to increase their efforts toward the implementation and realisation of IE. The review of the literature in the last section revealed that most countries, both from the Global North and the Global South, institute different policies and strategies that aim at fostering inclusion within education. The review further noted that IE practices are evident in many countries worldwide, including in Malawi. As a part of the efforts toward implementation of international treaties on IE, Malawi has developed its own IE policy and action frameworks. The policy frameworks included the National Education Policy (NEP) (2016) and the National Strategy on Inclusive Education (NSIE) (2017-2021). Past studies found that the Malawian IE policies and implementation strategies, similar to the ones across African countries, support opportunities for diversity by emphasising a need of educating all children together in mainstream classes (UNESCO, 2009; Rieser, 2012; Chilemba, 2013; Mgomezulu, 2017; Chataika, Kamchedzera, & Semphere, 2017). The studies forgot to highlight that the existence of IE policies and strategies does not consequently affirm parity with the practices.

The implementation of IE takes place in individual countries, whereby mainstream schools become the catalyst of the implementation process. In essence, policymakers should understand the mismatch between IE policies and practices primarily from the sentiments of the national education goals. For instance, Malawi draws on international trends to accelerate the realisation of its own IE. Clough and Corbett (2000) recommended that "what is established as policy must be concordant with what actually happens in schools" (p. 6). This implies that context should also be taken into account during policy conceptualisation. Malawi attempted to break the tradition of educating LPD in special schools unnecessarily and opted for inclusive schools. As a result, more LPD now attend mainstream classes across Malawi (Chavuta, Itimu-Phiri, Chiwaya, Sikero, & Alindiamao, 2008; Kamchedzera & Aubrey, 2010; Braathen & Loeb, 2011; Chimwaza, 2015; Hummel & Werning, 2016; Ishida et al., 2017; Soni et al., 2020). The studies acknowledged that the transition from SE to IE is not a straightforward endeavour in Malawi. Once the LPD are in mainstream schools, the very elements of SE are transferred to

mainstream education. The situation undermines the stipulations of IE national policies and strategies. The practice also undermines the very goal of IE of promoting epistemological access more than focusing on the physical (dis)abilities of the learners. Thus, IE remains a contentious issue in Malawi and many other countries.

In the context of LPD, the major concern is whether IE equips mainstream teachers to educate LPD alongside their peers in the mainstream classroom as stipulated by national IE policies and strategies (Gabel & Danforth, 2008; Chataika et al., 2017). Researchers reported the mismatches between the policy and the practice but overlooked the mitigating strategies to address the disparities and enhance inclusivity (Itimu & Kopetz, 2008; Artiles, 2015; Polivara et al., 2017; Tsiplakides, 2018; McLinden et al., 2018; World Bank, 2020). Consequently, IE implementation in the Malawian secondary schools faces a policy-to-practice disparity (Kamchedzera, 2010). As much as there is a good intention towards IE in Malawi, the disparity is a major setback (Chimwaza, 2015; Hummel & Werning, 2016). Lund and Lynch (2012) noted that educational opportunities for learners with albinism (a physical disability) were not the same as their fellow learners. The reason for this was, among others, the lack of teacher preparedness to accommodate physical disabilities (Ntombela & Raymond, 2013; Carew, Deluca, Groce, & Kett, 2019).

The policy-to-practice mismatch dilutes the desire of educating all learners together regardless of physical disabilities. Nonetheless, IE expects mainstream teachers to enact inclusive practices regardless of the barriers that LPD face in mainstream education. The expectation prompted Malawi to adopt policies and strategies to speed up the implementation of inclusive practices in its education systems, including secondary education (Mkandawire, Maphale, & Tseeke, 2016; Ishida et al., 2017). Even with the policies and strategies in place, the quest of IE is not as straightforward in Malawi as the case may be in other countries within southern Africa, such as South Africa, which has the White Paper 6 that has dramatically increased inclusive practices in mainstream education since the early 2000s.

2.4 Policy-to-Practice Disparities in Inclusive Education

The introduction to the thesis defined key concepts for this study. The definitions of the key terms gave the reader an understanding of how the study understood and applied the terms. Thus, the purpose of the conceptual framework here is not to replicate the earlier effort. In this

section, the main intention is to construe the key concepts in the context of IE policy-to-practice disparities. The intention speaks to the last section, where the study located itself within the larger global agenda of IE and then funnelled down to IE situations in Malawi. The subsequent sections review and discuss the factors that have sustained the IE policy-to-practice mismatches globally and in Malawi. In doing so, the literature review serves the purpose of supporting the gap that the study explored (Randolph, 2009; Hart, 2018; Snyder, 2019).

2.4.1 Contradictory Policy Sources for Inclusive Practices Implementation

Many IE practitioners misconstrue the concepts of SE and IE. The misconstruction contributes to the policy-to-practice disparity. There is contestation as to what SE entails and what IE involves. Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018) highlighted that the tenets of SE in the Global North overshadow IE in the Global South. What sets the SE apart from the IE is the context in which it occurs. The SE occurs in a segregated school, such as a school for the blind. On the other hand, IE happens within the schools initially designed to educate learners without disabilities. What binds the SE and IE is the notion of Special Educational Needs (SEN). Some critics fault the rationale of talking about SEN in IE. In both SE and IE, the emphasis is on making learners with SEN receive appropriate support to facilitate their learning. However, SEN speaks more to SE even when construed within IE. The delusion of SE, IE and SEN is undermining the aims of IE (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020).

Policies and strategies usually convey the ideologies of SE and IE. Ferguson (2008) noted that some countries have policies on IE, while others do not have. Since IE was brainstormed and introduced, LPD are increasingly attending inclusive schools instead of special schools (Florian & Linklater, 2010). Research has revealed that mainstream teachers who have opposing views toward IE or do not understand inclusive practices, do not make efforts toward inclusivity (Galovic, Brojcin, & Glumbic, 2014; Adewumi, Mosito, & Agosto, 2019). Governments and organisations came up with IE policies and strategies, thinking that it would be successful in eradicating exclusion within mainstream education. Policymakers overlooked the need for engaging mainstream teachers to understand the reasons for moving LPD from special schools to inclusive schools.

Policy is a very debatable and fragile issue in IE (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; Pappas, Papoutsi, & Drigas, 2018). The success of IE policy is unpredictable unless stakeholders take meaningful

actions to implement it. When a country lacks an explicit policy on IE, matters become worse. For instance, Malawi had no perceptible policy on IE until the ratification of various international treaties (Kadzamira & Rose., 2001). Even to date, Malawi has no dominant IE policy. Some scholars reported that Malawi adopted an IE policy, referring to the National Special Needs Education Policy (NSNEP) of 2007 (Itimu & Kopetz, 2008; Chilemba, 2013; Kamchedzera, 2015; Mkandawire et al., 2016). Labelling the NSNEP as an IE policy is problematic as it sustains the ideals of SE in IE. Perhaps the scholars described the NSNEP as an IE policy, because it recommends that mainstream schools cover SNE where possible.

Thus, the legacy of SE overshadows the need for IE. To illustrate the situation, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) serves well here. The members of the African Union (AU) adopted ACHPR in 1981 and enforced it in 1986. The ACHPR aimed at providing "for the establishment of bodies to promote and protect human and peoples' rights" (p. 1). Of particular interest is Article 17, which said: "every individual shall have the right to education" (p. 3). The Charter recognised that every individual, including LPD, has the right to access education. However, the Charter did not specify the type of education. As such, the ACHPR is problematic to use for IE policy formulation. One is unsure of the type of education suggested in the Charter. The silence of the international protocols like ACHPR on a need for IE fosters and nurtures exclusion within mainstream education. An argument to not implement SE may be that the Charter belonged to the 1980s, when the concept of IE was not a viable option. The counterargument is that the Charter is still in force, and member states, including Malawi, must ensure its implementation.

On the same note, another example is the UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education (CDE), adopted in 1960. In order to understand the aim of the Convention, it is crucial to understand how it defined discrimination and education. The CDE defined discrimination as "any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, economic condition or birth" (p. 5). The Convention defined education as "all types and levels of education and includes access to education, the standard and quality of education, and the conditions under which it is given" (p. 6). The CDE further suggested actions for eliminating discrimination in education. One of them is to "make primary education free and compulsory [and] make secondary education available and accessible for all […] on basis of individual capacity" (p. 7). The emphasis on 'individual capacity' is very problematic. If a learner with

VI is not capable, it means he or she must be excluded from education. The Convention is misleading as far as IE is concerned. In the case of Malawi, the NSENP (2007) modelled its intentions for IE on individual capacity, embracing the CDE of 1960 when IE was not born.

As already mentioned, the legacy of SE overshadows the implementation of IE. Beyond the legacy of SE versus IE, Malawi faces the dilemma of modelling inclusivity policies based on sources that are not only contradictory but also misleading in its stipulations of when SE would be more beneficial to the learner than IE. Kamchedzera (2010) made thoughtful observations on the interplay of IE policy development and implementation in Malawi. Evidence from the research showed that

> The disparities that exist between the delivery of IE in primary schools and secondary schools in Malawi are not based on the contestations against inclusion as such. Rather, the disparities emanate from failure to […] develop holistic policies that adequately respond to teaching and learning needs in a realistic fashion. The problems that exist in the implementation of IE do not originate from resistance from elites, teachers or pupils. Instead, they emanate from having an inclusion policy developed in the context of other contradictory policy and legislative texts. (Kamchedzera, 2010, p. 347)

Kamchedzera (2010), quoted verbatim above, argued that challenges faced in the implementation of IE in Malawi do not necessarily originate from learners, with or without disabilities or teachers, specialist or mainstream, but from poorly developed policies. If policymakers developed a poorly worded policy, the logical expectation is that the intended stakeholders would poorly understand it. The critical issue that Kamchedzera's research highlighted was that Malawi's policies and strategies on IE are formulated based on contradictory sources. Other studies also agreed with Kamchedzera (2010) as they asserted that the efficiency of IE in Malawi is driven by unnecessary curiosity in implementing tenets of SE (see Artiles, 2015; Price 2018; Hummel, 2018). In the context of primary education in Malawi, there was already earlier evidence that IE diverted from its intentions before Kamchedzera's study was undertaken (2010). However, for secondary education, that evidence never existed until Kamchedzera's study. Since then, researchers grappled with investigating how Malawi implements inclusivity policies and strategies in secondary education.

To either assert or refute Kamchedzera's findings, a good starting point would be an international protocol to which Malawi is a party. Malawi is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Drafted in 1989 and adopted in 1990, by the UN member states, UNCRC aimed at, among other things, accelerating the right to education for children. Of particular interest are Articles 23 and 29, which alluded that a child with a disability has a right to special care and education. Concerning IE, misunderstanding the articles could potentially lead to unnecessary exclusion. Article 29 (1a) of the UNCRC recommended that the aim of education should be "the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" (p. 9). Mainstream teachers are expected to develop the physical abilities of the learners instead of their cognitive proficiency. Thus, the UNCRC affirms Kamchedzera's findings on the mismatch between policy and practice on IE in Malawi. The disparity may be the result of countries paying too much attention to international protocols, to look like they are on par with international matters, and they develop their policies imitating the international ones not taking into consideration the unique circumstances in their countries. The articles may be misleading for policy formulation. Having a disability does not, and should not, necessarily warrant SE (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). Equally, the aim of education should not be developing the physical abilities of learners (Choi et al., 2020). Instead, all learners should learn together, and those with SEN should be accorded the necessary support within the mainstream education regardless of their physical abilities (Schuelka et al., 2020).

The next step is to look at the international scene to find a regional policy that Malawi may likely use for IE policy formulation. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) fits well here. Adopted in 1990 and operationalised in 1999 by the AU, the ACRWC is aimed at protecting the rights of children in Africa. The ACRWC followed the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (DRWC) in 1979. Even so, the ACRWC is more of an implementation strategy for the UNCRC. This observation suggests that policies and protocols are usually in response to preceding ones. Thus, the demerits of the preceding policy or protocol could easily misinform the succeeding one. Of particular interest from the ACRWC is Article 11 (of the Charter) on education. Section 2 (a) of Article 11 declared that the aim of education should be "the promotion and development of the child's personality, talents and mental and *physical abilities* [emphasis added] to their fullest potential" (p. 3). Like the UNCRC, the ACRWC put LPD in a discriminatory situation since the emphasis is not on epistemological or physical access but physical abilities. Thus, the ACRWC has a

possibility of misleading countries, including Malawi, in IE policy formulation and implementation, which would emphasise physical abilities in mainstream education, defeating the very goal of IE.

In the national context, the Malawian Child Care, Protection and Justice Act of 2010 illustrate the mismatch of policy formulation and practice implementation. This Act facilitated the stipulations of the UNCRC and the ACRWC. Part II, Division 5 of the Act focuses on the registration of children with disabilities. The same division, Section 72 stipulated that "a local government authority shall keep a register of children with disabilities within its area of jurisdiction and give assistance to them whenever possible to enable those children to grow up with dignity among other children and to develop their potential and self-reliance" (p. 29). Confining children with disabilities to their local areas limits their prospects of acquiring education in various mainstream schools across the country. For example, Malawi has national secondary schools that select students based on merit and not a geographical location. The fact that a child with a disability has to be under the jurisdiction of a local authority does not inspire the spirit of striving for excellence in education as their peers do. Neither does this align within the philosophy of IE. The Act has the potential to influence the formulation of policies that confine LPD to special schools within their localities, hence defeating the ends of IE.

The Malawian National Youth Policy (NYP) (2013) serves as an example of possible policy-to-practice disparity. Malawi has many policies and strategies that are not specific to the education sector. One of their goals includes guiding educational practices as a part of national priorities. The aim of the NYP (2013) is the promotion of youth development and empowerment. The main objective in Chapter 3 of the NYP is "creation of decent employment for youth both in formal and informal sectors and in urban and rural areas" (p. 13). The NYP suggested achieving the objective through ensuring that "special self-employment training programmes for young people with disabilities are provided" (p. 13). The NYP's implementation plan outlined the provision of special training programmes for young people with disabilities as one of its support strategies. The NYP is biased towards SE. If a mainstream teacher misconstrues the NYP, the teacher would be reluctant to support LPD in mainstream classes, as the LPD are for special programmes and not mainstream education.

2.4.2 Policy and Disability Law Responsiveness to Inclusion

One of the situations that have led to a mismatch between policy and practice in IE is the tensions that exist between policy ideals and realities in schools (Mitchell, 2005). In this regard, the Salamanca Statement and EFA are the most popular IE policy guidelines. Countries, including Malawi, pledged to commit to the declarations articulated in these statements. Since the EFA Conference (1990), the Salamanca Summit (1994) and the World Education Forum (Dakar Framework of Action) (2000), Malawi has undeniably registered a tremendous improvement in IE, which is evident in the formulation of policies and the incorporation of LWD in mainstream schools (Kamchedzera & Aubrey, 2010; Chilemba, 2013; Hayes & Bulat, 2017). However, most of the enacted national IE policies, strategies and legislative texts did not take into consideration the current and inclusive educational needs for schools, with the issue of albinism in Malawi as an example.

Since 2010, Malawi witnessed a rise in the killings of persons with albinism (PWA). The killings are due to the profoundly entrenched myths associated with albinism in Africa that the body parts bring financial fortunes (Lund & Lynch, 2012; Taylor, Bradbury-Jones, & Lund, 2019). Before the practice of abducting and killing PWA in Malawi became rampant, there were reports across borders in Tanzania and Mozambique that traditional doctors were using the body parts of PWA for charms (Lynch, Lund, & Massah, 2014). Before such reports, the deaths or murders of PWA were ordinary. Presently, the inclusion of learners with albinism (LWA), who usually have physical disabilities such as visual impairments, is at stake due to the abduction and killing of PWA in society. The killings advance the myths about PWA, including LWA. National policies and strategies reviewed earlier had the potential to foster opportunities IE could offer for the inclusion of LWA. Unfortunately, the policies and strategies disregarded the need for responsiveness. In Malawi, policy ideals and inclusive needs do not tally concerning albinism. Inclusive schools can change their attitudes toward diversity by educating all the children together and forming the foundation for a just and non-discriminatory society (UNESCO, 2009). Past studies on IE indicated that it is time to reflect whether IE in Malawi is contributing to the change of negative attitudes toward LWA (see Lund & Lynch, 2012; Lynch et al., 2014).

The Malawian Disability Act of 2012 illustrates the explanation of legal responsiveness and inclusive educational needs. The Act defines disability as "a long-term physical, mental,

intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder the full and effective participation in society of a person on an equal basis with other persons" (p. 3). The Act proclaimed that "the government shall recognise the rights of persons with disabilities to education based on equal opportunity, and ensure an inclusive education system and lifelong learning" (p. 7). The Act recognised everyone's right to education and talked about making premises and buildings, including schools, accessible to everyone regardless of disability. The government's aim was at removing exclusion from the education system and providing equal access to education to the less privileged, just as it would be with persons without disabilities. The Act did not address the plight of PWA, including school-going children. The Act was the only legislative text that could address the exclusion of LWA. Notwithstanding that, the Act remained mute. The muteness was a missed opportunity as the Act could have assisted the formulation of the NEP (2016) and the NSIE (2017-2021).

The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) II (2011-2016) also illustrates policy responsiveness. The MGDS II aimed to improve wealth creation and the reduction of poverty drawing from MGDS I (2006-2011). The MGDS II recognised that PWD are vulnerable. The Strategy suggested that improving the resilience and quality of life for PWD would support them to move out of vulnerability. The Strategy outlined several strategies for supporting PWD. One is through establishing coherent and progressive social support synergies. The Strategy ignored the essence of effecting inclusion for LWA. The Strategy meant to accelerate Malawi's economic growth of which education is one of the key contributing factors. It is obstructive to conceptualise a policy about inclusion without considering contextual needs (Miles & Signal, 2010; Selvaraj, 2015).

2.5 Policies and Strategies Toward Inclusive Education in Malawi

As of 2020, Malawi does not have a sovereign national IE policy, as noted earlier. Currently, the country draws its broader aspirations for IE from the NEP (2016) and specific objectives toward IE from the NSIE (2017-2021) as well as the National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESIP) (2020-2030). The NSIE is a direct result of the NEP. The implementation plan for the NEP explicitly stated that "the [MoEST] shall be responsible for translating this policy into strategies and plans and ensure implementation of such plans in partnership with all stakeholders" (p. 14). Thus, there is no doubt that the NSIE is a direct response to the NEP. The three documents are the most critical discourses on IE in Malawi. Sections below briefly

review the NEP (2016), the NSIE (2017-2021), the NESIP (2020-2030) and other policies relevant to IE in Malawi.

2.5.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Many of the past studies did not report the possible ideal situation of IE policy-to-practice parity explicitly. The UNCRPD (2006), which links to the intentions of the Salamanca Statement (1994), can illustrate the situation. Article 24 of the Convention articulated that "states shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels" (p. 16). Article 24 of the Convention further indicated that "persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live" (p. 17). The Convention's stipulation for IE policy formulation is that it must be relevant, specific and attainable. Nothing much related to the Convention is present in the Malawian NSNEP (2007), which many researchers designated as the national IE policy. Instead, contradictory sources, which foster exclusion within mainstream education, are prominent in the NSNEP (2007). The UNCRPD (2006) is not entirely perfect for guiding IE policy formulation for LPD. The Convention is aimed at fostering "the development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential" (p. 16). The emphasis on 'physical abilities' is problematic as it undermines the need to focus on developing epistemological abilities. This was also the case with the UNCRC and the ACRWC.

2.5.2 National Policy on Equalisation of Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities

The Malawian National Policy on the Equalisation of Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities (NPEOPD) (2006) could help towards policy-to-practice parity. The NPEOPD is aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of PWD. Section 4 of the Policy refers to education and training. The Policy accepts that universal education is unobtainable without the inclusion of PWD. The Policy outlines strategies toward the inclusion of PWD in education and training, including the "incorporation of special needs training in the teacher-training curriculum" and "supporting and encouraging inclusive education" (pp. 23-24). In Malawi, education colleges and universities train mainstream teachers. If the Policy is brought to the teachers' attention during their training or the strategies incorporated in their curriculum, the Policy could be better understood (Pather & Nxumalo, 2013; Baranauskiene & Saveikiene,

2018). When they start teaching, teachers would be mindful of the objectives of IE by preparing effective strategies for supporting LPD within inclusive classes.

2.5.3 The National Education Policy

The NEP (2016) presents many objectives. The policy objective relevant to the study was (i): "to create an enabling environment for the expansion of equitable access to education for all Malawians" (p. 3). Even if the objective does not explicitly state IE, the desire to expand "equitable access" may encompass inclusion. There are many priority areas mentioned in the NEP. Of particular interest is Policy Priority Area (ii): "Accessible and Quality Secondary Education" (p. 3). The Policy Priority Area (ii), which was the focus of the study, has several policy statements. Of relevance to the study was Policy Statement (iii): "Equitable access to quality and relevant special and inclusive secondary education is enhanced" (p. 7). Beyond the abovementioned priorities and strategies for IE, the NEP offers nothing more in terms of inclusion. The brevity is understandable as the NEP is a broad policy encompassing all issues in education. Perhaps, an independent national IE policy, which is currently non-existent, would articulate matters more profoundly.

2.5.4 National Strategy on Inclusive Education

The MoEST framed the NSIE (2017-2021) "as a way of moving from the special education system to the newly introduced inclusive education system" (Ishida et al., 2017, p. 19). The NSIE (2017-2021) identified "factors that exclude learners from and within the education sector in Malawi". The most dominant factor identified is "teachers' lack of experience, skills and knowledge to teach diverse classrooms e.g., use of sign language, curriculum differentiation skills" (p. 16). Among many priority areas that the Strategy presents, the most relevant ones are Strategy Priority Area (v): "Teacher Education and Motivation" and Strategy Priority Area (vii): "Enabling environment for teaching and learning" (p. 20). Each priority area has an accompanying Strategic outcome. For the Strategy Priority Area (v), a strategy towards the outcome is to "introduce a rewarding system for educators in ECD, primary and secondary schools" (p. 23). The activity that is supposed to enable the outcome is "promote professional development for IE" (p. 23). Strategy Priority Area (vii), is a strategy that will enable a strategic outcome "adapt existing curriculum, methodology, teaching and learning

materials to incorporate IE" (p. 24). Likewise, the activity that will enable this strategic outcome is to "develop a handbook on curriculum differentiation" (p. 24).

2.5.5   National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan

The Malawian National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan (NDMSIP) (2018-2023) is another strategy towards IE policy-to-practice parity in Malawi. The Strategy emphasises a need for IE. Continued discrimination of PWD necessitated the formulation of the NDMSIP (2018-2023). The Strategy is aimed at providing guiding principles for sectors such as education to review their respective policies and programmes to ensure the prioritisation of disability for support purposes. One of the goals is to promote access to equitable education for PWD. One of the strategies toward the goal was "developing the capacity of directorates, technical staff and education planners within MoEST on disability mainstreaming and inclusive education" (p. 17). The critical activities towards the Strategy are:

- Establish model inclusive primary and secondary schools in all education divisions;
- Orientate heads of education institutions on inclusive education guidelines; and
- Produce school-based inclusive education action plans. (NDMSIP, 2018, p. 17)

The NDMSIP (2018-2023) outlined the issue of IE clearly and put in place strategies toward its realisation. Thus, the NDMSIP would be ideal for IE policy formulation. Equally, if a mainstream teacher understands the NDMSIP adequately, the chances are that the teacher would foster inclusion in the mainstream class comprising LPD.

2.5.6   National Education Sector Investment Plan

The Malawian National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESIP) (2020-2030) replaced the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) (2008-2017). The NESIP made IE one of its foci. The Plan resonates with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4, which strives to ensure equal and accessible IE by 2030. The NESIP (2020-2030) is unique in its formulation as it rests on the Theory of Change, thus aligning with the transformational approaches needed for IE to succeed. The Plan recognised that "the Education Sector emphasises inclusive education to ensure that all learners with special educational needs are not marginalised and

have access to education at all levels" (p. 12). In essence, the Plan encompasses many international and national stipulations toward IE. If implemented as intended, the NESIP (2020-2030) has the potential to move Malawi to the meaningful realisation of IE at all levels of education, including secondary schools.

However, the Plan's approach to teacher education may be problematic. The NESIP regrets that "there are no government-owned institutions that train teachers for inclusive education leading to inadequate specialised teachers to support inclusion in schools" (p. 28). Arguably, there is no need for special government-owned institutions to train teachers on IE. In the case of secondary education, the University of Malawi's Chancellor College, Mzuzu University, Domasi College of Education and Nalikule College of Education are the main government-owned teacher education institutions. IE intends to transform existing systems, infrastructure and curricula to be inclusive. Thus, the mainstream teachers trained in the abovementioned institutions are pertinent for implementing IE. The effort should be on building the capacity of the institutions to transform the curricula to mainstream IE (UN. DESA, 2018; Ishida, 2019; Teodoro, 2020). The same institutions could train specialist teachers if accorded the necessary support and changes. The practice of training both mainstream and specialist teachers in the same institutions would initiate IE collaboration required once the teachers are deployed in secondary schools.

2.6 Practices Toward Inclusive Education in Malawi

The sections below discuss practices that could help Malawi, and perhaps other countries, to mitigate mismatches between policy and practice in IE. The practices reviewed in this section have the potential to enhance inclusivity if construed along the policies and strategies reviewed above.

2.6.1 Involvement of Mainstream Teachers in Policy Formulation

Mainstream teachers are the frontline implementers of IE. Put differently, mainstream teachers are the conduit from policy to practice of IE in any national context (Haug, 2017; Pappas et al., 2018; Zwane & Malale, 2018; Williams-Brown & Hodkinson, 2020; Azorin & Ainscow, 2020). The expectation is that IE policies and strategies would influence mainstream teachers in coming up with inclusive strategies within mainstream education. Mainstream teachers are

responsible for developing learning objectives and activities that would ensure that every learner succeeds epistemologically (Dalton, Mckenzie, & Kahonde, 2012; Villegas, Ciotoli, & Lucas, 2017). Policies and strategies guide mainstream teachers on how best to devise and implement practices on inclusion. However, mainstream teachers' voices are not outwardly apparent in policy conceptualisation (Armstrong, 2003; Pather & Nxumalo; Baranauskiene & Saveikiene, 2018; Teodoro, 2020). The absence of their contribution has the potential to imply a mismatch between policy and practice in IE (Hummel, 2018).

The question of whether policymaking involves mainstream teachers is very contested. The involvement in policymaking may be at two levels. Firstly, teachers are invited to voice their ideas on what the policy should stipulate. Secondly, what the teachers suggest, with other consultations, should finally reflect in the policy. In the first instance, IE policymaking in Malawi engaged mainstream teachers (Kamchedzera 2010, Chimwaza 2015; Grimes, Stevens, & Kumar, 2015; Hummel & Werning, 2016; Ishida et al., 2017; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). Policymakers interviewed teachers on what they would like the inclusivity policies to stipulate, but the teachers' contributions seldom find a place in the final policies.

Consequently, the situation of policy-to-practice mismatch is persistent. In most cases, mainstream teachers find out about IE policies after the formulation process, i.e., the top-down model (Artiles, 2015; Hayes & Bulat, 2017). The consultation is usually superficial to fulfil the requirement of engaging with stakeholders. However, the importance of involving mainstream teachers in IE policy cannot be overstated (Pather & Nxumalo, 2013; Colley, 2018). The teachers' hands-on experiences make them more conversant with IE. Thus, the exclusion of their contributions would make the education of LPD subject to segregation (Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Mariga, McConkey, & Myezwa, 2014; Hummel & Werning, 2016; Ishida et al., 2017).

Mainstream teachers regard inclusion as the duty of specialist teachers. Several Malawian IE policies and strategies, including the NEP (2016) and the NSIE (2017-2021) stipulate that specialist teachers are in mainstream schools to assist mainstream teachers. The arrangement implies that mainstream teachers have major roles in IE. The observation alludes to the argument that teachers confuse SE and IE, which comes at the expense of IE (Ishida et al., 2017; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020; Saloviita, 2020).

2.6.2   Mainstreaming of Disability Law in Inclusive Education

The Constitution of Malawi – Chapter 14, Section 25 – enshrines that "all persons are entitled to education" (Malawi. Ministry of Justice [MoJ], 2016). The Constitution (Section 20.1) stated that "discrimination of persons [including those with disabilities] in any form is prohibited" (Malawi. MoJ, 2016). In Section 20.2, the Constitution articulated that "legislation may be passed addressing inequalities" (Malawi. MoJ, 2016). The Government of Malawi enacted the Disability Act (No. 8 of 2012) of which Section 10 (a) is aimed at "ensuring that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system" (Malawi. [MoJ], 2012, p. 7). Through the Act, the evidence is clear that IE has led Malawi to rethink and reformulate education policies to reflect and recognise diversity. Often, Malawi passes a law or act about inclusion.

Seemingly, little is done in schools to successfully educate all learners together regardless of physical (dis)abilities (Malawi. NEP, 2016). As much as academic performance would determine the realisation of IE, some of the disparities faced could originate from outside the classroom, including disregarding laws and acts that the country enacted. In Malawi, inclusion mostly focuses on teaching and learning processes rather than the readiness of the teachers for IE class activities as mandated by the law (Braathen & Loeb, 2011; Zagona, Kurth, & MarcFarland, 2017). IE overwhelms policy development within the broader educational policies worldwide, including Malawi (Lindsay, 2007; Baranauskiene & Saveikiene, 2018). To move towards IE, policy development should reflect what the disability laws stipulate (Chilemba, 2013). Then, IE stakeholders, including teachers, will have a legal mandate to ensure that all learners access mainstream education regardless of their physical (dis)abilities.

2.6.3   Involvement of Learners in Inclusive Education

One way of ensuring successful implementation of IE is to pay attention to the immediate educational environment of all the learners. Teachers and policymakers should be mindful of educational contexts when considering inclusion (Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson, & Gallannaugh, 2007). Chavuta et al. (2008) found that to progress in the provision of SNE services, Malawi is a party to many world declarations, and has put in place policies that aim to provide equal educational opportunities to all learners. The IE policy "should include the need for students without disabilities to provide the needed support to students with disabilities

to promote inclusive education" (Asamoah, Ofori-Dua, Cudjoe, Abdullah, & Nyarko, 2018, p. 9). The recommendation comes against the background that "there are strong doubts as to whether the right to inclusive education has led to a new direction in policy-making" (de Beco, 2018, p. 396). Abosi (2008) suggested that involving all the learners in IE is very crucial. Teachers in mainstream schools are essential in implementing IE objectives (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000), and should actively involve all learners in implementing IE (Ishida et al., 2017).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed some literature that was relevant to the study. Firstly, the review focused on the context of IE globally and specifically in Malawi. After that, the review explored the policy-to-practice (dis)parities in IE. The chapter revealed that IE is a highly contested political agenda. The next task is to understand the problem in a theoretical framework in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework for the study. Firstly, the chapter presents the theories. After which, the discussion focuses on specific elements of the theories and how they were applied to this study. The introductory chapter indicated that the study employed DSC and BSP. The study intended to use theoretical underpinnings that explore and establish the interaction between factors in which LPD are not involved directly. However, the outcome of the interaction funnels down to the LPD. As such, the two theories were suitable tools for the study, especially if approached from the systems perspective. The theoretical framework was essential to the study as it determined the directions of research objectives, questions and methods (Walliman, 2011; Grant & Osanloo, 2016). The theoretical framework did not dictate what to do in the study. Instead, the theoretical framework helped to find the pursuits as the context of the research dictated.

3.2 Disability Studies Critique

There are many theoretical perspectives on inclusion policy and practice that have shaped research on LPD for the past decades. From SE to IE, seldom are perspectives designated as exclusive to one notion. For example, with IE advocacy, the understanding is that SEN falls into mainstream education. Put differently, the idea is to do away with special schools and let LPD be taught and supported within mainstream education. Thus, there could be no perspective that would claim to be entirely on IE without necessarily drawing from the essence of SEN. The purpose of IE is lessening barriers to learning and not remedying physical disabilities.

3.2.1   Origins of Disability Studies Critique

Clough and Corbett (2000) traced five critical perspectives in the development of inclusive schooling. The perspectives are the psycho-medical legacy, the sociological response, curricular approaches, school improvement strategies and disability studies critique. The classification of the five perspectives mentioned above is not exclusive nor exhaustive (Clough & Corbett, 2000). According to Clough and Corbett (2000), the five perspectives reflect three important ideas, namely:

- The historical influences which shape the current views and practices,
- The heterogeneity of an inclusive ideology and
- How researchers' ideas change and develop over a lifetime.

The DSC is the latest in the historical developments of disability and education. The study employed DSC in analysis with the three ideas raised above, which will also be probed later in this thesis. Figure 1 below gives insight into the five perspectives using keywords for each perspective.
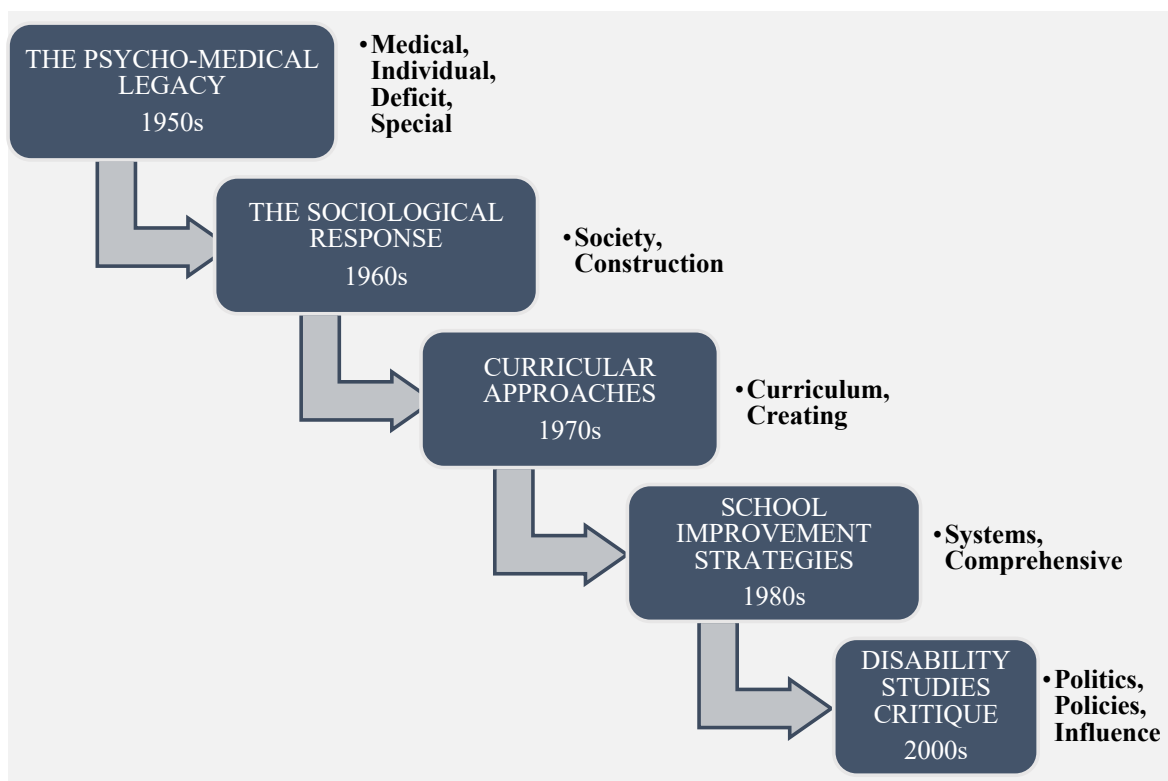
Figure 1: Historical Developments in Disability and Education

Source: Clough and Corbett (2000)

3.2.2 Applicability of Disability Studies Critique

Clough and Corbett (2000) designated DSC as a term that was experimental in attempting to illustrate the newest trends in and efforts towards inclusive schooling. Based on their arguments, my study understood DSC as a philosophical framework that considers a need for IE based on equal opportunities and access. Historically, DSC responded to and countered the

psycho-medical legacy and its succeeding perspectives. The psycho-medical model led to the establishment of special schools. The psycho-medical model regarded an individual learner as deficient, with a need for a special curriculum and context. The DSC is a new way of philosophical thinking that resonates with the intentions of IE. Since the tenets of DSC speak to the intentions of IE, the theory was a necessary explanatory tool for my study. The DSC provided the means and premises to analyse the mainstream teachers' inclusive practices as interpreted from policies and strategies. The theory, therefore, provided an analytical lens to understand the mainstream teachers' interpretations of inclusion.

3.2.3   Merits of Disability Studies Critique

Firstly, the DSC provided a tenet to understand inclusive policies as a political response, which then gave the lens to understand how mainstream teachers implement the inclusive policies in the classroom through inclusive strategies. The DSC is a theoretical perspective that emerged outside the education systems as a part of Critical Disability Theory (CDT). Clough and Corbett (2000) observed that the theory's 'outsideness' makes "its contribution to debates on inclusive education unique" (p. 27). The DSC recognised inclusive policies as a political response "to the exclusionary effects of the psycho-medical model" (Clough & Corbett, 2000, p. 8). Secondly, the DSC defined the environment that crafts IE. The understanding of the political environment that guides the interpretation of policies on inclusivity is a crucial element in IE (Zagona, Kurth, & MarcFarland, 2017; Asamoah, Ofori-Dua, Cudjoe, Abdullah, & Nyarko, 2018; de Beco, 2018; Majoko, 2019). Policies and strategies are part of the political environment, while mainstream teachers are the backbone of IE. The teachers are essential to the successful implementation of the policies and strategies (Majoko, 2019).

3.2.4   Demerits of Disability Studies Critique

No theory is without shortcomings. One of the criticisms levelled against the DSC is the understanding that the theory does not exclusively detach itself from its preceding perspectives. The DSC still embeds some arguments previously faulted in psycho-medical or sociological thoughts. The theory remained a viable theoretical tool for the study to understand the underpinning philosophy of inclusive policies fully. The study employed the DSC to explain mainstream teachers' interpretation of policies and strategies. As a solution to the criticism, the study observed that IE cannot ignore the SEN. Put differently, there are some principles, tenets

and practices in the past models, such as the medical model, necessary for IE. The necessity comes with adoption to align with the intentions of IE.

Another criticism raised against the DSC is that the theory overlooks issues such as human development and human rights that continue to shape the contemporary IE. The criticism goes further arguing that politics alone cannot help to understand the underpinnings of inclusive schooling. In addressing the criticism, the study employed another theory, the BSP, which looks at the issue of IE from a human development perspective. The BSP does not merely complement the loophole of the DSC. Instead, the BSP resonates with the DSC in that IE is an educational system rather than an educational product.

3.3 Bioecological Systems Perspective

Bronfenbrenner (2005) propounded the BSP. My study used the BSP as a substantive theory. The study adapted and modelled the BSP around the mainstream secondary teacher as the focus. The mainstream teacher's role and influence in the implementation of the IE policy were of critical importance in the study since they influence the learner's environment. Swartz (2015) stated that the BSP could help in maintaining and showing the numerous interactions between the teachers' environment and how it influences the learners' cognitive development. In my study, the BSP helped in theorising the teachers' engagement with the IE policy. It also assisted in understanding how teachers shape or influence the effective learning of the LPD.

3.3.1   Origins of Bioecological Systems Perspective

The BSP has its origin in Vygotsky's work on sociocultural perspectives (Velez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Vega-Molina, & Coll, 2019). It underwent many modifications. The BSP (2005) is a revised version of Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1979; 1992; 2001) seminal work on socio-ecological systems theory. In essence, the BSP places an individual at the centre of activities involved in his or her development. As of 2005, the BSP received some additions to the initial four systems conceptualised in 1977 and the revised five systems in 1979. Noticeably, Bronfenbrenner (2005) added proximal processes, in the Process Person Context Time (PPCT), which are the crucial catalysts for human development in an interactive environment. My study adapted and employed the five 'nested systems' of BSP. The five systems are Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem and Chronosystem.

3.3.2 Applicability of Bioecological Systems Perspective

The five systems in the BSP: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem provided theoretical perspectives of looking at the problem of policy-to-practice disparity in IE. The sections below explain how my study understood, adapted and employed each of the five systems in BSP.

3.3.2.1 The Microsystem

Bronfenbrenner (2005) redefined, from his previous work, microsystem as "a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of belief" (p. 148). For my study, the critical factor in the microsystem is the teacher. However, the teacher does not exist independently of other factors such as LPD. Ntombela and Raymond (2013) argued that IE "acknowledges that individuals are in constant interaction with the various systems in their social environments" (p. 4). The argument justifies the applicability of the BSP in exploring mainstream secondary teachers' interpretation of national IE policies and strategies. Before the 2005 model, scholars and critics believed and presented the child as the sole active player in the microsystem. Swartz (2015) theorised the teachers and parents as part of the microsystem. Still, a child was at the core of the original microsystem. Thus, the adaptation of the BSP to focus on the teacher instead of a learner justifies a systems perspective. In a conduit of systems, one system should eventually help to achieve the goal regardless of the starting point.

3.3.2.2 The Mesosystem

The mesosystem is the interaction of various factors within a microsystem (Swartz, 2015). A mesosystem may comprise of several microsystems. A mesosystem acts as the conduit between microsystems. Bronfenbrenner (2005) defined a mesosystem as "a system of microsystems" (p. 160). The interaction between mainstream secondary teachers and LPD in a school setting forms a mesosystem. The interaction between school colleagues may form another microsystem within the mesosystem. These are but two examples of how the mesosystem might be shaped. The mesosystem helps to explain the intersectional relationships and

interactions between the teachers' interpretations of the IE policies and learning processes of the LPD. In other words, the teachers are the ones entrusted with the implementation of policies and have to interact with several microsystems such as the parents, peers and learners. The power relationships that exist between the teacher and the learner in the microsystem becomes evident in the mesosystem. The resources that the schools have and how the schools advocate IE also affect what the teachers do in the mainstream classroom. Thus, the two elements of a microsystem, namely, the mainstream teachers and LPD, becomes a core unit in the mesosystem. In essence, the mesosystem gives an understanding that the teacher has the potential to influence the schooling experiences of the LPD, as stipulated in IE policies and strategies.

3.3.2.3 The Exosystem

The exosystem refers to the interaction of factors that involves the teacher, which in turn, affects the learner's development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; McLinden, Ravenscroft, Douglas, Hewett, & Cobb, 2018). Decisions made within the exosystem affect the teachers and the learners. Yet, neither the teachers nor the learners have any control over the decisions. Such an interaction can be between the mainstream teachers and national policies on IE. From the systems perspective, the teacher belongs to the microsystem. The IE policy belongs to the macrosystem. However, the interaction of the teacher and the policy forms an exosystem. While the interactions between the teachers and the IE policies are within the exosystem, the influencing factors funnel down to the microsystem, thus, intersecting with the other systems as well (Stofile, Raymond & Moletsane, 2013). Hence, the exosystem is essential in explaining influencing factors that affect LPD from policy issues, whether constraints or enablements.

3.3.2.4 The Macrosystem

The macrosystem comprises of metaphysical and sociocultural factors in the teacher's environment. These factors have a profound influence on the learner because of the funnel effect of the BSP (McLinden et al., 2018). Some of the factors could be belief systems that influence how teachers view LPD. They could also be political beliefs that influence how teachers think and enact inclusion in their classrooms. Even a constitution and what it says about the education of its citizens, issues of social justice, inclusivity and human rights form a macrosystem. The macrosystem includes political influences that find expression in national

policies, legislation and strategies across different sectors, of which education is one of them (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The macrosystem can also include economic, social and political systems affecting what the teacher does in the classroom.

Bronfenbrenner (2005) revisited the earlier definition of a macrosystem to emphasise that it exists "with particular reference to the developmentally instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options, and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of [micro-, meso- and exo-] systems" (p. 150). In essence, all policies influence what teachers do in the classroom irrespective of whether or not policymakers consulted the teachers. Thus, the interaction of factors in which the learner is not involved is worthy of studying using the BSP. The aim would be to contextualise the interrelatedness of all five the systems. In the context of my study, all five the systems are focusing on mainstream teachers' development. The intention is to ascertain how the teachers implement IE aspiration, which includes teaching LPD in a mainstream classroom.

3.3.2.5 The Chronosystem

The chronosystem is the relationship between time (which is part of PPCT) and development (Crawford, Snyder, & Adelson, 2019). According to Eksteen (2019), the chronosystem is "patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course" (p. 43). Events in the chronosystem change how a teacher associates with his or her environment bearing in mind that the learner becomes part of the teacher's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The system could also include historical events in education and changes in the curricular (curriculum reforms) that changes teacher identities, roles and responsibilities. The chronosystem could be events that happen at a global level that influence what mainstream secondary teachers in Malawi do, for example, conventions and treaties signed by member countries of the UN. The chronosystem could also include changes over time that happened in the life of the teacher. The chronosystem could account for changes in the school over time that impacted on what and how teachers do what they do. Therefore, my study used the chronosystem from the perspective of the teachers. In essence, the teachers are at the core of the systems because of their ability to acquire an understanding of the learning processes of the LPD over time.

Figure 2 below illustrates the five BSP systems discussed above. The illustration is adapted to focus of my study. For the illustration of Bronfenbrenner's original BSP, see Appendix 5.
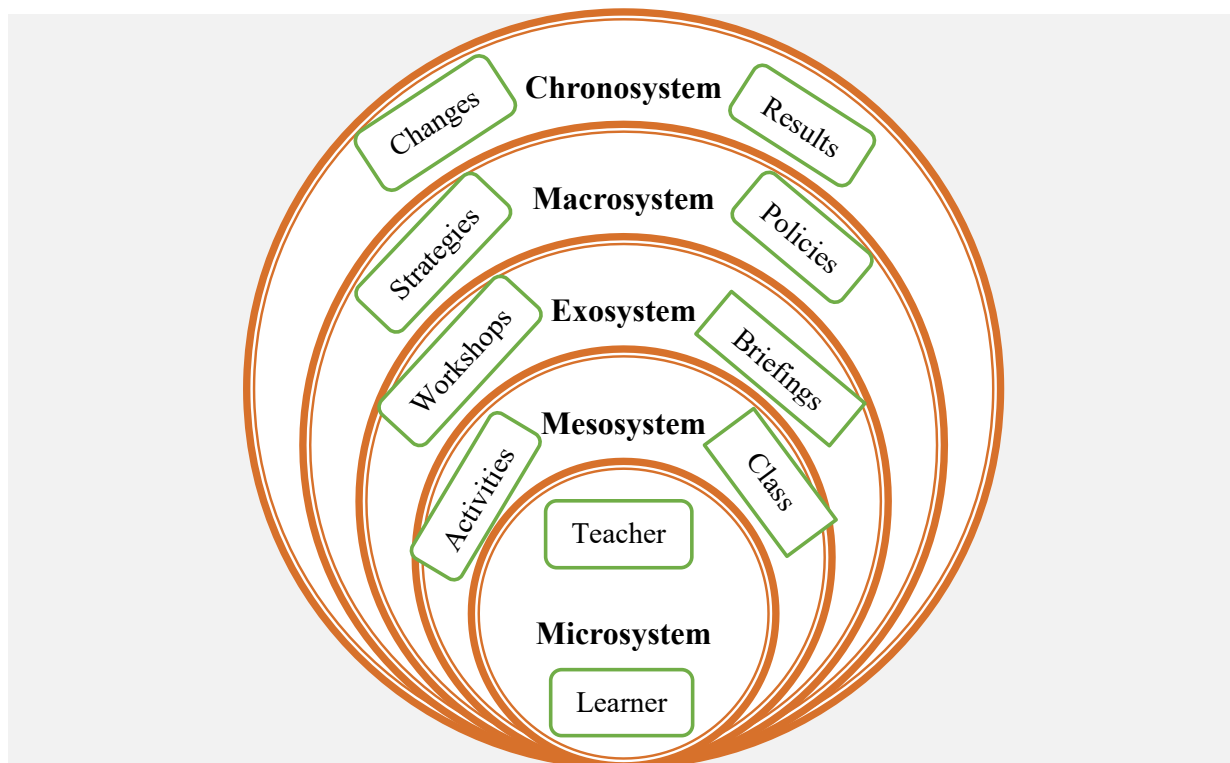
Figure 2: Bioecological Systems Model

Adapted from Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Perspective (2005)

From Figure 2 above, a (mainstream) teacher and a learner (with a physical disability) co-exist in a microsystem. The interaction of the teacher and the learner manifests in the mesosystem. Teacher professional development activities such as a workshop on IE are at the exosystem. The activities of the exosystem bedrocks on the factors of the macrosystem, such as policies and strategies. All teacher activities end up leading to some changes or results (chronosystem) which funnel down to the learner in a microsystem.

3.3.3 The Relevance of a Bioecological Systems Perspective

The BSP can suffice an understanding of the learning processes of the LWD over time. Crawford et al. (2019) observed that researchers employing the BSP pay too much attention to the interaction between a child and the other factors in the systems. However, the BSP has interrelated and nested systems. Thus, the understanding of BSP should be holistic. Some past studies, conducted using BSP as a theoretical lens, attempted to "investigate[..] the role of all of [the systems] to provide data adequate for understanding human development" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. xv). As much as the understanding would help LWD, the teacher

may also be a unit of analysis since teachers are critical to the successful implementation of IE policies and strategies (Majoko, 2019; Dorji, Bailey, Paterson, Graham, & Miller, 2019). Interaction occurs in the systems, whether involving the learner directly or indirectly, the focus is on the development and educational needs of the learner. As such, the teacher would be the conduit between the policy and the learner (Zagona, Kurth, & MarcFarland, 2017; Asamoah, Ofori-Dua, Cudjoe, Abdullah, & Nyarko, 2018; de Beco, 2018; Majoko, 2019). The interrelated nature of the BSP made the theory a critical underpinning of my study.

McLinden et al. (2018) observed that the BSP, especially the chronosystem as understood in the discourse of PPCT, could be a guide for learner development through different stages of education, i.e., elementary, primary, secondary and tertiary. The chronosystem could not only operate across education levels but within one level as well, serving as a monitoring and evaluation tool. For example, the chronosystem could monitor and evaluate inclusive practices implemented within secondary education against what happened over time. In the chronosystem, all the IE stakeholders are periodically (monitoring) checked on how they are implementing or benefiting from IE and are finally (evaluation) checked on what they have achieved. For instance, for secondary education in Malawi, LPD performance in the national examinations could evaluate their strides in mainstream education and the eventual transition to tertiary education. In essence, all five systems would support each other to achieve IE.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the theoretical framework that underpins my study. The study deduced its theoretical arguments from Clough and Corbett's DSC and Bronfenbrenner's BSP. In Malawi, the context of my study, McLinden et al. (2018) initiated some work on theorising IE through the BSP lens. However, their work focused on Early Childhood Development (ECD) in community-based care centres. The work of McLinden et al. (2018) limited the applicability of the BSP. Thus, my study extended the BSP to secondary education. The study also expanded the implications of BSP on IE. Kamchedzera (2010) proposed an interactionist model for policy and practice of IE that would utilise both top-down and bottom-up models. The interactionist model would be better and more effective if theorised and propounded within the discourses of the BSP, which allows close, productive and meaningful interactions among IE stakeholders such as policymakers, mainstream teachers, parents, LPD and peers. The next chapter reports the methodology that the study used to collect and analyse data.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports methodological decisions made in designing and carrying out the study. Firstly, the chapter presents the research orientation. On the orientation, the chapter discusses and justifies the research approach, research paradigm and the research design the study used. Secondly, the chapter discusses positionality and its implications on the research questions and the choice data generation methods. Lastly, the chapter explains the methodological limitations and strategies put in place to minimise them.

4.2 The Qualitative Research Approach

The study took a qualitative approach. The intention was to investigate lived experiences of mainstream secondary teachers in supporting LPD (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Tracy, 2019; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020; Schratz, 2020). As such, the study generated textual data, which is one feature of the qualitative approach (Kumar, 2019; Opie, 2019; DePoy & Gitlin, 2019; Bartlett & Burton, 2020). Methods that can generate textual data include observations, interviews and document reviews (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Aspers & Corte, 2019). The study also used a questionnaire, a method usually associated with a quantitative approach. The use of a predominantly quantitative method in a qualitative approach does not turn the latter into quantitative research. Instead, the research paradigm and the research questions determine the research approach (Christensen & Johnson, 2016; Patten & Newhart, 2018). In my case, the questionnaire collected qualitative data as suggested by the questions.

The study did not merely collect textual data. Notably, the study explored issues from the views of the mainstream secondary teachers (Lune & Berg, 2016; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018; Flick, 2018a; Hennink et al., 2020). The qualitative approach was thus essential in exploring IE, in Malawi, from the teachers' perspectives. The teachers are the people who translate policy stipulations into inclusive practices. The qualitative approach also helped to understand the meanings and the interpretations that teachers make from their experiences (Kivunja, & Kuyini, 2017; Creswell & Clark, 2017; Schratz, 2020; Hennink et al., 2020). The study decoded the interpretations of the teachers concerning their inclusive practices. The qualitative approach

helped in understanding the participants' interpretations of their practices. Thus, the qualitative approach became a viable approach for the study rather than the other research approaches.

The three elements, namely self-reflexivity, context and thick description guided my study (Tracy, 2019). Self-reflexivity focused on my prior knowledge that may have some influence on the study and interaction with participants (Attia & Edge, 2017; Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas, & Caricativo, 2017; Randall et al., 2018). The study ensured self-reflexivity in two ways. Firstly, my research journal detailed past experiences and intuitions. Secondly, a reflection on positionality helped in taking measures to minimise bias in the study. In terms of the context, my study was purposive to the research goal and questions (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Hennink et al., 2020). The study chose the context after a critical review of available literature on the IE policy-to-practice disparities in Malawi. A researcher has to consider the way and the extent to which he or she immerses in the research and provide enough evidence in supporting the findings (Rheinhardt, Kreiner, Gioia, & Corley, 2018; Grix, 2019). Accordingly, the study did a broad review of literature in the second chapter. The literature review allowed the understanding of the scope of the problem. Additionally, the study used data generation methods that captured in-depth thoughts of the participants, hence the interpretive paradigm.

4.3 Interpretive Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is a set of beliefs that portrays one's worldview in a study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015; Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lang, 2020). In an interpretive paradigm, reality is a social construct (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Sławecki, 2018; Ling, 2020). The reality exists at different levels and is subjective from one participant to another (Putnam & Banghart, 2017; Gunbayi, 2020; Hennink et al., 2020). Disability is a reality. Disability is part of the context that the mainstream secondary teachers live. The interpretive paradigm enabled the understanding of the realities of the teachers in supporting LPD (Freebody, 2003; Bakkabulindi, 2015; Tshabangu, 2015; Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2018; Kamal, 2018; Carr, 2019; Stafford & Marston, 2019).

A research paradigm is threefold; ontology, epistemology and methodology (Wilson, 2001; Wolhuter, 2015; Gibson, 2017; Ling & Ling, 2020). According to Hart (2010), ontology is concerned with the nature of reality pursued. For my study, the mainstream teachers

constructed meanings from their lived experiences of supporting LPD. So, the interpretive paradigm was a necessary philosophical package that helped in exploring what constituted a reality from the perspectives of the teachers. Epistemology is about what constitutes knowledge and ways of acquiring it (Moon & Blackman, 2014; Pernecky, 2016; Roth, 2019). What constitutes knowledge is subjective (Walby, 2017; Aspers & Corte, 2019; Tracy, 2019). My study chose the interpretive paradigm to investigate what teachers value as knowledge in IE. The study used data generation methods that aimed at exploring the teachers' interpretations of IE policies and strategies, hence a phenomenological design.

4.4 The Phenomenological Research Design

The study chose data generation methods that allowed for the understanding of the meanings that the study participants put in their IE experiences (Van Manen, 2016; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Vagle, 2018; Gill, 2020a). Typically, a phenomenological design studies a 'phenomenon', which can be an issue or experience. For my study, the phenomenon was the mainstream secondary teachers' interpretation of IE policies and strategies in supporting LPD. Within the phenomenological design, there are three types of methodologies; transcendental (describing), hermeneutic (interpreting) and existential (analysing) (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; Płotka, 2016; Evangelista, 2018; Valentine, Kopcha, & Vagle, 2018; Längle, & Klaassen, 2019; Yee, 2019; Collet, 2019; Gill, 2020b).

The study used the hermeneutic phenomenological research design. The design resonated with the interpretive paradigm as the goal was to 'interpret' the interpretations of the teachers. Although the study focus was on interpreting the teachers' interpretation of policy and their practice, one of the sub-questions analysed policy and strategies on IE with a focus on mainstream teachers' roles. Thus, the three types of phenomenology are not exclusive, and the data generation methods may mix (Byrne, 2001; Kafle, 2011; Arghode, 2012; Lauterbach, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2019; Telford, 2019). The study commenced with profiling and piloting.

4.5 Contextual Profiling and Piloting

In contextual profiling, a researcher assesses the feasibility of the study at the proposed research sites with the intended participants. The study began with assumptions based on personal experiences and literature. The SWED confirmed the availability of secondary schools in the

Lower Shire region matching my research foci. Interestingly, the SEN and IE coordinator at the SWED said that "*everyone who is interested in conducting research on SEN and IE in the division goes through my office*" (JE1-2019). He further said that "*there is no one who conducted research on IE in secondary schools specifically looking at physical disabilities in relation to policy implementation*" (JE2-2019).

The SWED advised writing a letter addressed to the EDM (see Appendix 6). The division also advised visiting the proposed schools in the Lower Shire region. The SNE and IE coordinator issued the gatekeeper permission to visit the schools and meet with the headteachers (see Appendix 7 for the permit). After the visits to the schools, there was a need to pilot the research methods and tools. Cohen et al. (2018) recommended a study to commence with piloting. For my study, the piloting allowed identifying potential shortfalls, testing reliability, checking the validity and improving the research (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014; Gumbo, 2015; Mikuska, 2017). The piloting happened in a single mainstream secondary school within the SWED (indexed as school E and the participants involved as E1 and E2). The contextual profiling and piloting also helped in addressing the positionality dilemmas.

4.6 Positionality

Situating oneself in the qualitative study minimises bias and subjectivity (Chavez, 2008; Bourke, 2014; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2015; Ary et al., 2018). For this study, the positionality was double-layered: an insider to the study and outsider to the participants. As an insider to the study, my teaching experience in mainstream secondary school, as explained in the introductory chapter, provided a rich and informed direction in the qualitative research design chosen. The reflection on past experiences helped in addressing the consequences of positionality in this qualitative interpretive study. Essentially, insider positionality motivated the need for carrying out the study. The motivation was one of curiosity for knowledge rather than to be judgemental of the teaching processes of the participants or the inefficiency of the policy (Kothari, 2004; Thomas, 2017; Peers, 2018; Hennink et al., 2020).

As an outsider to the participants, my learning and working experiences in IE were influential in upholding the ethical considerations needed in this qualitative study. Therefore, the awareness of the positionality helped me in avoiding emotion, personal background and prior knowledge influencing the interaction with the participants and the interpretation of their

responses (Ary et al., 2018; Tracy, 2019). The outsider positionality promoted the purpose of doing the study, even though bias and subjectivity naturally existed in the study. The study employed self-reflexivity together with data triangulation procedures and member checking to minimise bias and subjectivity arising from my positionality (Malterud, 2001; Clough & Nutbrown, 2012; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Both the insider and the outsider positions determined appropriate data generation methods and tools relevant to the study.

4.7 Data Generation Methods

The interpretive paradigm and the broader assumptions of qualitative research informed the choice of data generation methods (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Turhan, 2019). Thus, personal favourites and dilemmas did not influence the choice of methods (Gorard & Taylor, 2004; Kafle, 2011; Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The sections below discuss why and how the study used the selected data generation methods.

4.7.1   Document Review

Document review (see Appendix 8) was a secondary data generation method that involved collecting and reviewing policy documents (Bretschneider, Cirilli, Jones, Lynch, & Wilson, 2017). Gasa and Mafora (2015) recommended document review as ideal for data generation in qualitative research. The study utilised the document review based on a structured guide that gave the focus for the review. The study reviewed policy documents to get a better understanding and informed standpoint on what the IE policies and strategies meant to the teaching and learning in the mainstream secondary schools (Vartanian, 2010; Johnston, 2017; Logan, 2020). The review also gave an entry point into data generation that involved the teachers (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012; Bell, 2014; Machi & McEvoy, 2016).

4.7.2   Questionnaire

The study used a questionnaire (see Appendix 9) to enable the mainstream teachers to respond to questions in their own time and to return it at an agreed time (Munn & Drever, 2004; Ganga & Maphalala, 2015; Opie, 2019). Cohen et al. (2018) identified three major types of questionnaires, namely structured, semi-structured and unstructured. The questioning technique determines whether a questionnaire is close-ended or open-ended. The study used a

semi-structured open-ended questionnaire to acquire mainstream teachers' interpretation of IE policies and strategies (Coenders & Verhoef, 2019; Bryant, Bryant, & Smith, 2019; Saloviita, 2020). The study chose the questionnaire for its ability to offer less limited writing space for the teachers to articulate their responses. The study also chose the questionnaire for its ability to provide a structured questioning system that built into the argument of the study. Additionally, the questionnaire allowed many teachers to participate in the study, something that is difficult in methods such as individual interviews.

4.7.3 Interviews

An interview is a one-on-one question-and-answer session between a participant and the researcher (Owen, 2017; Tracy, 2019; Hennink et al., 2020). The study used a semi-structured interview (see Appendix 10) to acquire data from mainstream secondary teachers. The study employed the semi-structured interview for its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of the teachers' interpretations, understanding and implementation of the IE policies and practices. The interviews also offered opportunities to ask follow-up questions and further probing of the participants' responses (Dakwa, 2015; Mann, 2016; Gudkova, 2018; Roulston & Choi, 2018; Ahlin, 2019). During the interview process, the participants discussed their thoughts, wishes and fears on the implementation of IE in mainstream secondary education in Malawi. Thus, the interviews provided productive space for continued dialogue and discussion with the teachers about the policy and practice of IE in Malawi. Mainly, the dialogue and the discussion with the teachers originated from the results of the document review, questionnaire and the entries in my research journal.

4.7.4 Reflective Journal

A reflective research journal (see Appendix 11), in the form of a mini personal diary, was used to record important reflections throughout my research journey. Firstly, the research journal helped in reflecting on positionality (Bourke, 2014; Orange, 2016; Noh, 2019). Secondly, the journal helped in recording important encounters during field visits for data generation. During the visits to the schools for data generation, there was some information that came to my knowledge, which the questionnaire and the interviews did not cover. Such information was recorded in the research journal. Thirdly, the journal also helped in reflecting on the research process, something important in the interpretive study as it resonates with self-reflexivity

(Thurairajah, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). The entries in the journal also influenced the selection of research sites and participants.

4.8 Research Sites and Participants

The study used non-probability selection based on non-random sampling, which is common in qualitative approaches (Alvi, 2016; Taherdoost, 2016; Sharma, 2017; Kalton, 2020). Common techniques in non-random selection are purposive, convenience, snowball, quota and voluntary response (Vehovar, Toepoel, & Steinmetz, 2016; Valliant, Dever, & Kreuter, 2018). My study used a purposive selection technique, as explained below.

4.8.1 Selection and Size of Sites

Prior knowledge and personal judgement complemented the purposive selection of the research sites (Walford, 2001; Hibberts, Johnson, & Hudson, 2012; Lumadi, 2015; Cohen et al., 2018). The study employed a purposive sampling technique in selecting four secondary schools in the Lower Shire districts of Chikwawa and Nsanje in Malawi. There was little literature available exclusive to the Lower Shire region. Ironically, the Lower Shire is one of the places in Malawi where SE started with the introduction of Lulwe School for the Blind in Nsanje (Chataika et al., 2017). When sampling sites for data generation on IE research in Malawi, researchers tend to leave out the Lower Shire region. Poor transport networks and extremely high temperatures maybe some of the speculative reasons the researchers omit the region.

4.8.2 Selection and Size of Participants

The study requested teachers that met the relevant criterion to participate in this study. The criterion centred on teachers' experiences in supporting LPD in inclusive classes. Within a research site, such participants were specifically requested to participate. Malawian mainstream secondary teachers in four schools in the Lower Shire region of Malawi formed the sample frame. The sample size was 33 for the questionnaire method and eight for the interview method. While the sample size was small, which is usual in a qualitative study, it was adequate and can be generalised across the Lower Shire region, however, with some caution on the teachers' interpretation of IE policies and strategies, as this is highly subjective (Normann, 2017; Schreier, 2018; Hennink et al., 2020). The rationale for the adequacy of the

sample is that the study involved a homogenous population (Boddy, 2016; Sim, Saunders, Waterfield, & Kingstone, 2018). Even without this, one could not unnecessarily complain about a sample size to be either too small or too large as long as the researcher can justify it (Walliam, 2011; Lune & Berg, 2016; Dawson, 2019). For example, a "qualitative sample size of ten may be adequate for sampling a homogenous population" (Boddy, 2006, p. 4).

4.9 Data Management

This section presents data cataloguing, indexing and storing. The subsequent chapters refer to the data using the indexing codes provided in this section. The familiarisation of the indexes may make the reading of the next chapters, especially the direct quotes of data, more concrete.

4.9.1   Data Inventory

This sub-section presents the data cataloguing. Table 2 below shows the data cataloguing.

Table 2: Data Inventory

Data Set	Data Source	Purpose of Data Source	Dates	Recording Methods
1	A review of national IE policy and strategy documents	To understand how IE is construed and analyse the roles given to schools and teachers	June 2019 to June 2020	Note-taking
2	Open-ended questionnaire completed by 33 mainstream teachers at four schools	To survey teachers' interpretations of national IE policies, strategies and practices	Dec 2019 to Jan 2020	Written responses
3	Semi-structured interviews with eight mainstream secondary teachers at four schools	To probe in detail the teachers' interpretations of national IE policies, strategies and practices	Feb 2020 to Mar 2020	Audio-recorded and transcribed
4	Research journal entries for two years	To reflect on positionality and interaction with participants	Jan 2019 to Dec 2020	Written reflections

4.9.2 Data Indexing

This sub-section indexes the data sets catalogued in Table 2 above to ensure a presentation that takes into account the anonymity and confidentiality of the research sites and participants. Table 3 below is an example of the data indexing. See Appendix 12 for a more extended version of the data indexing table.

Table 3: Data Indexing

Source Number	Data Source	Index	Index Code
1	Document Review	Document Review 1 of National Education Policy (NEP)	DR1-NEP
2	Questionnaire	Questionnaire at School A in Chikwawa district by Participant A1	QN-A1
3	Interview	Interview at School D in Nsanje district with Participant D8	INT-D8
4	Reflective Journal	Journal Entry 1 in 2019	JE1-2019

4.9.3 Data Storage

Primary data generation was in Malawi. All questionnaires and field notes were scanned to avoid loss or damage when travelling from Malawi to South Africa. An encrypted Google Drive stored the scanned copies and interview recordings. Each completed questionnaire had a unique code for maintaining information anonymity and safety, but at the same time maintaining cross-referencing. A further data analysis process used audio-recorded and transcribed interviews. At the end of the analysis, all photocopied questionnaires, field notes, interview transcripts and compact discs formed two hard copies of data sets sealed in envelopes. The principal supervisor kept one envelope within the university premises. I shall keep the other envelope for not less than five years. After five years, I may shred the data in some recycling fashion.

4.10   Data Analysis

The study employed an analytical framework that consisted of data triangulation, thematic analysis, conceptual framework and theoretical framework. The thematic analysis organised the data by identifying central ideas such as policy formulation and practice implementation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Thomas & Harden, 2008; Clarke, Braun, & Hayfield, 2015). This was at both inductive (drawing from the data to inform the argument) and abductive (drawing from literature and theory to look into the data) levels of analysis.

Creswell (2018) recommended a 'data analysis spiral' to avoid complications arising from large amounts of qualitative data. The spiral breaks the task of data analysis into steps. For my study, there were no exclusive steps because the analysis started at the beginning of the generation process (Nwaigwe, 2015; Feza, 2015; Gibbs, 2018; Tracy, 2019). Instead, three tools helped in the analysis. These were the analytical framework, the analytical memo and modes of analysis. Table 4 below presents the analytical framework, illustrating the data analysis.

Table 4: Analytical Framework

Phase of Analysis	Analytic Frame	Purpose of Analysis	Data Sources
Phase 1 Sub-question 1: What are the national policy directives and strategies on IE in mainstream secondary schools?	DSC: IE policy as a political response BSP (macrosystem): IE policy as a blueprint Concepts: IE and Mainstream teachers	To describe how national policies and strategies on IE construed roles of mainstream schools and teachers	Review of policy documents
Phase 2 Sub-question 2: How do mainstream teachers translate practices from national policies and strategies?	Concepts: Inclusive Strategies, Physical Disability and IE BSP: microsystem, mesosystem and exosystem	To explain instructional activities that mainstream teachers plan from national IE policies and strategies	33 questionnaires Eight interviews Two-year journal entries

Phase 3	DSC: Influences	To proffer strategies	All data from
Sub-question 3:	Concepts: policy-to-	that can help in	document
What strategies can	practice disparity	mitigating policy-to-	review,
mitigate policy-to-	BSP: all the five	practice disparities	questionnaires,
practice disparities and	systems	and enhancing	interviews and
enhance inclusivity?		inclusivity	journal entries

The analytical memo developed categories, themes and evidence from text and references to research questions. The direct quotations from the interviews and questionnaires formed thick description data in the memo. Table 5 below illustrates the memo with one research question, see Appendix 13 for the full analytical memo the study used in the data analysis.

Table 5: Analytic Memo

Question 1			
What are the national policy directives and strategies on IE in mainstream secondary schools?			
Category: National policy directives and strategies on IE in mainstream secondary schools			
Themes and Sub-themes	**Colour Code**	**Evidence**	**Data Index**
Problems in IE			
• Lack of coordination	▉	"Furthermore, due to the absence of a well-defined education policy, different key players in the education sector have not been well coordinated."	DR1-NEP p 2
• Undefined roles for stakeholders	▉	Additionally, their roles and responsibilities have not been clearly defined thereby prompting non-conformity to set standards among stakeholders."	DR1-NEP p 2
• Unqualified human resource	▉	"There is also lack of qualified special needs lecturers and necessary facilities in teacher training colleges."	DR1-NEP p. 7

The modes of analysis guided the levels of analysis. Table 6 below describes the modes of analysis and explains how each frame answered the research questions.

Table 6: Stages of Analysis

Stage of Analysis	Mode of Inference	Mode of Association	Purpose
Stage 1: Description of data presented in Chapter 5 against the research questions	Inductive analysis: Used reflections and responses of the teachers to deduce themes	Primary association in categorisation: Colour coded themes and sub-themes from the data	To describe the data as it emerges from the analysis of all data sources
Stage 2: Explanation of data discussed in Chapter 6 against the analytical statements	Abductive analysis: Used DSC and BSP as a lens to interpret the findings and proffer strategies for mitigating policy-to-practice disparities and enhancing inclusivity	Secondary association: Explored the enablements and constraints of IE policies and strategies	To explain the data as it pointed towards new ideas that could help in mitigating the policy-to-practice disparities and enhancing inclusivity

4.11   Validity Issues

The study attempted to minimise both internal threats (the ability of data to explain a phenomenon) and external threats (conclusions and implications of the results and their applicability to other contexts) to validity (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Baldwin, 2018; Gaber, 2020). Firstly, the study used different methods to understand better the teachers' IE interpretations and practices, therefore, minimising threats to theoretical internal validity (Heale & Forbes, 2013: Wilson, 2014: Flick, 2018b). Secondly, the study generated data within the school settings using the questionnaire and interviews on the same participants, thereby, minimising threats to external interpretive validity (Cicourel, 2007; Cohen et al., 2018). Thirdly, member checking was done soon after initial data analysis to share the findings with the participants for verification. The member checking also showed respect for the teachers'

contributions and their rights. As the potential benefit, the mainstream teachers deserved to know the findings so that they reflect on their IE practices.

4.12   Ethical Considerations

Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee (RUESC) issued ethical clearance (see Appendix 14). Permission to include and access the schools was sought and negotiated with headteachers of the schools (see Appendix 15). Each participant gave their consent to inclusion and participation in the study. The study used the informed consent (see Appendix 16) of the participants in negotiating access and permission to acquire, use and refer to the data generated (Halse & Honey, 2010; Sotuku & Duku, 2015; Maree, 2016). An invitation letter to the participants (see Appendix 17) described and explained the study's objectives and data generation procedures during the consent negotiations. Importantly, all the participants were ensured of anonymity, hence pseudonyms in cross-referencing of the primary data.

4.13   Conclusion

The chapter explained and justified the methods and methodology used in the study. One fundamental explanation was that the study involved interaction with human participants. As such, all the participants signed a consent form, which had all the terms and conditions of the study. No part of the study required the identities of the participants and the sites to be revealed. Apart from the written informed consent for participation in the study, verbal consent was sought before the use of the audio recorder during interviews. The time, as well as the venue, for the interviews were also negotiated. The next chapter presents findings from the study.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the research findings. The presentation of the findings takes a hybrid approach, mixing explanations and quotations from data sources in order to give a comprehensive presentation of the data (Reay, Zafar, Monteiro, & Glaser, 2019). The findings are presented under different headings to keep similar ideas together. The presentation follows the research questions:

- The first question was: What are the national policy directives and strategies on IE in mainstream secondary schools? The question wanted to determine what the policies say about the roles of mainstream teachers, the school infrastructure and the involvement of other stakeholders, e.g., parents in IE. The data from the document review answers the question.

- The second question was: How do mainstream teachers translate practices from national IE policies and strategies? The question wanted to determine how teachers are working with national IE policies and strategies to inform their inclusive practices. The data from the questionnaire and the interviews answers the question.

- The third question was: What strategies can mitigate policy-to-practice disparities and enhance IE? The question looked at finding ways to minimise the gap between policy and practice, i.e., strategies to support the translation of policy to practice. All the data – document review, questionnaire, journal and interviews – answer the question.

5.2 Reflection on the Piloting Phase

The piloting phase happened in one mainstream secondary school within the SWED. However, this school is not in the Lower Shire region where the actual research took place. Both the questionnaire and the interview schedule were piloted.

5.2.1 Piloting the Questionnaire

Participants E1 and E2 at school E completed a questionnaire (see Appendix 9). The questionnaire had thirteen questions. Participant E1 answered 12 of the 13 questions. Participant E2 answered all the questions. The unanswered question sought the definition of IE as understood by the participants. The question lost its targeted response. Participant E2 responded as "*learners' participation and understanding of concepts*" (JE1-2020). During the main phase, this question was rephrased. Thus, the piloting phase allowed for finetuning of the questions (Gudmundsdottir & Brock-Utne, 2010; McKenney & Reeves, 2018; Malmqvist, Hellberg, Möllås, Rose, & Shevlin, 2019).

Question four on the questionnaire also attracted scrutiny. The question sought the kinds of physical disabilities that learners in the participants' classes have. The responses from participants E1 and E2 reflected the contention of categorisation of disabilities. For example, participant E1 responded that one of the physical disabilities that his or her learners have or had in his or her class is learning difficulties. The second participant, E2, also responded to the same question indicating hearing, visual and physical as some of the physical disabilities. The question went into the main research phase of data generation unchanged. The idea was to explore further how other mainstream teachers categorise physical disabilities, which would also influence the kind of support rendered to LPD.

5.2.2 Piloting the Interviews

Participant E2 qualified for a one-on-one interview. The basis for interview selection was the responses the participants gave in the questionnaire. Much as participant E1 responded to the questionnaire, participant E2 made some thought-provoking observations that warranted further probing. The interview schedule (see Appendix 10) had eight open-ended questions in order to give a platform for the participants to express themselves (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Majid, Othman, Mohamad, Lim, & Yusof, 2017; Hammer & Wildavsky, 2018). The participant answered seven out of the eight questions. Question five on the interview schedule proved to be ambiguous. The question sought to find out: "How do the government guidelines, policies and strategies on educating all learners together define your role as a teacher in mainstream education?" The participant requested for the repetition of the question. Then, the participant

requested for the rephrasing of the question. On the third instance, the participant requested for the repetition of the question. Lastly, the participant admitted that she did not understand the question. The question went unanswered during the pilot interview. During the main research phase of data generation, the question was rephrased numerous times from one participant to another.

5.3 Participants' Demographics and Participation in Questionnaire and Interviews

Table 7 below shows the gender of the participants. The table further shows the participation rate in both the questionnaire and the interviews.

Table 7: Participants' Demographics and Participation Rate

School	Males	Females	Distributed Questionnaires	Returned Questionnaires	Interviewed Teachers
A	7	4	15	11	2
B	3	3	15	6	2
C	5	2	15	7	2
D	8	1	15	9	2
Total	23	10	60	33	8

5.4 National Policy Directives and Strategies on IE in Mainstream Secondary Schools

National policies and strategies influence teachers' attitudes and practices in IE (Mariga et al, 2014; Teodoro, 2020). Both international and national policies on IE mandate teachers to ensure that LPD learn effectively in mainstream education. Schooling practices show continued exclusion of LPD within mainstream education (Slee, 2011; Polat, 2011; Banks & Zuurmond, 2015; Winter & Blanks, 2020). This section presents research findings from the document review of the NEP (2016) and the NSIE (2017-2021). The former is the broader education policy while the latter speaks to the actual implementation of IE in Malawi.

5.4.1 Problems in Inclusive Education

The NEP and the NSIE recognise that many problems hinder the quality and implementation of IE in Malawi. The sections below outline some of the problems highlighted in the NEP and the NSIE.

5.4.1.1 Lack of Stakeholder Coordination

The NEP acknowledged that "due to the absence of a well-defined education policy, different key players in the education sector have not been well coordinated" (DR1-NEP, p. 2). Thus, the policy aimed at putting all stakeholders such as schools, teachers and parents in coordinated interactions that improve the quality of education and enhance implementation of IE in Malawi.

5.4.1.2 Undefined Roles for Stakeholders

The education policy further acknowledged that, apart from lack of stakeholder coordination, "their roles and responsibilities have not been clearly defined thereby prompting non-conformity to set standards among stakeholders" (DR1-NEP, p. 2). The policy suggested that since the roles of the key stakeholders are not defined, policy-to-practice disparities are inevitable.

5.4.1.3 Unqualified Human Resource

In addition to undefined roles of stakeholders, the education policy observed that "there is also a lack of qualified special needs lecturers and necessary facilities in teacher training colleges" (DR1-NEP, p. 7). The lecturers and the colleges are some key players in IE. As such, the NSIE argued that "the shortage of well-qualified personnel at basic as well as secondary education compromises the quality of education for all" (DR2-NSIE, p. 17).

5.4.1.4 Lack of Teacher Expertise

Since lecturers and teacher training colleges lack the skills to train IE teachers, there is a lack of expertise in the teachers being deployed to the schools. The IE strategy pointed out that there is "teachers' lack of experience, skills and knowledge to teach diverse classrooms, e.g., use of

sign language, curriculum differentiation skills" (DR2-NSIE, p. 16). Teachers, including those in mainstream schools, are crucial to the realisation of IE but they lack the expertise to foster inclusivity.

5.4.1.5 Focus on Special Education than Inclusive Education

As lecturers and teachers lack the necessary IE expertise, tenets of SE overshadow IE. According to the IE strategy, "analysis reveals that existing teacher education programmes focus more on special needs education rather than inclusive education" (DR2-NSIE, p. 17). The literature review conducted in the second chapter also revealed that more emphasis is placed on SE than on IE (see the second chapter).

5.4.1.6 Disparities Due to Physical Ability

The education policy observed that "there are also disparities according to gender (in favour of boys), location of schools, income of parents and/or guardians and *physical ability* [emphasis added] of students. Orphans and other vulnerable children (OVCs) are also disadvantaged" (DR1-NEP, p. 6). For the context of my study, the interest was on disparities due to the physical ability of learners.

5.4.1.7 Poor Infrastructure

Addressing all the problems above does not guarantee the successful implementation of IE. There is the issue of infrastructure that is key in mainstreaming LPD. The IE strategy articulated that

> School infrastructure is another important aspect of inclusive education. These include classrooms, sanitation facilities, playgrounds as well as water points. Studies have shown that school infrastructure has a direct impact on access, quality and equity of education. Extant data indicates that school infrastructure in Malawi still remains a challenge. This is evident from the shortage of classrooms, sanitation facilities, water points as well as playgrounds within the education sector". (DR2-NSIE, p. 17)

5.4.2 Directives for Inclusive Education

The NEP and the NSIE give directions on each level of education in Malawi. Below are some of the directives that speak more to education in general and secondary education in particular.

5.4.2.1 Enhancement of Inclusive Education

The education policy aspires to ensure that "equitable access to quality and relevant special and inclusive secondary education is enhanced" (DR1-NEP, p. 7). The directive is under the government commitment to ensure that mainstream education provides for all learners regardless of their (dis)abilities. The problems outlined above, especially the disparities due to physical ability, may undermine the policy directive.

5.4.2.2 Mainstreaming of Inclusive Education in Teacher Education

The NEP observed that teachers lack the expertise necessary for IE. In response to the problem, the policy directs that "special and inclusive education is mainstreamed" (DR1-NEP, p. 8) in teacher education. The directive acts as a response to the teachers' lack of IE expertise.

5.4.2.3 Promotion of Education in Inclusive Settings

The NSIE indicated that "the goal of the strategy is to ensure that learners with diverse needs have equitable access to quality education in inclusive settings at all levels through the removal of barriers to learning, participation, attendance and achievement" (DR2-NSIE, p. 11). The strategy attempts to enlist efforts to transform existing education systems into inclusive ones.

5.4.3 Strategies for Implementation of Inclusive Education

Apart from identifying problems and giving directives on IE, both the NEP and the NSIE offer strategies for implementing IE in Malawi. The sections below present some of the implementation strategies and describe activities that could translate the strategies into action.

5.4.3.1 Raising Awareness about Inclusive Education

In order to implement IE, the NSIE mandates stakeholders to "prepare IE awareness raising tools […and] orient teachers, caregivers, teacher educators, education managers, inspectors, advisors, PEAs, community members and learners on IE" (DR2-NSIE, p. 21). The awareness aims at equipping stakeholders with relevant knowledge regarding IE.

5.4.3.2 Increasing Human Resource Capacity

As a way of ensuring capable human resources, the IE strategy encourages the relevant authorities, especially MoEST, to "train and recruit teachers, caregivers and support assistants for IE" (DR2-NSIE, p. 21). The strategy is pursuant in addressing the problems of unqualified human resources and lack of teacher expertise in implementing IE.

5.4.3.3 Improving Teacher Education

In recognition of the crucial role, that teachers play in IE implementation, the IE strategy encourages the relevant authorities to "develop inclusive education training manual for ECD, primary and secondary teacher education" (DR2-NSIE, p. 23). The training manual would inform part of the curriculum for pre-service teachers. When the teachers are deployed to schools, they will apply what they were trained regarding IE.

5.4.3.4 Enhancing Partnerships for Inclusive Education

The NEP observed that activities of stakeholders in IE do not occur in a coordinated manner. In response, the IE strategy mandates authorities such as MoEST, education managers and headteachers to "hold quarterly meetings for stakeholders on IE at different levels" (DR2-NSIE, p. 25). The intention is to foster meaningful and productive relationships between IE stakeholders including teachers, parents and communities.

5.4.3.5 Strengthening Leadership for Inclusive Education

Leadership plays a significant role in the implementation of IE. There is a need to "train school managers and administrators on IE management and administration" (DR2-NSIE, p. 21). The

IE strategy assumes that IE leaders need to understand their roles so that they can spearhead its implementation effectively.

5.4.3.6 Curriculum Differentiation

Since IE intends to transform the existing systems and content to cater for all learners, there is a need to "develop a handbook on curriculum differentiation" (DR2-NSIE, p. 26). The handbook would enhance teachers' expertise on inclusive methodologies. Curriculum differentiation entails that the same learning objectives and content purposely differ in their delivery to cater for the needs of all learners including LPD. In order to do away with SE, where LPD would have a separate curriculum in a special school or classroom, the NSIE recommends a differentiated curriculum, which fosters inclusion as all learners encounter knowledge together regardless of their physical (dis)abilities. The curriculum differentiation is not a synonym for IE, instead, it is a strategy within IE. In essence, IE calls for new and transformative approaches in the existing curricula in order to include learners previously excluded on a basis of factors, such as their physical ability.

5.4.4 The Roles of Mainstream Teachers in Inclusive Education

The NEP and the NSIE pointed out that the undefined roles of the stakeholders are one of the problems hindering the implementation of IE in Malawi. Surprisingly, both documents do not make the roles of mainstream teachers explicit. The NEP assigned the roles to the MoEST. The NSIE assigned the roles to mainstream schools. MoEST, as a ministry, has many stakeholders. Mainstream schools usually have administrators, mainstream teachers, specialist teachers and caregivers. Thus, the roles in the two policy documents are not clearly assigned to specific stakeholders. The following are some of the roles that the NEP and NSIE stipulate that may apply to mainstream teachers, including in secondary schools.

5.4.4.1 Providing Remedial Lessons

The IE strategy, through the roles assigned to mainstream schools, requires mainstream teachers to "provide remedial lessons to learners with diverse needs that have transitioned to mainstream schools and the existing learners with diverse needs" (DR2-NSIE, p. 28). The language used in the strategy may be problematic regarding the models of disability. Provision

of remedial lessons resonates with the medical model of disability that sees an individual as medically, physically and cognitively deficient and requiring remediation. Arguably, not all LPD transitioning to mainstream classes require remedial lessons, likewise does not all LPD already in mainstream education, require remedial lessons. Mainstream teachers may prescribe remedial lessons to LPD to conform with the NSIE. This may foster exclusion within mainstream education.

5.4.4.2 Teaching Learners with Diverse Needs

The prominent role assigned to mainstream schools, which also applies to mainstream secondary teachers, is the mandate to "teach learners with diverse needs" (DR2-NSIE, p. 27). The role speaks to the intention of transformative education, which is critical in the realisation of IE. Initially, mainstream schools and classes catered for learners without disabilities. However, with the introduction of IE, the schools and teachers in mainstream education have to transform and teach inclusively.

5.4.4.3 Collaborating with Communities and Parents

The NEP directed enhancement of IE partnerships. In response, the NSIE expects mainstream teachers to "collaborate with local communities on IE issues" (DR2-NSIE, p. 27). Communities and parents play a crucial role in the schools, this collaboration is relevant for IE implementation and realisation.

5.4.4.4 Incorporating NSIE in School Planning

Planning is one of the roles assigned to mainstream teachers, though obscurely. The mainstream teachers should "incorporate [the National Strategy on Inclusive Education] in school planning" DR2-NSIE, p. 27. The writing suggests that mainstream teachers should first know what the national strategy stipulates. In that case, the planning for teaching should draw on the strategy. However, actual actions that would translate into inclusive planning are absent in the NSIE.

5.4.4.5 Safeguarding the Rights of Learners with Diverse Needs

As one of their roles, mainstream teachers should "establish and/or strengthen child protection mechanisms to ensure the rights of learners with diverse needs are safeguarded" (DR2-NSIE, p. 28). The IE strategy does not state what the safeguarding of the rights of learners would entail in mainstream education. The role speaks more to the advocacy on the right to education, which may not be within the practicalities of mainstream teaching.

5.5 Teacher Practices Translated from National IE Policies and Strategies

This section presents some practices that teachers, whether implicitly or explicitly, translate from national IE policies and strategies. The language and terminology the teachers used in their questionnaire and interview responses may be problematic in the current understanding of inclusion. For example, with the inception of IE, terms such as remedial, retard, deformed and crippled are designated as disempowering. However, this section captures the language and terminology as the teachers put it. The subsequent chapter discusses the problem of using some of the terms.

5.5.1   Physical Disability Support

In the questionnaire, teachers indicated the type of physical disabilities they support and how the support is rendered. Below are the responses that mainstream teachers supplied through the questionnaire.

5.5.1.1 Visual Impairment

Some teachers indicated that they had learners with VI. They categorised VI as a physical disability. In the questionnaire, Participant QN-C1 said that "I *make sure their work is available whether in braille or large prints*". Another Participant observed that "*while those with visual impairment, I do more talking than writing. Groupwork is done much*" (QN-B1).

5.5.1.2 Muscular Paralysis

Muscular paralysis (the participants called it lameness or crippled) is one of the physical disabilities that learners had in some of the teachers' classes. The support for these learners is provided in different ways. One way is "*putting them in groups together with their fellow students*" (QN-B3). Further assistance is through "*giving them a seat where they can learn effectively according to their choice*" (QN-B3).

5.5.1.3 Hearing Impairment

Some mainstream teachers identified Hearing Impairment (HI) as a physical disability supported in mainstream education. One teacher, responded in the questionnaire, "*I prepare the work and assign a student to sit close to the student and assist the learner as I am not fully conversant with sign language* (QN-C7). Another teacher "*use locally available resources to demonstrate some of the terminologies, sign language and big font on the chalkboard*" (QN-C2). Participant QN-B1 has innovative ways for supporting HI, which include "*minimise movement and look straight at them when talking so that they can read my lips. I also do more writing than talking*". Additionally, "*during teaching, making full use of the chalkboard*" (QN-B2) also helps learners with HI to learn effectively. Further, "*illustrations and writing on chalkboard enable the [HI] to read and learn* (QN-B4). Thus, the support for learners with HI involves several inclusive practices and differ from one mainstream teacher to another, with the same goal of promoting epistemological access more than focusing on their physical (dis)abilities.

5.5.2   Professional Activities and Training

The mainstream teachers pointed out that there are some professional activities and training that gave them insight into IE. The sections below present some of the professional activities.

5.5.2.1 Sensitisation

One of the ways teachers understand IE is through "*sensitisation on physical disabilities at division level*" (QN-A1). The activity resonates with the stipulations of both the NEP and the NSIE that aimed at making IE stakeholders aware of the issues of inclusion in education.

5.5.2.2 Incentives

There were "SMASE [Strengthening of Mathematics and Sciences Education] incentives" (QN-A8). Some had "*school-based incentive trainings on special needs education*" (QN-C1). One teacher said they had "*knowledge and skills acquired from SMASE incentives; however, these incentive courses do not focus on inclusive education*" (QN-D6). The SMASE project intended to promote the teaching and learning of mathematics and sciences in Malawian schools. Little was offered on inclusive teaching for Mathematics and Sciences.

5.5.2.3 Teacher Education

Many teachers got "*knowledge from the college where they included a course on special needs education*" (QN-A2; QN-A4; QN-A6; QN-D1; QN-D2). Some of the training institutions mentioned are Mzuzu University, the Catholic University of Malawi, the University of Malawi's Chancellor College and Domasi College of Education. However, the NSIE observed that teacher education focuses more on SE than IE, which is also evident from the course the teachers cited.

5.5.3 Planning for Teaching

The NEP and the NSIE require teachers to prepare inclusive lessons. Teachers highlighted that they take into account many factors when preparing for teaching in a mainstream class with LPD, as presented below.

5.5.3.1 Inclusive Content and Activities

One factor to consider when planning for teaching is inclusive content and activities. In an interview, Participant INT-C3 ascertained "*that is to ensure that all students get the right material regardless of disability*". The same participant shared in the questionnaire that "*it ensures that learners get the same education regardless of their disabilities*" (QN-C3). Another participant, through the questionnaire, observed that "*planning activities that will incorporate all the learners and motivate their interests*" (QN-A6). Furthermore, Participant QN-D3 shared in the questionnaire, "*the teacher prepares a lesson which is inclusive, e.g., involving the*

learners with different disabilities so that they should participate in the course of teaching and learning in a classroom situation".

During one interview, another participant said: "*because with these students we need inclusive education for them to learn very well, that's why we are able to incorporate these students in the classes*" (INT-C1). On the same note, the teachers' role is "*prepare work that can cater for their learning*" *(*QN-D2). Participant QN-C5 reflected in the questionnaire, "*during lesson planning, I plan according to their disability to take them aboard. I consider activities which are participatory – group discussions or pair discussion, research, presentatio*n". To enable inclusive content and activities, one teacher makes "*use of real situations for teaching and learning*" (QN-D2).

5.5.3.2 Policy Adherence

In transitioning from policy to practice, Participant INT-B4 said during an interview, "*the role of a teacher is to implement whatever the government has planned by whatever it is teaching methodologies*". Furthermore, the policies "*help us to teach those students who are of some disabilities regardless of their status or their age and so on, we are able to teach all*", said Participant INT-C1 in an interview. Participant INT-B6 shared that "*I think that is the issue of inclusiveness, you know the policies of government, you know Malawi has adopted many programs worldwide at African level. For example, we have a good example Agenda 2063 which I learnt at Catholic University, and that is goal…aspiration number one goal one, it says so, no child should be remain behind, no child should miss education and that is including learners with disability*". In order to adhere to the policy stipulations, teachers "*plan lesson notes in advance, use teaching and learning aids or improvisation and involve all learners*" (QN-A1; QN-A6). In essence, "*what we want is good education that's why we are including inclusive education for all students to learn*", said Participant INT-C3 in an interview.

5.5.3.3 Relevant Materials

Another thing the teachers consider when planning for inclusive teaching is relevant materials. As a mainstream teacher, "*when planning lessons, I first consider students with physical disabilities rather than the abled ones. Sometimes I find relevant teaching and learning aids*

that they should understand better" (QN-C6). This response from the questionnaire resonates with what Participant INT-A4 said during an interview:

> *As a teacher when I am planning, I know that in the class I am going to attend, I am going to teach I have these students who have this type of challenge. So, I always make sure I consult my friend in the resource department and see what resources do I have that I can use in a class that is a mixed bag and be able to achieve my success criteria, because what I want by the end of the day is that whether one is deformed or not but leaning should take place.*

Some teachers consider getting relevant materials as a duty. For example, Participant INT-D2 said during the interview that "*some of the duties are those to provide required or relevant materials that can cater the learning of the disabilities and caring for the disabilities*". The national policies and strategies on IE mandate the requirement to get relevant materials. In proving this, Participant INT-D3 said in the interview that the policies and strategies "*help me to plan carefully, so that to get the required and relevant teaching and learning materials that can help the disabled to learn better. For example, the teaching and learning materials should be visible, large enough and audible too. If in case of use of radios or whatever should be audible*". Another teacher asserted in the questionnaire that the role of a mainstream teacher in IE is "*to be resourceful in accessing proper and relevant teaching and learning materials*" (QN-D9). Participant QN-B1 added in the questionnaire, IE "*requires thorough preparations and appropriate teaching and learning materials suitable for all students*".

5.5.3.4 Equal Opportunities

When planning for teaching, a mainstream teacher has "*to provide equal opportunities to learners regardless of their disability*" said Participant INT-A4 during one of the interviews. One teacher during the interviews even alluded to the EFA by saying that "*education for all, they want everyone to access education, regardless of his or her physical outlook or else, yeah in all they want every child to go to school and be assisted in the same way*" (INT-B4). In the questionnaire, another teacher observed that IE "*involves giving same opportunities to all learners and placing them in the same class and the same school*" (QN-A4).

5.5.3.5 Relevant Attention

In mainstream secondary education, the LPD "*receive special attention if there is a need to do so*" (INT-D3). However, teaching all learners together regardless of disabilities, said Participant INT-A6,

> *Is not simple task, it is not simple in the sense that […] let's say for a person, a learner who has hearing impairment it means it will take a long time before he catches on what is going on in the class, when those that are able are ahead of her or him, he or she is lagging behind, so as a teacher I always make sure that tasks are distributed according to the abilities and attention is also given differently. Those that are able, those that are bright they have no problems in learning they are fast learners I also pay them attention that is equivalent to their abilities and the ones that have challenges I also make sure that am giving them much time so that they are assisted.*

Relevant attention is also crucial in "*making sure that every learner has achieved the intended outcomes for the lesson; hence focusing more on the disabled so that they learn just like their friends*" (QN-A3). The preceding response agrees with what Participant QN-A8 wrote in the questionnaire that relevant attention "*ensures that those with learning difficulties are assisted in their own way, so that they achieve curriculum aims*" (QN-A8). There are many other ways teachers give attention to the LPD, including:

- *Writing large print exercises* (QN-A1)
- *Seating them in front of the class to those who have hearing difficulties* (QN-A1; QN-A4; QN-A5; QN-D7)
- *Remedial lessons* (QN-A4; QN-D7)
- *Making them active in class* (QN-A4)
- *Making them repeat what has been said by the teacher* (QN-A6)
- *One on one talk after lesson* (QN-B4)

Participant INT-D2 articulated that although IE is placing all learners together regardless of their disabilities, the disabled ones receive special attention so that they can be at the same level of learning as their more able-bodied peers. Teachers are not merely concerned with how LPD

access classwork, but also with their wellbeing outside the classroom, including mobility for those with muscle paralysis. A teacher at School B is happy that "*this institution has that kind of environment whereby students are being accommodated*" (INT-B6).

5.5.3.6 Appropriate Teaching Methodologies

One teacher was of the view that mainstream teachers should have "*the knowledge of the importance of varying teaching methods to suit learners in question*" (QN-A3). The knowledge of appropriate teaching methodologies entailed the following:

- *Use of different methods of teaching: lecture, groupwork, teaching aids* (QN-A2).
- *Include teaching methods that will make students active and that will not put learners with physical disabilities at a disadvantage* (QN-A7).
- *When planning the lesson, different methods and activities should be included to suit all learners* (QN-A4).
- *Including different methods and activities that can help them improve their understanding of the lesson content while in class* (QN-A9).
- *Making sure that methods used in the lesson are accommodative* (QN-B1).
- *To ensure that lesson delivery is learner-centred and that it uses various teaching and learning methods that accommodate learners of different physical disabilities* (QN-B4)

The teachers said using the appropriate teaching methodologies:

- *Help learners to be more interactive during lessons delivery* (QN-A8).
- *Help them to feel included not discriminated, therefore, enhancing a positive attitude towards learning* (QN-A2).
- *Provide a positive climate in them, hence they are able to have a sense of belonging* (QN-A8).
- *Assist the physical disability students to achieve a lot, for example, participatory methods have assisted these learners to interact with their fellow students effectively. If you ask questions, they are able to answer the questions correctly* (QN-C3).
- *Encourage participatory learning in learners with disabilities as well, hence learning takes place and they are able to excel during national examinations* (QN-B1).

However, one teacher was "*not sure if they are really achieving because most of them fail tests and examinations*" (QN-A3). The teacher's doubt speaks to a situation where there is a lack of monitoring and evaluation of IE in mainstream schools.

5.5.4 Supporting Learning

Teachers pointed out that they do not only prepare to teach inclusively. They also actively support the learning process, through several ways and for many reasons, as presented in the sections below.

5.5.4.1 Peer Learning

As a mainstream teacher, "*in most cases I incorporate the students with disabilities with some students who are abled, to assist these students during lessons*" (QN-C3). For Participant QN-A9, peer learning requires to "*involve learners in experiments which are conducted in groups*". During one of the interviews, Participant INT-D2 asserted that "*they can learn more from the disabled and abled ones, as well the abled ones can learn more about the needs of the disabled as they are working together*". On the same note, Participant INT-A4 made a thoughtful reflection on IE and peer learning during one of the interviews:

> *Inclusive education to my understanding is a very good means of providing education, because basically, we look at a learner like someone who is a seeker of knowledge. So, if maybe it was like teaching those who have difficulties separately from the ones that have no problems it could create some sort of what I can call segregations, which could result in hindering the learning process but when it is a mixed group where there are those that are able and others, they are less able they at least share in the process. They share knowledge, they share ideas, and they share skills. So, yeah, I look at it as a fair play, a fairground where learning can take place without any feeling of disassociation.*

5.5.4.2 Social Justice

One way of supporting the learning of LPD is "*assisting the learners to get feedback to what is being taught*" (QN-A7). As such, "*it is very important because disabled learners as well as*

those that are able, they all have got interest, as a teacher my role is just to help each learner reach maximum of his ability, regardless of whether he has a deformity or not" (INT-A6). The interpretation of the national policies and strategies on IE by the teachers also points to the issue of equality and social justice in inclusive schooling. Teachers said government strategies and policies aim to achieve the incorporation of all learners in mainstream education. The aim is to achieve education for all, said Participants QN-B4, QN-B2, QN-C1 and INT-B6. Education for all is a human right, where everyone is entitled to access equitable education.

5.5.4.3 Non-Segregation

When mainstream teachers support learning, the learners with "*disabilities don't feel segregated as they are together with the non-disabilities*", said Participant INT-D2 in an interview. As such, "*both disabled and abled are learning together, they help one another, they don't segregate, they chat together*" (INT-D3). In essence, "*all learners are placed in a general education classroom, full-time, regardless of their disabilities, with the support of teachers*" (QN-A3). Thus, mainstream teachers have to "*avoid discrimination when teaching*" (QN-A10). One way towards non-discrimination is that "*both the abled and the disabled mix together in the sitting plan to avoid segregation*" (QN-D2; QN-D3). Participant QN-B2 also agreed that the mixed sitting plan makes "*the disabled feel that they are not discriminated*". During one of the interviews, Participant INT-D2 said that the non-segregation "*can assist them to have self-independence*".

5.5.4.4 Learner-centred Approaches

Some teachers said that national policies and strategies such as NEP and NSIE require them to implement teaching and learning approaches that put the learners at the centre of class activities. For example, Participants QN-C4, QN-B4 and QN-B5 are using learner-centred approaches. However, they did not explain what that entails, to actively involve LPD. This was one of the shortcomings of the questionnaire. During the interviews, the teachers who pointed out about learner-centred approaches were asked to elaborate. The teachers said that learner-centred approaches involved including activities conducted by the learners themselves, which would be more practical and demonstrative.

5.6 Strategies for Mitigating Disparities and Enhancing Inclusivity

This section presents strategies that mainstream teachers suggested for mitigating policy-to-practice disparities and enhancing inclusivity. The section also includes the suggestions made in the NEP and NSIE and discuss how they resonate with the teachers' suggestions.

5.6.1   Continuous Teacher Professional Development

One significant suggestion that came out of the research is Continuous Teacher Professional Development (CTPD). The sub-sections below present what both the teachers and the policies articulate on CTPD.

5.6.1.1 Orientation and Training on Policies, Strategies and Inclusion

A few teachers "*were informed of the disabilities so, we are having some insight to teach these students*" (INT-C1). Thus, the information aligns with the education policy that mandated authorities to "establish development programs which will take care of capacity development in the context of aligning technical assistance with associated commodity aid, training requirements and improved structural and systemic approaches in the execution of the policy" (DR1-NSIE, p. 12). Some mainstream teachers said: "*at first, we were having some difficulties, but when we went on the insight [sic], we were able to handle these students very well*" (INT-C3). The education policy stipulated that the "Teaching Service Commission (TSC) will take into account professional development programs" (DR1-NEP, p. 12). Participant QN-A10 wrote in the questionnaire that "*teachers should be involved or engaged in continuous professional training in diverse issues affecting learners with different disabilities*".

Lack of CTPD is hindering the efforts toward IE. Participant QN-C1 observed in the questionnaire:

> *The methods that I use somehow enable students successful in achieving curriculum. However, trainings are needed for teachers like me so that I should use better methods which can help learners with physical disabilities. More trainings to all teachers to impart them with necessary knowledge on how to help the learners properly. If teachers are well trained in all disabilities then learners will be successful in achieving*

curriculum aims. My plea goes to the Ministry of Education to help us to know these policies.

During the interviews, one teacher said, "*I feel it is good to teach these students inclusively, but the other side is we should be oriented on how we can handle these students*" (INT-C1). The suggestion of Participant INT-C1 resonates with another suggestion in a different interview that "*another thing is training, I feel apart from that we have specialist teachers but we should [sic]. I would love if there were some insights organised at a school level maybe so that teachers who are handling such classes should be able to help at that level before it is taken to the specialist [...] so I feel resource and expertise are what are missing much but government is doing its best*" (INT-A4). Even in the questionnaire, one participant emphasized that "*there must be special training for teachers so that they have knowledge and skills to handle these special students*" (QN-D8).

Without CTPD, mainstream teachers fail to embrace diversity. There was an incident at School B in Chikwawa district with one teacher, as shared during one of the interviews, "*when I landed in form one, at one point when I was teaching it came a time when I was asking questions, so I saw a certain boy in front of me having the hearing aids, so I thought it was the headsets so other students had to say no he has a problem*" (INT-B4). Thus, "*those teachers who haven't gone far with this kind of special needs, sometimes it's difficult at the same time it could be no problem if the government initiates this called insights for even teachers of other fields*", suggested Participant INT-B6 during one of the interviews. The incident at School B suggests that "*extra training should be given to teachers as not all have undergone a real training on inclusive education*" (QN-A4). Participant QN-C5 agreed with all other participants that "*to ensure that there is successful implementation of inclusive education in Malawian secondary schools, I think teachers should be oriented on how to handle these students with physical disabilities*". Thus, the point is, "*teachers should receive in-service training in inclusive education*" continuously (QN-B1).

The questionnaire asked the mainstream teachers whether they attended any training on educating all learners together regardless of disabilities or any workshop to do with IE. Out of the 33 participants who returned the questionnaire, seven participants responded Yes, and 26 participants responded No, as described in Figure 3 below.
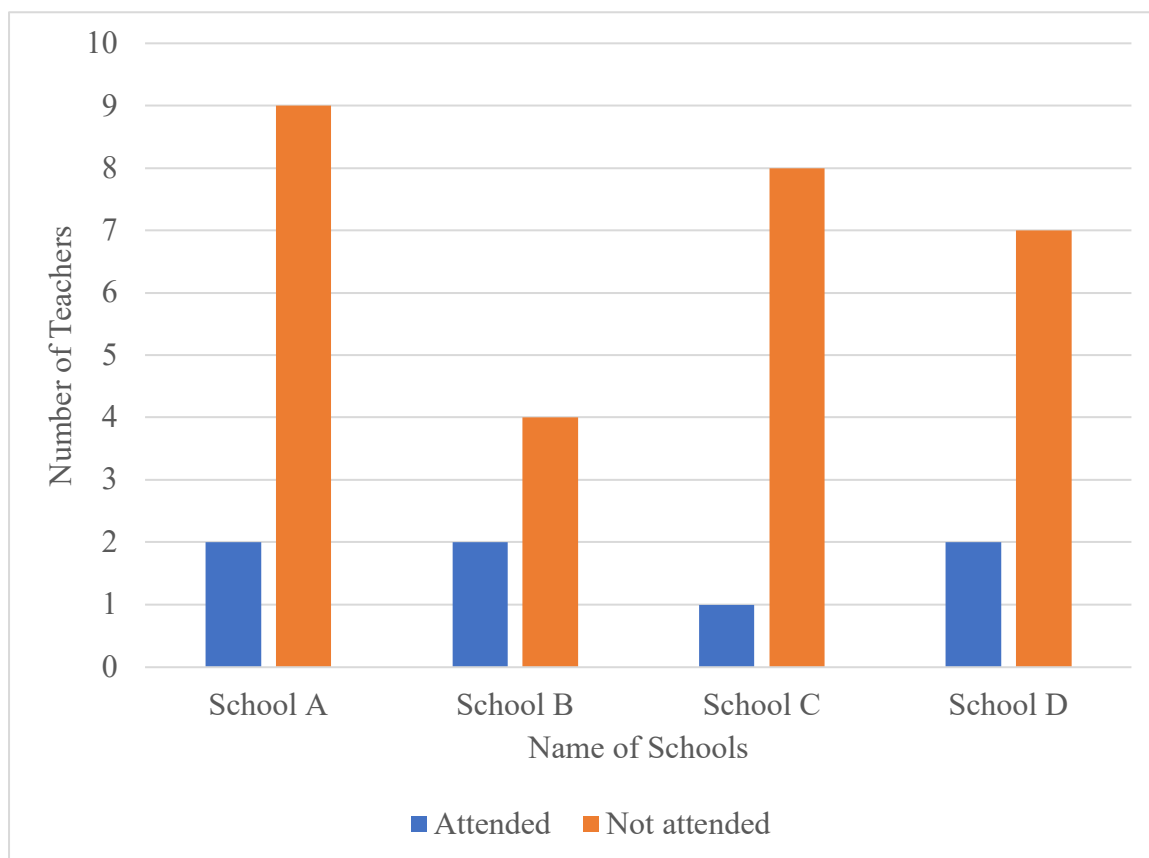
Figure 3: Teacher Attendance of IE Training

Since some teachers attended CTPD while some did not attend, the interest turned to awareness of national IE policies and strategies. When asked whether the mainstream teachers were aware of any government policies or strategies on IE, it showed that most of them were not aware of any policy or strategy. Out of the 33 participants involved in the study through the questionnaire, 10 were aware of some policies and strategies while 23 were unaware of any, as depicted in Figure 4 below.
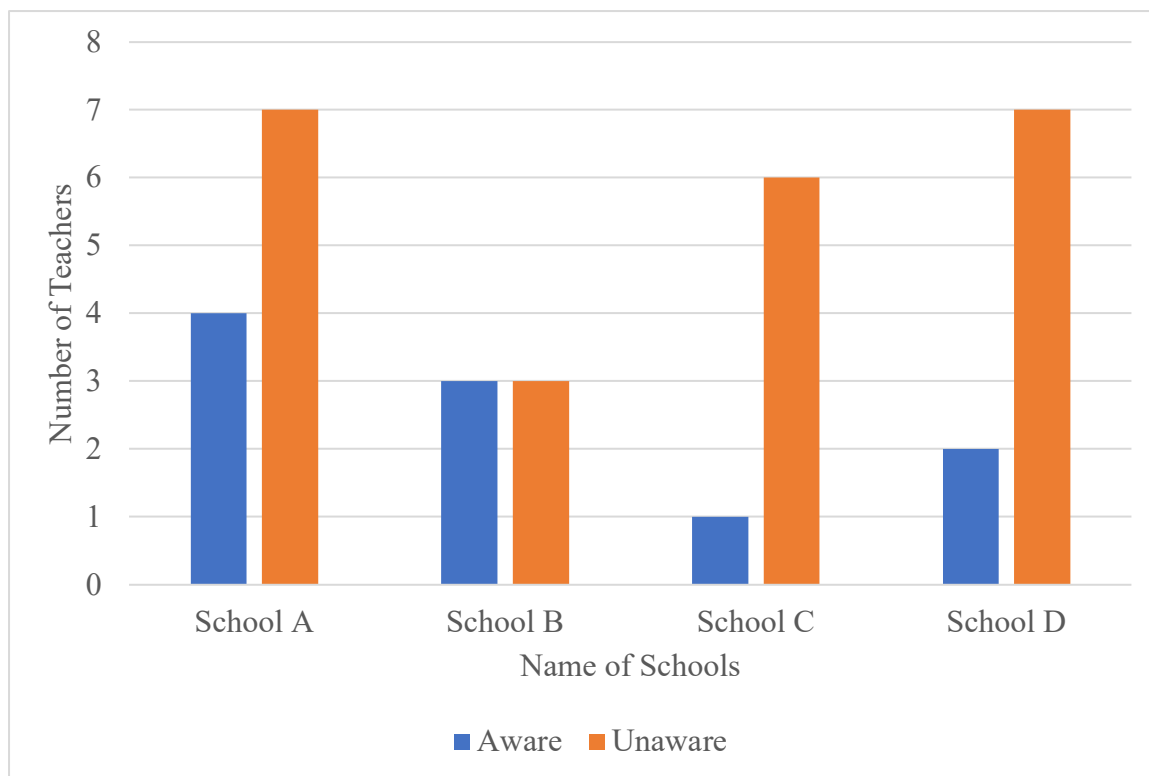
Figure 4: Awareness of IE Policies and Strategies

For the teachers who responded that they were aware of some IE policies and strategies, they cited both international and national ones. Additionally, many teachers mentioned teaching methods and learning strategies such as learner involvement rather than policies and strategies on IE. The teachers, who managed to mention precise policies and strategies, listed the following:

- Constitution of Malawi
- African Union Agenda 2063
- National Education Standards (Policy Number 13)
- Disability Policy (supposedly the Malawian Disability Act of 2012)

The teachers who said they were unaware of policies and strategies on IE cited the following as what assists them in planning for inclusive classes:

- Textbooks and Syllabus
- Specialist teachers
- Personal knowledge

- School training

The teachers who said they were aware of the policies and strategies were asked whether they use the policies to plan for their teaching. Of the 33 participants, 11 made use of them while 22 did not make use of them, as described in Figure 5 below.
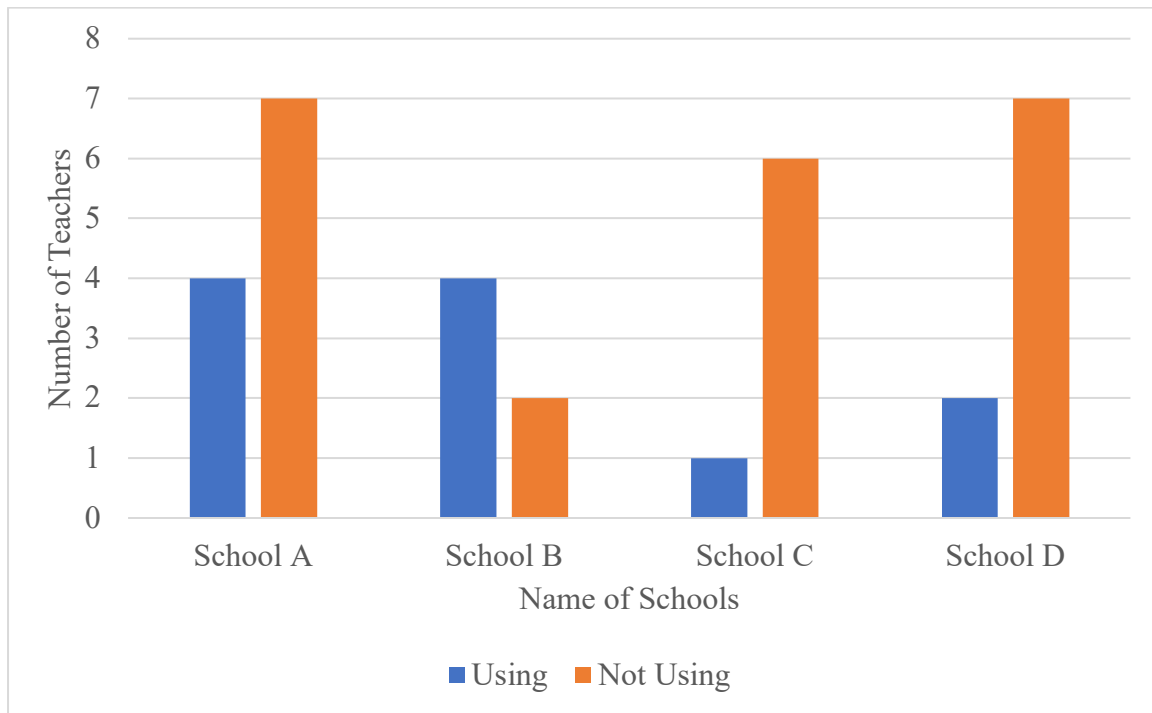
Figure 5: Teachers' Use of IE Policies and Strategies

The teachers who confirmed using the policies and strategies explained as follows how they make use of them in their teaching:

- Planning teaching methods that take into account the needs of LWD.
- It acts as a reminder for inclusive classroom practices such as a purposive seating plan.

The teachers who said they were aware but did not use policies and strategies were asked for reasons for not using the policies and guidelines, although they were aware of them. The reasons included:

- It is time-consuming.

- Some LPD prefer some subjects over others. For example, Participant QN-D1 is a science teacher, and most LPD do not take science subjects.
- It is the work of specialist teachers.

The findings presented above suggest that CTPD is necessary to make teachers aware of IE, highlighting some contemporary issues in IE and motivating the teachers to embrace IE. Thus, orientation and training on IE, which the NEP and NSIE stipulate, is crucial towards IE.

5.6.1.2 Sign Language

Apart from orientation and training on IE, policies and strategies, "*teachers should be trained on how they can effectively teach learners together, because for example sign language can be necessary at times, but they have no knowledge at all*" (QN-A3). What Participant QN-A3 asked was not to take over the duties of specialist teachers, but to have a basic knowledge of sign language so that mainstream teachers are also able to support learners with HI.

5.6.1.3 Teaching Methodologies

The CTPD should also emphasise teaching methodologies in IE. During one interview, Participant INT-D2 complained that "*the disadvantage is you try to cater for the ability of the disabilities, at the same time the abled ones tend to be slowed down when they have dire need to learn fast*". Thus, "*the learners with disability are not able to catch up with friends very easily, so teachers have to work extra hard in order to make them catch up with friends and if not, they cannot catch up*" (INT-D3). In the questionnaire, Participant QN-A6 suggested that CTPD should emphasise that "*the teacher should always use different teaching methods*". According to Participant QN-D5, teachers need to "*include several activities so that all learners are assisted*" (QN-D5).

5.6.2   Support for Inclusive Education

As a way of transitioning from policy to practice and ensuring parity between the two, mainstream teachers called for support for IE. The call resonates with both the NEP and the NSIE. Sub-sections below present some forms of support teachers called for in IE.

5.6.2.1 Political Will

Government policies and strategies call for IE implementation but "*in most cases, the government does not provide anything*", said participant INT-C1 in one of the interviews. In the questionnaire, Participant QN-B6 urged the government to "*walk-the-talk by supplying teaching and learning and assessment resources for learners with disabilities*" (QN-B6). Another teacher was of the view that:

> *This issue is a controversial one and it needs seriousness, the part of the government even the implementers themselves, teachers. The government must pump in resources, all resources, most of the resources, I mean a lot of resources, financially, materially even physically they should come in and intensify this programme, otherwise it is just a word, people are just talking there is this inclusiveness but, on the ground, things are not okay we need to be serious, as the government.* (INT-B6)

5.6.2.2 Teaching and Learning Resources

Apart from political will, which should include materials as also pointed out, mainstream teachers suggest that the allocation of adequate teaching and learning resources may help in the IE implementation. One teacher said, "*I think the most important gaps are the learning materials, we don't have enough learning materials which we can assist these students*" (INT-C3). Thus, the "*government should provide enough teaching and learning materials*" (QN-A1). The same request came from Participant QN-D1 who said that "*government must provide teaching resources for these students*". The government should "*come up with special materials that can assist the disabilities to learn better*" (INT-D2). According to Participant QN-B1, "*teaching and learning materials should be readily available in schools, e.g., braille materials*". Another participant wrote in the questionnaire that the government should consider "*purchasing of school braille*" (QN-A7).

The unavailability of the relevant resources for both the teachers and LPD is hampering the implementation of IE. For example, some participants mentioned that most of the resources that mainstream teachers use were personal property. When the teachers who have some resources that assist LPD transfer to another school, they leave the learners stranded. These resources include laptops, televisions and speakers used during lessons which are mostly the

personal property of the teachers, but necessary for IE, where technology can assist learners to grasp concepts.

5.6.2.3 Specialist Teachers

Much as IE intends to transform SE and mainstream the LWD into regular schools, the necessity of specialist teachers remains unchanged. At School A, mainstream teachers use "*a specialist, so whenever we have problems, we always contact this gentleman who always gives us some direction and how we can ably handle those that are challenged*" (INT-A4). At School D, "*we have specialists here, some teachers who are not specialists, they assign them with assignments then the specialists translate to their braille, yeah something to do like that*" (INT-B6). However, the problem is "*we have only one specialist teacher, and therefore that is a barrier, you see these guys are many here, we have many people with disability here, having one specialist only at this institution already this is a barrier*" (INT-B6). The teachers feel that "*government must post special teachers for SNE*" (QN-D7). Some mainstream teachers complained that, although they are the frontrunners in implementing IE, they are hardly involved in in-service training. The IE training and incentives mainly involve specialist teachers.

5.6.2.4 The Teacher: Learner Ratio

The teacher: learner ratio is another setback in IE implementation. In the questionnaire, one participant observed that "*in addition, the teacher: pupil ratio does not allow a teacher to concentrate more on one or two learners, leaving others aside. Besides, there are more slow learners who need further assistance from the same teacher. The work just becomes too much. As such, the number of [mainstream] teachers should be increased*" (QN-A3).

5.6.2.5 Infrastructure

The NEP asserted that "the Ministry of Lands and Housing will provide advice on education infrastructure design" (DR1-NEP, p. 13). Thus, the mainstream teachers want "*provision of infrastructure, government should make sure that those that have problems they are assisted according to the problems. If it is mobility, there are deliberate structures that are constructed*" (INT-A6). There is a need for "*construction of school blocks that are inclusive*" (QN-A5).

5.6.2.6 Model Inclusive Schools

One teacher recommended to "*come up with at least two boarding schools in each district and equip them with various teaching and learning materials*" (QN-B4). The idea of model schools is one key strategy indicated in the NSIE:

> The Strategy will also help to increase numbers and capacity of specialist teachers and regular teachers to effectively respond to learner diversity, improve schools and colleges to be inclusive by using model schools and colleges in selected places, reduce stigma and discrimination and promote an inclusive data management system. (DR2-NSIE, p. 6)

5.6.3 Learner Involvement

As one way of lessening policy-to-practice disparities and enhancing inclusivity in mainstream education, teachers suggested active involvement of learners, including those with disabilities, in epistemological processes and extra-curricular activities. Below are some of the proposed strategies for learner involvement in IE.

5.6.3.1 Sporting Activities

The NEP stipulated that "the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports will be responsible for youth empowerment and the promotion of sporting activities, recreation and provision of sporting facilities to Malawi youth (DR1-NEP, p. 13). During one of the interviews, Participant INT-A6 suggested

> *Introducing sporting facilities that will motivate learners who are disabled in some ways. From my personal experience at present is that, when you are organising sporting activities most of those that are disabled [..] have deformities they are not included so I would campaign for the provision of these sporting activities or sporting equipment so that those that have challenges, mentally, physically or what they should also be able to get into that.*

5.6.3.2 Learner Groupings

Learner groupings are one way to involve LPD in mainstream education, according to Participant INT-A4 during one of the interviews. The Participant said:

> *Another thing I could also think of creating are maybe I can call a group, a grouping of these students that have problems, organise them like an association of some kind, so that they should be able to share their experiences and come up with what they think, because they are the ones that are going through such challenges, so they are better placed to give suggestions on what best should happen to them but in that case I would like to say I would create an environment where students with learning disabilities they are able to expose and express their feelings, that way then we can make them better part of the society.* (INT-A4)

5.6.4   Stakeholder Engagement

Another way towards policy-to-practice parity and inclusivity is stakeholder engagement. Much as IE happens in mainstream schools, with headteachers, administrators and teachers as key players, IE cannot overlook the essence of other stakeholders such as parents and communities. Accordingly, the NSIE "encourages networking and collaboration of stakeholders as one way of strengthening efforts aimed at improving the efficiency of the education system and its structures" (DR2-NSIE, p. 11). The NSIE asserted that "communities, families and parents will provide the general management of schools, mobilise resources, and provide learners with their physical and social needs" (DR1-NEP, p. 13).

During one of the interviews, Participant INT-A6 suggested that "*I would want as many people as possible to be involved in this, in terms of planning and coming up with ideas on how the program can be made more effective*". Some teachers were of the view that since LPD come from homes in the communities, national policies and strategies should put it in clear terms when and how communities should be involved in IE. Interestingly, one of the roles of mainstream schools stipulated in the NEP is that of collaboration with communities and parents in IE. However, Participants QN-A8, QNC-5, QND-6 and INT-D3 expressed a concern that communities are seldom involved in IE and even the education of their wards in general.

5.6.5 Separation of Learners

Some mainstream teachers are challenging the mainstreaming of LPD in regular schools. They have their reasons for the perspective. In essence, they regard SE as the most convenient type of schooling for LPD. Below are some of the reasons given.

5.6.5.1 Special Attention

It is very definitely a well-known fact that teacher attitude is a problem in the implementation of IE. Even the NEP (2016) and the NSIE (2017-2021) mention teacher attitude as one setback in ensuring transformative education. The mainstream teachers involved in the study justified their attitudes against IE on the school systems inability to incorporate LPD. The study found a contradiction in the mainstreaming of LPD into mainstream education. One mainstream teacher said that it is not fair to include LPD with their peers. The teacher held a view that "*I cannot accept the disabled to be learning together with the abled ones, because they will not be able to compete on the examinations and they will lag behind all the time, because they need special attention*" (INT-D2). Even the NSIE hinted that IE could not accommodate some learners. The NSIE **"**stresses the need for educating all learners in an inclusive setting; however, some learners with SEN will continue receiving their education in special settings as the system moves towards full inclusion" (DR2-NSIE, p. 11)**.**

One mainstream teacher at School D in Nsanje district refused to participate in the study in protest of "*what the government is doing. The government is sending these children with physical disabilities to our schools because they are poor. Had it been that these children were sons and daughters of government ministers, they could not send them here. I cannot participate in your study because I feel like the government is wrong sending the children here. Better they leave them in their initial schools*" (JE2-2020). Another teacher at School B in Chikwawa district turned down the request to participate in the study because he "*did not see a reason to talk about this kind of students. They are just slowing down the learning process*" (JE3-2020). There is resistance among some mainstream secondary teachers that LPD are being mainstreamed into their classes.

5.6.5.2 Science Subjects

Another issue necessitating the separation of the learners are science subjects, according to one participant. Mostly, "*the students with disabilities opted not to take science subjects, especially Chemistry*" (QN-D1). Thus, the participant was of the view that separating the LPD from their peers will be useful as they would do subjects of their choice. The science subjects such as Chemistry, Physics and Biology are compulsory in mainstream secondary education across Malawi. However, the LPD opt-out of science subjects on their own. There is tension with the idea of SE, where "*there is a special curriculum that does not involve science subjects*" (JE4-2020). Thus, since the LPD have been mainstreamed to regular schools, they want to maintain the status quo of SE. This is even "*supported by mainstream teachers as they think that the LPD are incapable of pursing science subjects such as Physics and Chemistry*" (JE5-2020).

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented findings from the study on the policy and practice of IE in mainstream secondary schools. The chapter centred on data gathered in the field as well as data from documents reviewed. Study participants urged the government to walk-the-talk to ensure the successful implementation of IE in Malawian secondary schools. The teachers included thoughts on themselves and other factors such as providing adequate teaching and learning resources, continuous teacher professional development, reducing teacher: learner ratio and providing free secondary education for socially and economically deprived LPD and other students. The next chapter discusses the findings and concludes the thesis.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research findings presented in the preceding chapter. Of particular focus in this chapter is the discussion of the research findings with literature, concepts and theories. The discussion continues answering the research questions answered at a superficial level in the previous chapter. The chapter gives several insights into the future of IE in Malawi in alignment with the latest trends in the international domain. A key message that emerged is that policy development in inclusive secondary education needs to include the voices of mainstream teachers. Based on information received from participants, it is evident that an overhaul of policy is needed whereby school experiences inform national IE policies and strategies rather than the speculations of policymakers. The reason being that policymakers are mostly not active in inclusive schooling.

6.2 Summary of Findings

Key findings from my study on inclusive secondary school education in Malawi are:

- The National Education Policy (NEP) and the National Strategy on Inclusive Education (NSIE) assign roles to mainstream secondary teachers implicitly through activities allocated to schools. The roles of mainstream secondary school teachers are not outwardly apparent. Ironically, the NEP (2016) observed that mainstream teachers' "roles and responsibilities have not been clearly defined thereby prompting non-conformity to set standards" (p. 2). Yet, the same policy sustains the problem it attempts to solve. Nonetheless, the teachers are responsible for translating the policy and strategy stipulations into actions on par with policy directives.

- Mainstream secondary teachers regard their roles in IE as imposed by the government. From the teachers' practices, IE is not a concept of education itself, but a separate entity brought in by the government to respond to calls on ending discrimination against PWD, including in education. One participant said in an interview that "*it is just a word, people are just talking there is this inclusiveness but, on the ground, things are not okay we need to be serious, as the government*" (INT-B6).

- There are inclusive strategies that mainstream secondary teachers devise in supporting LPD within mainstream schools. Many of the strategies are not motivated or informed by the NEP or NSIE. Most of the teachers do not know about the existence of the NEP and NSIE. Through the questionnaire, Participant QN-C1 said: "*My plea goes to the Ministry of Education to help us to know these policies*". Even those teachers who know the policies ignore their stipulations as their directives do not align with the teachers' duties and responsibilities.

6.3 Discussion of Findings

Disparities between policy and practice of IE in Malawi have rendered the efforts of curbing exclusion within mainstream education futile (Kamchedzera, 2010; Chilemba, 2013; Chimwaza, 2015; Ishida et al., 2017). As part to probe the case in point, my study ascertained how mainstream secondary teachers in selected schools in the Lower Shire interpret national IE policies and strategies into supportive strategies for LPD. Reviewing teachers' interpretations was very useful for the study because "it is important that we recognise that learners are influenced by complex interactions among societal, community, family, school and classroom factors" (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020, p. 1). According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), systematic interactions that happen within the schooling network are crucial in the promotion of inclusion and respect for diversity. Thus, Bronfenbrenner's BSP, the bigger theoretical lens for my study, enabled the conceptualisation of the mainstream teachers' interpretations and practices in IE. Equally, Clough & Corbett's DSC, the supplementary theoretical discourse for my study, helped in understanding the underpinnings of national IE policies and strategies.

Most importantly, it was relevant to engage mainstream teachers because they are pivotal to the implementation of policies and strategies for IE. Thus, if there are any disparities between policies and practices, the mainstream teachers are in a position to share their thoughts (Chimwaza, 2015; Pather, 2019; Winter & Blanks, 2020). Before my study, evidence was available that many PWD in Malawi had a lower participation rate in mainstream education than their peers without physical disabilities (Braathen & Loeb, 2011; Soni, 2019; Saran, White, & Kuper, 2020; Soni et al., 2020). Therefore, my study focused precisely on supporting LPD in mainstream secondary schools. The analytical statements below align with the three research questions.

6.3.1 The national policy directives and strategies on IE are political responses

The implementation of IE has its history in the social model of disability in which barriers that exist in societies, including school infrastructure, pose problems for LWD (Lindsay, 2007; Imray & Colley, 2017; Teodoro, 2020). However, my study findings revealed that there is a shift from the social perception of IE to a political view. The shifting is initiated by government policies and strategies because they disregard the practicalities of IE implementation in schools. Consequently, mainstream teachers' understandings of IE reflect the political intentions of the national policies and strategies.

6.3.1.1 Policy Stipulations on IE and Mainstream Teachers

The NEP (2016) and the NSIE (2017-2021) admitted that exclusions exist in some levels of education in Malawi (see the previous chapter). In essence, the rationale behind the formulation of the NEP and the NSIE was to curb exclusion within mainstream education. The NEP (2016) acknowledged that "there are also disparities according to […] physical ability of students" (p. 6). Responsively, my study ascertained how mainstream secondary teachers affect inclusive strategies for supporting LPD. The understanding is that, within the mainstream education, LPD are put at a disadvantage when it comes to learning as emphasis focuses more on physical abilities than epistemological access and systems change (Schuelka et al., 2020).

The study found that the concept of IE is embedded in mainstream education because of government policy stipulations. The findings also highlight that IE has relevance due to the issue of 'right to education', pronounced on political podiums. Both the NEP and the NSIE stated that mainstream schools, and implicitly, mainstream teachers are crucial in the implementation of IE policies and practices. Mainstream schools and teachers become more important than before when it comes to IE. The political model of disability and inclusion rests on mainstream teachers' perceptions and interpretations of government policies and strategies regarding IE implementation (see Appendix 13, the Analytical Memo).

As a political response, the NEP (2016) and the NSIE (2017-2021) stipulate some propositions, that in practice, are not attainable. For example, the NSIE compelled mainstream schools and teachers to "provide appropriate care and support to learners with diverse needs" (p. 27). Teachers are obliged to provide appropriate care; however, they have not received training in

what appropriate care entails (see the previous chapter). In the context of my study, the NSIE views the mainstream secondary teachers as providers of the needed support and care, while the teachers view the NEP and NSIE as something more political to portray a government caring for its disadvantaged population. In practice, nothing of such nature exists in the schools (see Appendix 13, the Analytical Memo). Nonetheless, this may be one of the influences that fall within the exosystem, as far as Bronfenbrenner's BSP is concerned. As such, the employment of the bioecological systems approaches in connecting policy aspirations and teachers' practices may be relevant for the Malawian secondary education.

6.3.1.2 Mainstream Teachers' Interpretations of IE Policies and Strategies

From the study, findings are that many mainstream teachers are aware of the practice of IE. However, as it is the case in scholarly arguments (see Schuelka et al., 2020), the teachers did not give an absolute definition of IE. This is understandable because there is not a definitive one. All countries and individuals, generally speaking, have their definition of IE. From a consolidated point, the teachers understood IE as a learning initiative whereby learners mix regardless of disabilities. Literature seems to note many variations on the understanding of IE as opposed to one absolute definition (see Schuelka et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2020; Hallahan et al., 2020; Palmer & Williams-Diehm, 2020; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). It is therefore understandable that teachers provided various understandings of IE. The teachers' current understanding of IE has a direct reference to disability, it was not associated with any other factor such as race, gender and age. Participant QN-C1 from School C in Nsanje district responded in the questionnaire that IE is when "*all learners are placed in a general education classroom […] regardless of their disabilities with the support of teachers*".

Nonetheless, the study's findings suggest that, in terms of teaching strategies, most mainstream teachers regard IE as a broad teaching method with activities ranging from group discussions to peer learning. The teachers perceive IE as a teaching and learning strategy that is temporal, and prone to dissension. Put differently, the teachers regard IE as a temporary political pressure from the government, which may fade away over time. This speaks to the chronosystem in the BSP. The chronosystem is more concerned, in the context of IE, with what happens over time in terms of inclusive schooling. Since the teachers expect IE to diminish after some time, it entails that strengthening the teachers understanding of IE through the chronosystem may be necessary for IE. In the third chapter, my observation was that the chronosystem could be

employed as a monitoring and evaluation tool in IE. Thus, the chronosystem may be crucial in implementing the national policy directives on IE in the Malawian secondary schools: Enhancement of IE, mainstreaming of IE in teacher education and promotion of education in inclusive settings (see the previous chapter).

The questionnaire findings revealed that through IE, teachers have embarked on a quest of ensuring that every learner, regardless of their physical disability challenges, reaches their maximum educational abilities (see the previous chapter). Most of the participants reported that they are aware of policies and strategies regarding IE. However, when asked to name some of the policies and strategies, many of the teachers listed teaching methods rather than policies. Seemingly, the teachers, are not aware of the policies or do not have access to them or misconstrue policy with teaching strategy. As such, the teachers may tend to be hostile to IE practices. No participant explicitly seemed to be erudite about the NEP (2016) and the NSIE (2017-2021). However, these two documents are crucial in the implementation of IE in Malawi. The prominent awareness is that the government wants all learners to receive education within mainstream schools. At School B in Chikwawa district, more participants managed to list IE policies and strategies such as Agenda 2063, National Education Standard Policy Number 13 and the Disability Act. Yet, the three documents are not prominent IE stipulations.

From the BSP, which was the substantial theory for the study, the teacher exists in his or her microsystem with its own influencing factors (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Such factors include all learners, e.g., the teacher's encounters with learners form a mesosystem such as a class. It also includes policy documents. For the teacher to be well oriented in terms of policies and strategies, there is a need for in-service training such as workshops on IE (see Appendix 13, the Analytical Memo). When a teacher attends a workshop on IE policy or strategy, it would eventually form an exosystem. Thus, the teacher and the policy come in contact without the presence of learners (with physical disabilities).

Whatever the workshops focus on, the aim is to enhance the learning experiences of the learner. The teacher becomes the conduit for the information received in the various workshops to the learner. Equally, the argument speaks to the macrosystem in the BSP, which notes that policy is a blueprint for IE implementation (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In allocating the policy within the BSP, it suggests the interactions that exist within the teachers' environment involve the LPD. The theoretical underpinning of my argument (on the first objective of the study) is that

since the government forwards a policy as a blueprint, the teachers receive the policy and its stipulated practices adversely. During one of the interviews, participant INT-A4 noted that

> *One of my roles as a teacher, government instructs me to treat students equally so there is that equity in terms of us that should be handled. Another thing is provision of infrastructure, government makes sure that those that have problems they are assisted according to the problems. If it is mobility, they are deliberate structures that are constructed to make sure that students that have problems with movement, maybe they use wheelchairs they should be able to move from each class to another. Those that have problems with sight they are given sometimes braille machines so they can write. I look at it as a very good initiative and effort which government is offering.*

From what Participant INT-A4 noted, teachers implement IE practices, not as a necessary philosophical shifting of education, but as a response to the government's demands for inclusion rather than what is necessary for the best interests of the learner. The argument resonates with the DSC, which was a supplementary theory for the study. The DSC argued that policies on IE are usually a political response to exclusion (Clough & Corbett, 2000). Concerning the roles of mainstream teachers, as suggested in the NEP and NSIE, it is justified that IE in Malawi is a political response. Since the exclusion of LWD from mainstream education received international condemnation, the Malawian government made a determined effort to respond (see the second chapter), to portray a political will for IE to succeed in Malawi.

6.3.2 Teacher practices are more compatible with inclusive needs than special needs

On the second objective of the study, the findings alluded that policy focus needs to move from special needs to inclusive needs through the implementation of IE in a system approach rather than the linear top-down model. When a policy emphasises more on special needs than inclusive needs, undesirable elements of SE are misconstrued and sustained in mainstream education (Ishida et al., 2017; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018; Ishida, 2019; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). Ideally, 'inclusive needs' have more to do with learning barriers that learners, including those with disabilities, experience while 'special needs', implies segregation from the rest of the learners. The BSP is capable of moving policies and practices from special needs to inclusive needs, which suits well with the intentions of IE (Soni et al., 2020). Based on the responses of the participants (see Appendix 13, the Analytical Memo),

inclusive needs will accommodate all learners in Malawian mainstream primary and secondary schools, and perhaps in other countries that share IE situations with Malawi.

Mainstream teachers are theorised in the microsystem as the influencing dynamic towards LWD (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Swartz, 2015; Smit, Preston, & Hay, 2020; Soni et al., 2020). Over time, while aligning to the BSP (chronosystem and the PPCT), the mainstream secondary teachers are devising inclusive practices that improve learning experiences of LPD. The teachers' practices are, however, challenging the issue of special needs to inclusive needs that target LWD, to cater for all learners. On this note, study findings show that mainstream teachers are using curriculum differentiation, the support of specialist teachers and adapted teaching and learning materials to help all learners, including LPD, in achieving curriculum aims. The sections below elaborate on the teachers' inclusive practices in mainstream secondary education.

6.3.2.1 Curriculum Differentiation

According to my study's findings, IE has significantly contributed to the achievement of curriculum aims for all learners, whether they have physical disabilities or not. The findings suggest that teachers use a variety of teaching methods to assist learners to achieve curriculum aims (see the previous chapter for the definition of Curriculum Differentiation). For IE, the idea is to support LPD to reach the same levels of epistemological access as their peers. This speaks more to the mesosystem in the BSP, whereby LPD and peers interact in the classroom environment for curriculum achievement. Thus, the mainstream teacher becomes the conduit between the epistemological levels of the LPD and their peers. The intention is not to deal with the physical disability but to instead reduce learning barriers that the disability creates (Choi et al., 2020; Smit et al., 2020). Consequently, the teachers' practice on curriculum differentiation challenges the stipulations of the national IE policies and strategies that tend to limit the teaching strategy to LWD (see Appendix 13, the Analytical Memo). Albeit this, the national IE policies and strategies may not be the source of the constraint since "the social, political and economic changes taking place internationally, therefore, and their ramifications at the macro and micro levels of social life in different parts of the world, have an impact on the kinds of issues we face in terms of overcoming barriers to [IE]" (Armstrong, 2003).

6.3.2.2 Support of Specialist Teachers

Study participants responded that there is considerate physical disability support in the schools in general and in their classrooms in particular. The findings indicate that some of the physical disability support available in the research schools is from specialist teachers (see the first chapter, section 1.10.3, on the role of specialist teachers), who work in resource centres within mainstream school premises. The supporting systems that exist in the schools portray a nested system of IE implementation (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Swartz, 2015). Naturally, a mainstream teacher is a microsystem, and so is a specialist teacher. According to Bronfenbrenner's conceptualisation of BSP, when the two consult each other, in the best interests of the learner, they form an exosystem (since the learner is not present in the consultations). However, with the way my study adapted the BSP, it is possible that the consultations may also fit into the mesosystem (a conduit of microsystems) whether a learner (another microsystem) is directly involved or not, since the mainstream teacher was my core unit of analysis (see Figure 2).

The participants reported that teaching all learners together, regardless of disabilities, is not an easy task (see the previous chapter). From the study findings, IE was a misunderstood concept in the early years of its inception. It is now established among mainstream teachers although the practice has political connotations (Clough & Corbett, 2000). One significant finding from the study is that most of the LPD tend to learn at a slow pace. The situation may not, as the findings confirm, necessarily be because of the actual physical disability factor, but rather the learning barriers which ensue because of the physical disability. Thus, the support of specialist teachers remains crucial in IE. However, it seems there are no policy directions on the coordination between mainstream and specialist teachers (see Appendix 13, the Analytical Memo). The roles in the NEP and the NSIE assigned to specialist teachers are in the context of special schools rather than mainstream schools.

6.3.2.3 Adapted Teaching and Learning Materials

The participants indicated that instructional changes for physical disability accommodation remain a challenge. Of the four research schools in the Lower Shire, only School B, by design of its infrastructure, accommodate physical disabilities. Thus, the IE support, including "*relevant teaching and learning materials, predominantly pour to this school than the others*" (JE6-2020). However, the government is also admitting LPD in the other schools. In that

situation, the other schools embrace the IE philosophies amid inaccessible physical structures and instructional media.

Amid the abovementioned problems, the mainstream teachers adapt the teaching and learning materials to include all the learners in the learning processes. The support that the mainstream teachers get from specialist teachers plays a major role in their practice. Thus, it is evident that the IE practices in schools take a nested system approach but the national IE policies and strategies seem not to portray the same. One participant noted in an interview that the use of adapted teaching and learning materials "*helps me to plan carefully so that to get the required and relevant teaching and learning materials that can help the disabilities to learn better. For example, the teaching and learning materials should be visible, large enough and audible too. If in case of use of radios or whatever should be audible*" (INT-D2).

6.3.3   Teacher-oriented strategies can mitigate disparities and enhance IE

The study findings revealed that IE in Malawi is facing many hurdles. Still, expectations are held for IE to succeed. The success will require efforts from all stakeholders involved in IE through interactions of the educational systems (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). This argument points to the concept of the interrelatedness of systems in Bronfenbrenner's BSP. Systems do not exist independently of each other. Instead, they are interrelated and form supporting systems for all learners, including LPD (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Teachers' interpretations of the IE policies and the strategies directly inform how they produce action for inclusivity (Mpu, 2018; Ishida, 2019; Magumise & Sefotho, 2020; Saloviita, 2020). However, the government's political influences on the mainstream teachers, through policy directives, are also key in IE implementation (Clough & Corbett, 2000). To mediate the policy directives and the teachers' practices, there is a need to proffer teacher-centred strategies that are informed by both policies and experiences. The sections below discuss how the IE policy-to-practice disparities can be lessened and inclusivity enhanced.

6.3.3.1 Lessening the problems faced in IE

The NEP (2016) and the NSIE (2017-2021) acknowledged that many problems are affecting IE implementation in Malawi (see the previous chapter). Seemingly, many of the problems affect the preparedness of mainstream teachers for inclusive classes. Thus, based on the study's

findings, one of the key teacher-oriented strategies to mitigate policy-to-practice disparities and enhance IE is to lessen the problems faced in IE. This strategy could involve the following:

- Mainstream secondary teachers should receive repeated training on inclusive teaching practices through continuous professional development programmes (see Appendix 13, the Analytical Memo). Through the development programmes, the mainstream teachers will also have opportunities to contribute to IE policy formulation, thus facilitating the interactions necessary for IE systems (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Presently, much of the in-service training focus on specialist teachers (see the previous chapter, section 5.5.2.3). Yet, the national IE policies and strategies direct the mainstreaming of LPD.

- Adequate teaching and learning resources, materials and aids should be channelled to the mainstream secondary schools. Some schools were initially for learners without disabilities. Since the mainstreaming of LWD, the resources, materials and aids that the learners use in the special schools should now be available in mainstream schools. This strategy speaks to the transformative systems needed for the government's political response to exclusion to succeed (Clough & Corbett, 2000). The channelling of the resources will lessen the problems that the mainstream teachers face in supporting LPD and align with policy directives of promoting education in inclusive settings (see the previous chapter).

- The number of specialist teachers in mainstream secondary schools should be increased by either recruiting more teachers or transforming special schools into mainstream schools. The special schools are in a dilemma on whether to also enrol learners without disabilities (Ishida et al., 2017; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). The specialist teachers that are in special schools should be deployed to mainstream schools to assist the mainstream teachers. The special schools may transform just like the mainstream schools are transforming with the inception of IE. The transformation will require:

  – Government and its education partners constructing classrooms that are accessible to physically disabled learners at mainstream secondary schools.
  – Restructuring the existing curricular for teacher education and provide workshops that include differentiating instruction strategies.

- Lessening the teacher: learner ratio to provide more attention to the diverse needs of all learners in mainstream education.
- Increasing the number of boarding facilities for mainstream schools in the districts so that more LPD live within the school premises.

6.3.3.2 Using a theory-based approach for IE policy formulation

From a microsystem perspective, one of the situations that have led to a mismatch between policy and practice in IE is the tensions that exist between policy ideals and context realities for teachers and learners (see the second chapter, literature review). According to the NSIE (2017-2021), the mismatch has occurred because policies place more emphasis on special needs in mainstream education instead of inclusive needs. In the Malawian context, the saga of abduction and killing of persons (including learners) with albinism (see the second chapter) illustrates the argument. From the BSP, the expectation of the microsystem (where learners, teachers and parents are situated) is that the macrosystem (where policies and legislative texts originate) would consider inclusive needs that would help to enhance IE and promote inclusive societies (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; UNESCO, 2009). Instead, the macrosystem (the government and policymakers) is dormant rendering teachers, the implementers of IE, voiceless.

Arguably, the current national IE policy formulation approaches are not from a systems perspective. For example, the exosystem offers an excellent platform for policymakers to meet teachers before and after they go to the classes in the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Thus, the interface of teachers and policymakers in the exosystem should not initially be about orientating them to new policies but instead soliciting ideas for policy formulation. From a BSP, the policy-to-practice disparity comes about because the national IE policies tend to copy international protocols at the expense of systems within Malawi (see the second chapter). The mesosystem and the exosystem could inform policy formulation at a national level. Instead of Malawi's IE (as a whole BSP) looking to its systems such as the exosystem for insights into policy formulation, it imitates stipulations outside the BSP, which do little in enhancing IE. Therefore, future national IE policy formulation should embrace the BSP or any other theoretical perspective that departs from a systems perspective. This will help the policymakers to formulate IE policies that speak to the realities of inclusive schooling in Malawi, which has also been suggested in other contexts such as South Africa (Smit et al., 2020).

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6.3.3.3 An engaging evidence-based approach to IE policy implementation

Often, Malawi adopts a policy or a strategy that in one way or the other addresses the issue of inclusion in greater society as well as in education. However, little is done on the ground to educate all learners successfully together (see the second chapter). Much as class performance would determine whether IE implementation is occurring, the shortfalls faced may originate from outside the classroom environment (Majoko, 2019). The outside classroom context would include the teachers' interface with IE policies and strategies. Thus, it is imperative to focus on the outside classroom environment when implementing IE policies and practices. This will ensure that the mainstream teachers have a point of reference or evidence for diversity and inclusivity when they come to the actual teaching in an inclusive classroom.

The evidence-based approach to IE policy implementation would also call for policy formulation to rethink the practicalities of mainstream education and assign explicit roles to mainstream teachers. This speaks to the resonance of the mesosystem (policy implementation) with the macrosystem (policy formulation) of Bronfenbrenner's BSP. It further speaks to the political influences that the macrosystem has on the mesosystem and the microsystem (Clough & Corbett, 2000). The thrust is that the influence of the macrosystem on either microsystem or mesosystem should be less political and more evidence-based. The journey towards IE is somehow dependent on sound government policies and strategies (Slee, 2013). This is even more true about the teachers' attitudes toward diversity. The attitudes (like those presented in the previous chapter, section 5.5.5) of a mainstream teacher before LPD enter his or her classroom should be equally important as the accommodations a mainstream teacher provides to LWD during the learning processes. In essence, a holistic approach is needed for IE policy implementation to achieve parity between policy and practice.

The proposed approach would also require collaboration for IE to be enhanced. Majoko (2019) observed that "the competency of teachers to collaborate with community stakeholders, government ministries, and professionals to garner their support in facilitating the holistic development of children is fundamental for inclusive education" (p. 11). Majoko's observation does not only entail that teachers are critical in IE, but that their attitudes and knowledge ensure a successful implementation of IE. Majoko's research, which "examined key competencies teachers need for inclusive education", acknowledged that "other variables, including attitudes and the availability of support, could also be influential" (Majoko, 2019, p. 12).

Majoko's research, which may be relevant in the context of the Malawian secondary education, recommended that "future research could explore the influence of pre-service and in-service training content, process, environment, and assessment on the competencies of teachers in inclusive education" (Majoko, 2019, p. 12). Malawi's IE could put a particular interest in the environment (for IE policy interpretation and transition to practice) as proposed by Majoko (2019). The environment for policy interpretation and understanding could equally be an essential aspect in the successful implementation of IE. Seemingly, a viable solution rests in the mainstream teachers' practices yet is overshadowed by policy and the cascading of knowledge and practices as stipulated in the policy. The policies should firmly adopt acceptable and evidence-based school practices and incorporate them into their stipulations. In doing so, the problem of mismatches between policy and practice may be mitigated.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

The study looked for possible limitations at three levels; design, data and impact. The research design constructed seemed ideal until the implementation. Some of the aspects were changed to suit unforeseen circumstances. For example, the gatekeeper prohibited any research discussion on albinism. The reason may be that the issue is contentious in Malawi due to abduction and killing of PWA (see the second chapter). In terms of data, the study expected to understand the experiences of mainstream secondary teachers. Expectedly, some teachers did not know any of the IE policies and strategies. In that situation, the innovation was to probe factors that inform their IE practices. On impact, the issue of IE was not solely for mainstream secondary teachers. Many factors came into play, including specialist teachers' assistance and community involvement. Much as the study assumed some positive impact on mainstream teachers, it may not significantly contribute to the more prominent IE implementation.

Nonetheless, my study was one of the efforts toward that goal since mainstream teachers are the frontrunners in IE policy and practice implementation. As far as IE is concerned, "there has been little empirical study within low- and middle-income countries on how to effectively prepare teachers to educate children with disabilities" (Carew, Deluca, Groce & Kett, 2019, p. 229). Thus, my study provided some insights into how to prepare teachers for inclusive classes. Importantly, the study focused and provided data on a research area (the Lower Shire region in Malawi) of which little literature on inclusive schooling practices in this region was available. Yet, the area was one of the sites where Special Education was introduced by the missionaries.

6.5 Recommendations for Further Research

The study, informed by both literature and findings, makes the following recommendations:

- Investigate the role that specialist teachers play in implementing IE policies and strategies within mainstream secondary education. The current understanding seems to suggest that specialist teachers are affiliated with mainstream schools.

- Ascertain the impact of teachers' disabilities on inclusive schooling. From the schools visited during the study, many of the specialist teachers were persons with disabilities themselves. Conversely, many of the mainstream teachers did not have disabilities. A study to ascertain the impact of this situation on IE should be considered.

- Observe the mainstream secondary teachers in their classroom practices. Lesson observations with mainstream secondary teachers to ascertain how they practically translate national IE policies and strategies stipulations into learning activities and strategies may inform the enhancement of inclusion in mainstream education.

- Explore the mainstreaming of inclusion into initial and in-service teacher education within the context of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The teachers complained about the lack of teaching and learning materials. Practically, the government may not meet the demands of all the schools. Apart from specialised resources such as braille machines, teachers may think of recycling waste to prepare instruction media. Thus, research in this area may be a step towards a sustainable IE.

6.6 Conclusion

Simply putting learners with physical disabilities in a mainstream classroom does not equate to inclusive education. Malawi's IE continues to face difficulties due to the unpreparedness of mainstream teachers on interaction with national IE policies and strategies. The study strongly recommended that IE for LPD should be initiated from outside the classroom. Thus, headteachers, mainstream teachers and specialist teachers should prepare supportive systems in tandem with national IE policies and strategies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Map of Malawi

Appendix 2: Participant Selection Process

Pilot Study → Informed → **Main Study**

Pilot Study ↓ Involved → **2 Participants Questionaire**

Main Study ↓ Involved → **33 Participants Questionnaire**

2 Participants Questionaire → Informed → **33 Participants Questionnaire**

2 Participants Questionaire ↓ Identified → **1 Participant Interview**

33 Participants Questionnaire ↓ Identified → **8 Participants Interview**

1 Participant Interview → Informed → **8 Participants Interview**

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Appendix 3: Concepts Map

Appendix 4: Inclusive class

Appendix 5: Original Bioecological Systems Model
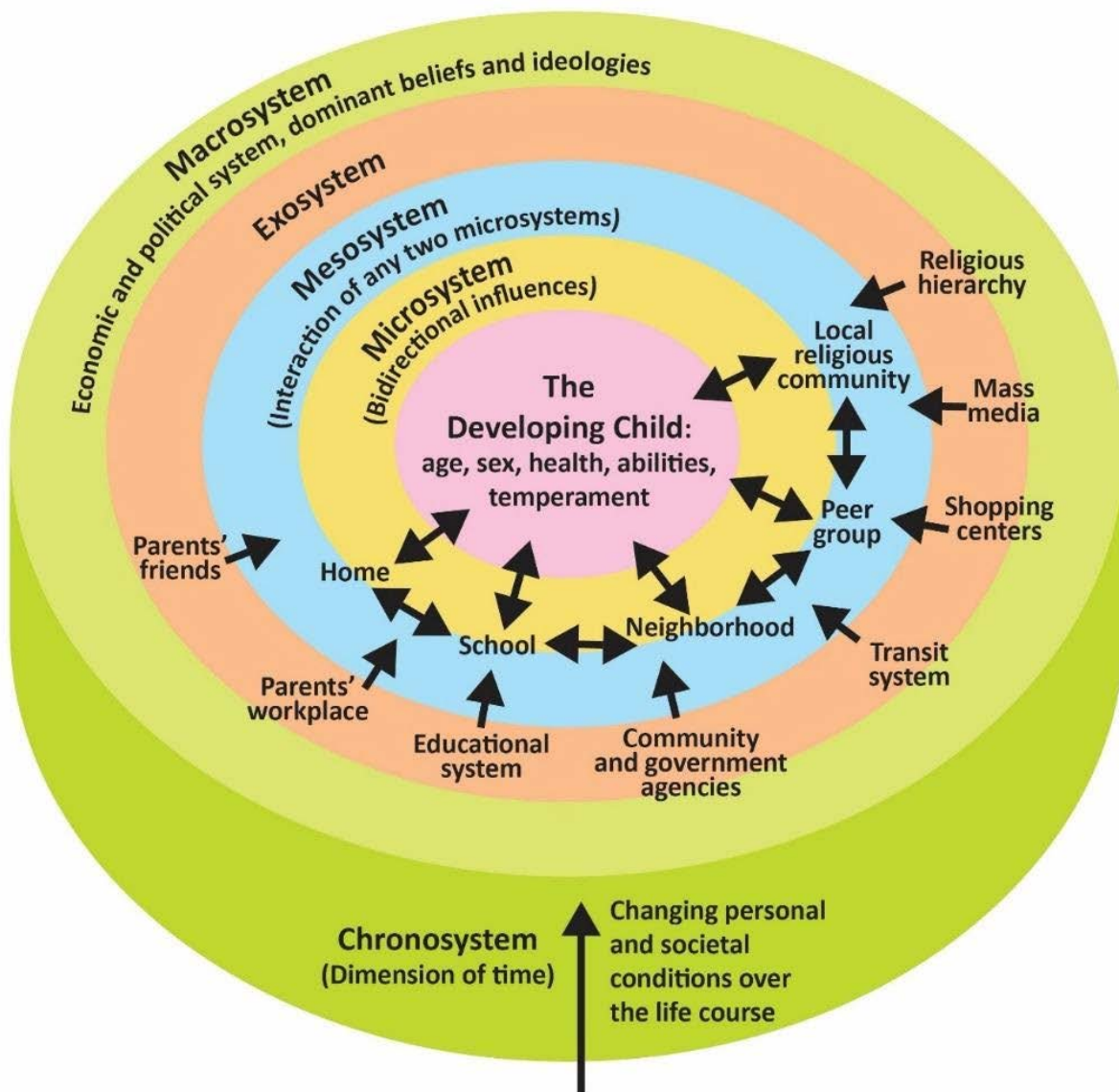
Source: Libretexts

ACCESS LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

<div align="right">

Rhodes University

Drosty Road

Grahamstown 6139

</div>

The Education Division Manager

South West Education Division

P.O. Box 386

Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi

21 September 2019

Dear Sir,

<u>**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**</u>

I am a registered Master's student in the Department of Education at Rhodes University. My principal supervisor is Bev Moore and my co-supervisor is Zintle Songqwaru. The proposed topic of my research is Policy and Practice of Inclusive Education for Mainstream Secondary Teachers Supporting Learners with Physical Disabilities in the Lower Shire, Malawi. The purpose of my study is to explore inclusion strategies for mainstream teachers in supporting learners with physical disabilities with reference to national policies and strategies on inclusive education. I am hereby seeking your consent to interviewing teachers and administering questionnaires within secondary schools in the Lower Shire in the South West Education Division.

To assist you in reaching a decision, I have attached to this letter: a copy of a provisional ethical clearance certificate issued by the University and a copy of my research proposal approved by Higher Degrees committee at the University.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows: Ben Souza, Student: souzaben@outlook.com; Bev Moore, Supervisor: b.moore@ru.ac.za /; Zintle Songqwaru, Co-supervisor: z.songqwaru@ru.ac.za.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide you with a feedback through a copy of my thesis. Your permission to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Ben de Souza

Appendix 7: Gatekeeper Permission

Telephone: (765) 99/580392
Fax: (765) 01 8/0 821
E mail: swcd@sndp.org.mw

All correspondences should be addressed to:
The Education Division Manager

In reply please quote: Ref. No. SWED/1/1

SOUTH WEST EDUCATION DIVISION
PRIVATE BAG 386
CHICHIRI
BLANTYRE 3
MALAWI

Prof. Joanna James

Chair: Human Ethics Subcommittee

Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee

P.O Box 94

Grahams town 6140

South Africa

Date 19th December 2019

Dear Professor ,

RE: GRANTING PERMISION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH BY BEN SOUZA

I am writing to certify that BEN SOUZA has been granted permission to carry out an academic research under the topic "**policy and practice of inclusive education : Inclusive strategies for mainstream secondary school teachers in supporting learners with physical disability in lower shire, Malawi.**"

The permission is granted at the targeted schools as long as normal classes are not interrupted in any way and that individual consent is obtained by the researcher.

Your Sincerely,

Wilson K Ellard

EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER
SOUTH WEST EDUCATION DIVISION
PHRMO

1 9 DEC 2019

PRIVATE BAG 386,
CHICHIRI BLANTYRE 3

Appendix 8: Document Review Guide

No.	Details of the Document under review	Inclusive education guidelines given for mainstream schools and teachers	Comments on perspectives from which the guidelines given (political, social, cultural, human rights etc)
1	National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2017-2021		
2	National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan 2018-2023		
3	National Education Policy 2016		
4	National Special Needs Education Policy 2008		
5	The Disability Act 2012		

INTRODUCTION:

I am Ben de Souza from Rhodes University in South Africa. I am conducting a study in the Lower Shire of Malawi that explores how teachers who support or have responsibility to support learners with physical disabilities prepare themselves. If you would like to share your experiences, please do so by answering the questions below in the spaces provided.

PLEASE NOTE:

- This questionnaire may take between 30 to 60 minutes to complete all the questions.
- You are not forced to answer all the questions.
- If you can no longer continue filling in the questionnaire for any reason, please feel free to inform me of your decision in person or through souzaben@outlook.com.
- Would you please return the completed questionnaire to me directly when I am at your school or submit it to the headteacher's office and mark it clearly for my attention.

No.	Questions *Please write your answers in spaces provided*	For researcher's use *Please do not use this space*
1	What do you understand by the term "inclusive education"?	

2	How long have you been teaching inclusive classes?	
3	What are some of the physical disabilities that your learners have or have had in your class?	
4	How many learners with physical disabilities do you have or have had in your class in total?	
5	What do you think your role is when teaching learners with physical disabilities and/or when you plan your lessons?	

6	Have you attended any training or workshop on inclusive education? (Encircle one option) **Yes / No**	
7	Which professional activities or trainings have made you aware of inclusive education?	
8	Are you aware of any policies and strategies on inclusive education? (Encircle one option) **Yes / No**	
9	If **Yes** to Question 8, what are some of the policies? If **No** to Question 8, what assist you as you plan to teach learners with physical disabilities?	
10	If you answered **Yes** for Question 8, do you use the policies to plan for your teaching? (Encircle one option)	

	Yes / No	
11	If you answered **Yes** to Question 10, how do you make use of the policies in your teaching. If you answered **No** to Question 10, what are reasons why you are not using the policies although you are aware of them?	

| 12 | What steps or activities do you do in assisting learners with the following disabilities during lessons in a mainstream class?

    • Visual impairment

    • Hearing impairment

    • Mobility difficulties (wheelchairs, etc)

    • Other disabilities | |

13	How do the methods you use to support learners with physical disabilities enable the learners to be successful in achieving curriculum aims?	
14	What should be done to ensure successful implementation of inclusive education in Malawian secondary schools? *You can include your thoughts on teachers and other factors.*	

FINAL STEPS:

1. Will you be willing to take your answers provided here further in an interview? Choose one.

Yes / No

2. If you are willing to attend an interview, how can I contact you later (you can provide a phone number, e-mail address or suggest any other way on how you should be informed): _____

Appendix 10: Interview Schedule

Participant   : …………………………….

Interview Number   : …………………………….

Date and time   : …………………………….

INTRODUCTION

I am Ben de Souza from Rhodes University in South Africa. I am conducting a study in the Lower Shire of Malawi that explores how teachers who support or have responsibility to support learners with physical disabilities prepare themselves. If you would like to share your thoughts, please say whether you are comfortable for me to ask you some questions.

PLEASE NOTE:

- This interview may take us between 30 to 60 minutes to complete all the questions.
- You are not forced to answer all the questions.
- If you are not comfortable with a question, please indicate so.
- If you can no longer continue being interviewed for any reason, please feel free to inform me in the course of our conversation.
- Please indicate whether you need a short break in the course of the interview.
- I will be recording your voice. Please indicate whether you are comfortable with it or not.
- Before the interview, during the interview and at the end of the interview, feel free to ask me questions about this study.

No.	Questions *Notes*	Coding *Key responses*
1	From your personal perspective, why do we have "inclusive education" in Malawian secondary schools?	
2	What is happening currently in terms of inclusive education within your school?	

3	What are your experiences in teaching learners with physical disabilities?	
4	What is your understanding of the goal of inclusive education policies?	
5	How do the policies define your role as a teacher in a mainstream classroom?	
6	Do you think the policies give you enough guidance in terms of what you can do to plan for teaching mainstream classes?	
7	What do you think are gaps in inclusive education policy and practice, especially related to learners with physical disabilities in Malawi's secondary schools and how can they be addressed?	
10	If you were given an opportunity to contribute to formulation of inclusive education policy to help learners with physical disabilities in Malawi, what issues would you include and would not include. Why?	

Appendix 11: Excerpts from Research Journal

Appendix 12: Extended Data Indexing

Source Number: 1; Data Source: Document Review	
Index	**Index Code**
Document Review 1 of National Education Policy (NEP)	DR1-NEP
Document Review 2 of National Strategy on Inclusive Education (NSIE)	DR2-NSIE
Source Number: 2; Data Source: Questionnaire	
Index	**Index Code**
Questionnaire at School A in Chikwawa district by Participant A1	QN-A1
Questionnaire at School A in Chikwawa district by Participant A2	QN-A2
Questionnaire at School A in Chikwawa district by Participant A3	QN-A3
Questionnaire at School A in Chikwawa district by Participant A4	QN-A4
Questionnaire at School A in Chikwawa district by Participant A5	QN-A5
Questionnaire at School A in Chikwawa district by Participant A6	QN-A6
Questionnaire at School A in Chikwawa district by Participant A7	QN-A7
Questionnaire at School A in Chikwawa district by Participant A8	QN-A8
Questionnaire at School A in Chikwawa district by Participant A9	QN-A9
Questionnaire at School A in Chikwawa district by Participant A10	QN-A10
Questionnaire at School A in Chikwawa district by Participant A11	QN-A11
Questionnaire at School B in Chikwawa district by Participant B1	QN-B1
Questionnaire at School B in Chikwawa district by Participant B2	QN-B2
Questionnaire at School B in Chikwawa district by Participant B3	QN-B3
Questionnaire at School B in Chikwawa district by Participant B4	QN-B4
Questionnaire at School B in Chikwawa district by Participant B5	QN-B5
Questionnaire at School B in Chikwawa district by Participant B6	QN-B6
Questionnaire at School C in Nsanje district by Participant C1	QN-C1
Questionnaire at School C in Nsanje district by Participant C2	QN-C2
Questionnaire at School C in Nsanje district by Participant C3	QN-C3
Questionnaire at School C in Nsanje district by Participant C4	QN-C4
Questionnaire at School C in Nsanje district by Participant C5	QN-C5
Questionnaire at School C in Nsanje district by Participant C6	QNC6
Questionnaire at School C in Nsanje district by Participant C7	QN-C7

Questionnaire at School D in Nsanje district by Participant D1	QN-D1
Questionnaire at School D in Nsanje district by Participant D2	QN-D2
Questionnaire at School D in Nsanje district by Participant D3	QN-D3
Questionnaire at School D in Nsanje district by Participant D4	QN-D4
Questionnaire at School D in Nsanje district by Participant D5	QN-D5
Questionnaire at School D in Nsanje district by Participant D6	QN-D6
Questionnaire at School D in Nsanje district by Participant D7	QN-D7
Questionnaire at School D in Nsanje district by Participant D8	QN-D8
Questionnaire at School D in Nsanje district by Participant D9	QN-D9
Source Number: 3; Data Source: Interviews	
Index	**Index Code**
Interview at School A in Chikwawa district with Participant A	INT-A
Interview at School A in Chikwawa district with Participant A	INT-A
Interview at School B in Chikwawa district with Participant B	INT-B
Interview at School B in Chikwawa district with Participant B	INT-B
Interview at School C in Nsanje district with Participant C	INT-C
Interview at School C in Nsanje district with Participant C	INT-C
Interview at School D in Nsanje district with Participant D	INT-D
Interview at School D in Nsanje district with Participant D	IN-D
Source Number: 4; Data Source: Research Journal	
Index	**Index Code**
Journal Entry 1 in 2019	JE1-2019
Journal Entry 2 in 2019	JE2-2019
Journal Entry 3 in 2019	JE2-2019
Journal Entry 4 in 2019	JE4-2019
Journal Entry 5 in 2019	JE5-2019
Journal Entry 1 in 2020	JE1-2020
Journal Entry 2 in 2020	JE2-2020
Journal Entry 3 in 2020	JE3-2020
Journal Entry 4 in 2020	JE4-2020
Journal Entry 5 in 2020	JE5-2020
Journal Entry 6 in 2020	JE6-2020

Appendix 13: Extended Analytical Memo

Question 1			
What are the national policy directives and strategies on IE in mainstream secondary schools?			
Category: National policy directives and strategies on IE			
Themes and Sub-themes	**Colour Code**	**Evidence**	**Data Index**
Problems in IE			
• Lack of coordination		"Furthermore, due to the absence of a well-defined education policy, different key players in the education sector have not been well coordinated.	DR1-NEP pp 2
• Undefined roles for stakeholders		Additionally, their roles and responsibilities have not been clearly defined thereby prompting non-conformity to set standards among stakeholders."	DR1-NEP pp 2
• Unqualified human resource		"There is also lack of qualified special needs lecturers and necessary facilities in teacher training colleges." "The shortage of well-qualified personnel at basic as well as secondary education compromises quality of education for all."	DR1-NEP p. 7 DR2-NSIE p. 17

• Lack of teacher expertise		"Teachers' lack of experience, skills and knowledge to teach diverse classrooms e.g. use of sign language, curriculum differentiation skills."	DR2-NSIE p. 16
• Focus on SE than IE		"analysis reveals that existing teacher education programmes focus more on special needs education rather than inclusive education."	DR2-NSIE p. 17
• Disparities due to physical disability		There are also disparities according to gender (in favour of boys), location of schools, income of parents and/or guardians and physical ability of students. Orphans and other vulnerable children (OVCs) are also disadvantaged.	DR1-NEP p. 6
• Poor infrastructure		"School infrastructure is another important aspect in inclusive education. These include: classrooms, sanitation facilities, play grounds as well as water points. Studies have shown that school infrastructure has direct impact on access, quality and equity of education. Extant data indicates that school infrastructure in Malawi still remains a challenge. This is evident from the shortage of classrooms, sanitation facilities, water points as well as play grounds within the education sector."	DR2-NSIE p. 17

Directives for IE			
• Enhance IE		Equitable access to quality and relevant special and inclusive secondary education is enhanced	DR1-NEP p. 7
• Mainstream IE in teacher education		"Special and inclusive education is mainstreamed" in teacher education	DR1-NEP p. 8
• Promote education in inclusive settings		The goal of the strategy is to ensure that learners with diverse needs in Malawi have equitable access to quality education in inclusive settings at all levels through the removal of barriers to learning, participation, attendance and achievement.	DR2-NSIE p. 11
Strategies for IE implementation			
• Raise IE awareness		"Prepare IE awareness raising tools e.g. manual, brochures, radio/TV programmes. Orient teachers, caregivers, teacher educators, education managers, inspectors, advisors, PEAs, community members and learners on IE."	DR2-NSIE p. 21
• Increase human resource capacity		"Train and recruit teachers, caregivers and support assistants for IE"	DR2-NSIE p. 21
• Strengthen IE leadership		"Train school managers and administrators on IE management and administration"	DR2-NSIE p. 21
• Improve teacher education		"Develop inclusive education training manual for ECD, primary and secondary teacher education."	DR2-NSIE p. 23

Themes and Sub-themes	Colour Code	Evidence	Data Index
• Enhance IE partnerships		"Hold quarterly meetings for stakeholders on IE at different levels"	DR2-NSIE p. 25
• Appropriate curriculum		"Develop a handbook on curriculum differentiation."	DR2-NSIE p. 26
Mainstream schools/ teachers' roles			
• Providing remedial lessons		"Provide remedial lessons to learners with diverse needs that have transitioned to mainstream schools and the existing learners with diverse needs."	DR2-NSIE p. 28
• Inclusive teaching		"teach learners with diverse needs."	DR2-NSIE p. 27
• Collaborate with community on IE		"Collaborate with local communities on IE issues."	DR2-NSIE p. 27
• Inclusive planning		"Incorporate NIES in school planning."	DR2-NSIE
• Safeguarding rights of learners		"Establish and/or strengthen child, protection mechanisms to ensure rights of learners with diverse needs are safeguarded"	DR2-NSIE p. 28

Question 2

How do mainstream teachers translate practices from national IE policies and strategies?

Category: Mainstream teachers' practices

Themes and Sub-themes	Colour Code	Evidence	Data Index
Physical disabilities supported			
• Visual impairment		I make sure their work is available whether in braille or large prints	QN-C1

		While those with visual impairment, I do more talking than writing. Groupwork is done much.	QN-B1
• Deaf		-Illustrations and writing on chalkboard enable the deaf to read and learn	QN-B4
• Lameness/ crippled		-Put them in groups together with their fellow students -Give them a seat where they can learn effectively according to their choice	QN-B3
• Hearing impairment		I prepare the work and assign a student to sit close to the student and assist the learner as I am not fully conversant with sign language	QN-C7
		Using locally available resources to demonstrate some of the terminologies Using sign language Using big font on the chalkboard	QN-C2
		Those with hearing impairment, I minimise movement and look straight at them when talking so that can read my lips. I also do more writing than talking	QN-B1
		During teaching, making full use of the chalkboard	QN-B2
IE professional activities and trainings			
Sensitisation		Sensitisation on physical disabilities at division level	QN-A1

Incentives		SMASE incentives	QN-A8
		School based incentive trainings on special needs education	QN-C1
		Knowledge and skills acquired from SMASE incentives; however, these incentive courses do not focus on inclusive education	QN-D6
Teacher education		Knowledge from the college where they included a course on special needs education	QN-A2 QN-A4 QN-A6 QN-D1 QN-D2
Planning for teaching			
• Inclusive content and activities		That is to ensure that all students get the right material regardless of disability.	INT-C3
		Planning activities that will incorporate all the learners and motivate their interests	QN-A6
		It ensures that learners get the same education regardless of their disabilities	QN-C3
		The teacher prepares a lesson which is inclusive e.g. involving the learners with different disabilities so that they should participate in the course of teaching and learning in a classroom situation	QN-D3

		Because with the students we need inclusive education for them to learn very well, that's why we are able to incorporate these students in the classes.	INT-C1
		My role is to prepare work that can cater for their learning	QN-D2
		During lesson planning, I plan according to their disability to take them aboard. I consider activities which are participatory – group discussions or pair discussion, research, presentation	QN-C5
		Involves making use of real situations for teaching and learning	QN-D2
• Policy adherence		The role of a teacher is to implement whatever the government has planned by when it is teaching methodologies	INT-B4
		They help us to teach those students who are of some disabilities regardless of their status or their age and so on, we are able to teach all	INT-C1
		What we want is good education that's why we are including inclusive education for all students to learn	INT-C3

		I think that is the issue of inclusiveness, you know the policies of government, you know Malawi has adopted many programs worldwide at African level. For example, we have a good example agenda 2063 which I learnt at catholic university, and that is goal…aspiration number one goal one, it says so one, no child should be remained behind, no child should miss education and that is including learners with disability.	INT-B6
		By planning lesson notes in advance By use of teaching and learning aids or by improvisation Plan my lessons to cooperate or involve all	QN-A1 QN-A6
Relevant materials		As a teacher when am planning I know that in the class am going attend, am going to teach I have these students who have this type of challenge, so I always make sure I consult my friend in the resource department and see what resources do I have that I can use in a class that is a mixed back and be able to achieve my success criteria, because what I want by the end of the day is that whether one is deformed or not but leaning should take place.	INT-A4

		Some of the duties are those to provide required or relevant activities that can cater the learning of the disabilities, caring for the disabilities in terms of…	INT-D2
		This helps me to plan carefully, so that to get the required and relevant teaching and learning materials that can help the disabilities to learn better. For example, the teaching and learning materials should be visible, large enough and audible too. If in case of use of radios or whatever should be audible.	INT-D3
		To be resourceful in accessing proper and relevant teaching and learning materials	QN-D9
		When planning lessons, I first consider students with physical disabilities rather than the abled ones. Sometimes I find relevant teaching and learning aids that they should understand better	QN-C6
		This requires thorough preparations and appropriate teaching and learning materials suitable for all students	QN-B1
Equal opportunities		To provide equal opportunities to learners regardless of their disability, because we have a teacher who was trained in the field of inclusive education	INT-A4

		That education for all, they want everyone to access education, regardless of his or her physical outlook or else, yah in all they want every child to go to school and be assisted in the same way.	INT-B4
		Involves giving learners same opportunities to all learners and placing them in the same class and the same school	QN-A4
Relevant attention		It is not simple task, it is not simple in the sense that…let's say for a person, a learner who has hearing impairment it means it will take a long time before he catches on what is going on in the class, when those that are able are ahead of her or him his lacking behind, so as a teacher I always make sure that tasks are distributed according to the abilities and attention is also given differently. Those that are able am able, those that are bright they have no problems in learning they are fast learners I also pay them attention that is equivalent to their abilities and the ones that have challenges I also make sure that am giving them much time so that they are assisted.	INT-A6
		Letting them sit in front of the class	QN-A5

		The disabilities receive special attention if there is need to do so	INT-D3
		-Writing large print exercises -Seating them in front of the class to those who have hearing difficulties	QN-A1
		Making sure that every learner has achieved the intended outcomes for the lesson; hence focussing more on the disabled so that they learn just like their friends	QN-A3
		To ensure that those with learning difficulties are assisted in their own way, so that they achieve.	QN-A8
		-Remedial lessons -Making them active in class -Putting them in front -Making them repeat what has been said by the teacher	QN-A4 QN-A6
		-Placing the disabled in front of the class close to the teacher -Provision of special attention to the disabled -Giving remedial lessons	QN-D7
		One on one talk after lesson	QN-B4
• Appropriate teaching methodologies		The knowledge of the importance of varying teaching methods to suit learners in question Not sure if they are really achieving because most of them fail tests and examinations	QN-A3

		Use of different methods of teaching: lecture, groupwork, teaching aids	QN-A2
		Include teaching methods that will make students active and that will not put learners with physical disabilities at a disadvantage	QN-A7
		When planning the lesson, different methods and activities should be included to suit all learners	QN-A4
		The methods help them to feel included not discriminated therefore, enhance a positive attitude towards learning	QN-A2
		Including different methods and activities that can help them improve their understanding of the lesson content while in class.	QN-A9
		-The methods help learners to be more interactive during lessons delivery -Provide a positive climate in them, hence they are able to have a sense of belonging	QN-A8

		-Giving them large print notes including examination papers -Giving them front seats in the classroom -Deaf, giving them summaries of what you are teaching, so that they try to follow in the course of the lesson	QN-D1
		This has assisted the physical disability students to achieve a lot for example participatory methods has assisted these learners to interact with their fellow students effectively. If you ask questions, they are able to answer the questions rightly.	QN-C3
		Making sure that methods used in the lesson are accommodative They encourage participatory learning in learners with disabilities as well hence learning takes place and are able to excel during national examinations	QN-B1
		To ensure that lesson delivery is learner-centred and that is it used various teaching and learning methods that accommodates learners of different physical disabilities	QN-B4
Supporting learning			
Peer learning		Inclusive education to my understanding is very good means of providing education, because	INT-A4

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		basically we look at a learner like someone who is a seeker of knowledge so if maybe it was like teaching those who have difficulties separately from the ones that have no problems it could create some sort of what I can call segregations, which could result in hindering the learning process but when it is a mixed group where there are those that are able and others they are less able they at least share in the process. They share knowledge, they share ideas, and they share skills. So yah I look at it as a fair play a fair ground where learning can take place without any feeling of disassociation.	
		They can learn more from the disability and abled ones, as well the abled ones can learn more about the needs of the disabilities as they are working together.	INT-D2
		I involve learners in experiments which are conducted in groups	QN-A9
		In most cases I incorporate the students with disabilities with some students who are abled to assist these students during lessons	QN-C3

		It is very important because disabled learners as well as that are able, they all have got interest, as a teacher my role is just to help each learner reach maximum of his ability, regardless of whether he has a deformity or not.	INT-A6
Maximum potential			
		Assisting learners to get feedback to what is being taught	QN-A7
Non-segregation		The disabilities don't feel segregated as they are together with the non-disabilities.	INT-D2
		Of course, both disabilities and abled are learning together, they help one another, they don't segregate they chat together	INT-D3
		All learners are placed in a general education classroom fulltime regardless of their disabilities with the support of teachers	QN-A3
		The proper learning, as well as to uplift disabilities, up to the level that can assist them to have self-independence	INT-D2
		Avoid discrimination when teaching	QN-A10
		Both the abled and the disabled to mix together in the sitting plan to avoid segregation	QN-D2 QN-D3
		The disabled feel that they are not discriminated	QN-B2

Question 3

What strategies can mitigate policy-to-practice disparities and enhance IE?

Category: Mitigating Strategies

Themes and Sub-themes	Colour Code	Evidence	Data Index
Teacher Professional Development			
• Orientation and training		We were informed of the disabilities so we are having some insight to teach these students	INT-C1
		Establish development programs which will take care of capacity development in the context of aligning technical assistance with associated commodity aid, training requirements and improved structural and systemic approaches in the execution of the policy	DR1-NSIE p. 12
		At first, we were having some difficulties but when we went on the insight, we were able to handle these students very well.	INT-C3
		Teaching Service Commission (TSC) will take into account professional development programs,	DR1-NEP p. 12
		Teachers should be involved or engaged in continuous professional training in diverse issues affecting learners with different disabilities	QN-A10

		The methods that I use somehow enable students successful in achieving curriculum. However, trainings are needed for teachers like me so that I should use better methods which can help learners with physical disabilities	QN-C1
		More trainings to all teachers to impart them with necessary knowledge on how to help the learners properly. If teachers are well trained in all disabilities then learners will be successful in achieving curriculum aims. My plea goes to Min. of education to help us to know these policies	
		I feel it is good to teach these students inclusive education, but the other side is we should be oriented on how we can handle these students.	INT-C1
		Another thing is training, I feel apart from that we have specialist teachers but we should, I would love if there were some insight organized at a school level maybe so that teachers who are handling such classes should be able to help at that level before it is taken to the specialist…	INT-A4

		There must be special training teachers so that they have knowledge and skills to handle these special students	QN-D8
		When I landed in form one, at one point when I was teaching it came a time when I was asking questions, so I saw certain boy in front of me having the hearing aids, so I thought it was the headsets so other students had to say no he has a problem, so yah like that.	INT-B4
		especially those teachers who haven't gone far with this kind of special needs, sometimes it's difficult at the same time it could be no problem if the government initiates this called insights for even teachers of other fields.	INT-B6
		Extra training should be given to teachers as not all have undergone a real training on inclusive education	QN-A4
		To ensure that there is successful implementation of inclusive education in Malawian secondary school I think teachers should be oriented on how to handle these students with physical disabilities	QN-C5
		Teachers should receive in-service training in inclusive education	QN-B1

		Teachers should be trained on how they can effectively teach learners together, because for example sign language can be necessary at times, but they have no knowledge at all.	QN-A3
• Sign language			
• Teaching methodologies		The disadvantage is you try to cater the ability of the disabilities, at the same time the abled ones tend to be slowed down when they have dire need to learn fast.	INT-D2
		The learners with disability are not able to catch up with friends very easily, so teachers have to work extra hard in order to make them catch up with friends and if not, they cannot catch up.	INT-D3
		The teacher should always use different teaching methods	QN-A6
		Include several activities so that all learners are assisted	QN-D5
Support for Inclusive Education			
• Political will		In most cases the government does not provide anything but we, we ourselves because of what the insight was we are able to teach the mainstreams.	INT-C1

		This issue is controversial one and it needs seriousness, the part of the government even the implementers themselves, teachers. The government must pump in resources, all resources, most of the resources, I mean a lot of resources, financially, materially even physically they should come in and intensify this program, otherwise it is just a word, people are just talking there is this inclusiveness but on the ground things are not ok we need to be serious, as a government.	INT-B6
		Government should walk-the-talk by supplying teaching and learning and assessment resources for learners with disabilities	QN-B6
• Resources		I think the most important gaps are the learning materials, we don't have enough learning materials which we can assist these students.	INT-C3
		One thing I can include is to come up with special materials that can assist the disabilities to learn better.	INT-D2
		Government should provide enough teaching and learning materials.	QN-A1
		Purchasing of school braille	QN-A7
		Government must provide teaching resources for these students	QN-D1

		Teaching and learning materials should be readily available in schools e.g. braille materials	QN-B1
• Specialist teachers		A specialist, so whenever we have problems, we always contact this gentleman who always gives us some direction and how we can ably handle those that are challenged.	INT-A4
		We have only one specialist teacher and therefore that is a barrier, you see these guys are many here, we have many people with disability here, have one specialist only at this institution already this is a barrier.	INT-B6
		We have specialists here, some teachers who are not specialists, they assign them with assignments then the specialists translate to their brail, yah something to do like that.	INT-B6
		Government must post special teachers for SNE	QN-D7
• Teacher: learner ratio		In addition, the Teacher: Pupil ratio does not allow a teacher to concentrate more on one or two learners, leaving others aside. Besides there are more slow learners who need further assistance from the same teacher. The work just becomes too much.	QN-A3

• Infrastructure		Provision of infrastructure, governments makes sure that those that have problems they are assisted according to the problems. If it is mobility, they are deliberate structures that are constructed	INT-A6
		The Ministry of Lands and Housing will provide advice on education infrastructure design.	DR1-NEP p. 13
		Construction of school blocks that are inclusive	QN-A5
• Model inclusive schools		Come up with at least two boarding schools in each district and equip them with various teaching and learning materials	QN-B4
Learner involvement			
• Sporting activities		I could think of maybe introducing sporting facilities that will motivate learners who are disabled in some ways. From my personal experience at present is that, when you are organizing sporting activities most of those that are disabled...have deformities they are not included so I would campaign for the provision of these sporting activities or sporting equipment so that those that have challenges, mentally, physically or what they should also be able get into that.	INT-A6

		The Ministry of Youth Development and Sports will be responsible for youth empowerment and the promotion of sporting activities, recreation and provision of sporting facilities to Malawi youth.	DR1-NEP p. 13
• Learner groupings		Another thing I could also think of creating are maybe I can call a group. A grouping of these students that have problems, organize them like an association of some kind, so that they should be able to share their experiences and come up with what they think, because they are the ones that are going through such challenges. So, they are better placed to give suggestions on what best should happen to them but in that case, I would like to say I would create an environment where students with learning disabilities they are able to expose and express their feelings, that way then we can make them better part of the society	INT-A4

Stakeholder engagement			
• Communities and parents		So inclusive education I would want as many people as possible to me involved in this, in terms of planning and coming up with ideas on how the program can be made more effective that it. But it is the right direction in as far as education is concerned.	INT-A6
		Communities, families and parents will provide general management of schools, mobilize resources, and provide learners with their physical and social needs.	DR1-NEP p. 13
		This strategy encourages networking and collaboration of stakeholders as one way of strengthening efforts aimed at improving efficiency of the education system and its structures.	DR2-NSIE p. 11
• IE advocacy		The Ministry of Persons with Disability and the Elderly will advocate for equalization of opportunities and rights of persons with disabilities.	DR1-NEP p. 12
Separate learners			
• Special attention		I cannot accept the disabled to be learning together with the abled ones, because they will not be able to compete on the exams and they	INT-D2

		will lack behind all the time, because they need special attention.	
		This strategy stresses the need for educating all learners in an inclusive setting; however, some learners with SEN will continue receiving their education in special settings as the system moves towards full inclusion.	DR2-NSIE p. 11
• Science subjects		The students with disabilities opted not to take science subjects especially Chemistry	QN-D1

Appendix 14: Ethical Clearance Certificate

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

7 January 2020

Ben Souza

Review Reference: 2019-0438-2082

Email: g19s0001@campus.ru.ac.za

Dear Ben Souza

Re: Policy and Practice of Inclusive Education: Inclusive Strategies for Mainstream Secondary Teachers in Supporting Learners with Physical Disabilities in Lower Shire, Malawi

Principal Investigator: Mrs. Bev Moore

Collaborators: Mr. Ben Souza

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee (RUESC) – Human Ethics (HE) sub-committee.

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on the completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloging number allocated.

Sincerely

Prof Joanna Dames

Chair: Human Ethics sub-committee, RUESC- HE

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Appendix 15: Letter to Head of Institution

Rhodes University

PO Box 94

Grahamstown 6140, South Africa

21 September 2019

Dear Headteacher,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

My name is Ben de Souza, and I am a master's degree student at Rhodes University in South Africa. The research I wish to conduct for my master's full thesis requires me to interview mainstream teachers and administer a questionnaire to them. This research will be conducted under the supervision of Bev Moore and Zintle Songqwaru.

I have sought permission from the education division office, see the attached letter. This letter serves to seek formal consent to approach the teachers as participants for this research. Further, I would be grateful if I may access the enrolment of learners with physical disabilities in your school. I request your permission to visit your school during second term to conduct my research as outlined in my proposal.

I attach a copy of my research proposal which includes copies of the consent and assent forms to be used in the research process. Once I have received clearance from Rhodes University, I will provide you with the ethical clearance letter. As part of this I undertake to ensure that the name of your school and all participants will be replaced with pseudonyms and that all the material I collect as part of the research will be accessible only to myself and my supervisors.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide you and the teachers with access to the research findings. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on souzaben@outlook.com.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Ben de Souza

Appendix 16: Informed Consent Form

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(Participant)

Project Title:

Policy and Practice of Inclusive Education for Mainstream Secondary Teachers Supporting
Learners with Physical Disabilities in the Lower Shire, Malawi

Ben de Souza from the Department of ***Education***, Rhodes University has requested my
permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration
have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to ***explore inclusive strategies for mainstream
   teachers within teaching and learning space in supporting learners with physical
   disabilities.***

2. The Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/
   may request to see the clearance certificate.

3. By participating in this research project, I will be contributing towards ***reflection on
   preparation for inclusive classes to maximize the benefits of inclusive schools for
   learners with physical disabilities.***

4. I willingly participate in the project by ***filling in a questionnaire and/or attending an***

interview.

5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research.

7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that

   a. the following risks are associated with my participation: ***disrupted times to attend personal commitments and/or school's extracurricular activities.***

   b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: ***mutually agreed times to submit the questionnaire and/or attend the interview.***

   c. there is a ***little*** chance of the risk materialising.

8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of ***thesis and journal article.*** However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.

9. I will receive feedback regarding the results obtained during the study. The researcher will cross-check with me his preliminary results before publication.

10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research, or my participation will be answered by ***Bev Moore*** (*b.moore@ru.ac.za***)** ***and Zintle Songqwaru*** (*z.songqwaru@ru.ac.za***).**

11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

13. I agree that my voice may be recorded, transcribed and quoted.

I, ……………………………………….. have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand, and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

……………………………….   ………………………….   ………………………….

Participant's signature   **Witness**   **Date**

Rhodes University

PO Box 94

Grahamstown 6140

South Africa

Dear Mainstream Teacher,

RE: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled "Policy and Practice of Inclusive Education for Mainstream Secondary Teachers Supporting Learners with Physical Disabilities in the Lower Shire, Malawi". The aim of this research is to explore and understand inclusion strategies for mainstream secondary teachers in supporting learners with physical disabilities. Your participation is important to the implementation of inclusive education policies in Malawi and to enhancement of schooling experiences for learners with physical disabilities in your school and classroom.

The research will be undertaken through questionnaire and interview. Your participation in the research is anonymous and your identity will not be revealed. The collection of this data will require between 30 minutes and 1 hour for each method (questionnaire and interview).

If you agree to participate, I will explain in more detail what would be expected of you, and provide you with the information you need to understand the research. These guidelines would include potential risks, benefits, and your rights as a participant. Once this study has been approved by the Rhodes Ethics Committee you will be sent the letter of ethical approval.

Participation in this research is voluntary and a positive response to this letter of invitation does not oblige you to take part in this research. To participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm that you understand and agree to the conditions, prior to any questionnaire completion and interview commencement. Please note that you have the right to withdraw at any given time during the study.

Thank you for your time and I hope that you will respond favourably to my request.

Your sincerely,

Ben de Souza