

**An Exploration of Inclusive Education For Children With  
Special Educational Needs in Kenya Twenty Years After The  
Salamanca Statement**

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## ABSTRACT

Kenya is said to be among the few countries of sub-Saharan Africa that have achieved Universal Primary Education, Education for All and achieved most Millennium Development Goals. However, research shows for some children access is limited in mainstream schools, while others lacked access at all. Kenya is a signatory to the 1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action and committed to creating inclusive schools. This study explores the challenges facing the creation of inclusive schools and efforts being made to include children with special educational needs in mainstream schools. It identified the impact of inclusion for children with SEN after the Salamanca Statement in 1994 and teachers' understanding of disability and inclusive education. It concludes with an analysis of the barriers to inclusion within the mainstream schools studied.

The research strategy explored a single revelatory case for an in-depth understanding of the current inclusion in a Kenyan rural Education Zone through a qualitative paradigm. An interpretivist epistemology approach is adopted to construct the interview questions and observations. A representative sample of seventeen teachers from government-funded primary and secondary schools and ten parents in one focus group were the target of this study. What has emerged from the research using thematic data analysis to establish findings, was that mainstream school teachers have limited understanding of disability, special educational needs and inclusive teaching. As with communities in general, stereotyping, discrimination and negative attitudes were found to be more personalised with teachers. In addition, lack of teacher education on special needs, professional development and confidence to teach children with diverse needs in the same classroom with non-disabled peers were significant barriers.

Based on the study's findings, policy shift is recommended to promote inclusive education. Funding is required to enable schools to develop a supportive child-friendly environment that is physically safe, emotionally secure and psychologically enabling, supported by intensified teacher training and professional development. Most of all, there is a need to develop inclusion support materials guided by policy and legislation to support the implementation of inclusive schools. This study contributes to academic knowledge by extending the concept of inclusive education as the most operational means of combating segregation in education, discriminatory cultural ideologies and building cohesive communities. This research will provide insight to teachers, parents, children, communities, policy formulation, and will ignite an inclusion debate in Kenya and other developing nations in a similar position.

**Key Words:** Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Disabilities, Special Educational Needs, Policy

## **DEDICATION**

This achievement of this thesis is wholeheartedly dedicated in your memory, Lydia Theru mwari wa Kiige, my grandmother, friend and mentor. You saw the learning potential in me and facilitated financially and emotionally my continued stay in primary and secondary school. Through inspiration and tough love, you were clear on the purpose of education and how it could change my life for the better. Were it not for you, I would have no doubt dropped off somewhere along the way.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ALLFIE	-	Alliance For Inclusive Education
CS	-	Cabinet Secretary
CSoED	-	Cabinet Secretary of Education
EFA	-	Education for All
FPE	-	Free Primary Education
GoK	-	Government of Kenya
KICD	-	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KISE	-	Kenya Institute of Special Education
MoE	-	Ministry of Education
MoEST	-	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
NACOSTI	-	National Council for Science and Technology
RoK	-	Republic of Kenya
SEN	-	Special Educational Needs
UK	-	United Kingdom
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	-	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UPE	-	Universal Primary Education

## LIST OF OUTPUT FROM THIS STUDY

Gachago, V. W., 2016a. *Management, Leadership and Governance of Inclusive Education in Kenya: Perspectives 20 Years After Salamanca Call*. Paper presented at the 1st National Conference on Inclusive Education (NCIE). Nairobi: Kenya.

Gachago, V. W., 2016b. *Teacher Training for Inclusive Education: An Assessment of Efforts in Kenya to Prepare Teachers for Inclusive Education*. Paper presented at the 1st National Conference on Inclusive Education (NCIE). Nairobi: Kenya.

Gachago, V. W., 2016c. Field Work Experience. Article published at the NTU Graduate News Magazine. Nottingham: UK.

Gachago, V. W., 2016d. *Exploring inclusive education in Kenya for learners with Special Educational Needs Twenty Years after the Salamanca Statement: Research methods*. Paper presented at the Nottingham Trent University Doctoral School conference. Nottingham: UK.

Gachago, V., 2016e. *Exploring inclusive education in Kenya for learners with Special Educational Needs Twenty Years after the Salamanca Statement*. Poster presented at the Nottingham Trent University Doctoral School conference. Nottingham: UK.

Gachago, V., 2017. Exploring inclusive education in Kenya for learners with Special Needs Twenty Years after Salamanca Conference. In Gruzdeva, K. and Kotzee, B, eds. *Papers from the School of Education Doctoral Research Conference*, University of Birmingham: UK.

Gachago, V., 2019. Book Review: Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Children 4-11 *Support for Learning*, 34(2), pp.231-232 by Glazzard, J. and Bligh, C. (2018). Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Children 4-11 Years, St Albans: Critical Publishing.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

*Mugi Ni Mutare*

*One who is wise must have been advised*

(Proverb from the Kikuyu community of Kenya)

### **1.0 Study overview**

This introductory chapter will provide background information on the context of the study and positionality as a researcher. The chapter will also present the statement of the research problem, the purpose and significance of the study. A deeper exploration of the issues of inclusive education will be done in chapter two. The research methods, findings and interpretation are in the subsequent chapters three, four and five. Finally, the conclusion, recommendations and relevance of the study are discussed in detail in chapter six.

### **1.1 Background of the research and general context**

This research focuses on the most significant challenge facing school systems (Clark et al. 2018) to have emerged internationally over the past thirty years (Florian, 2014) regarding how to educate all children, irrespective of need, together in the same classrooms in the same schools. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has helped many nations identify the most appropriate approaches to be used in education to effectively reduce discrimination and marginalisation for children with SEN (Special Educational Needs). For Kenya, milestones have been reached in providing education in mainstream schools for children without additional needs, but the same cannot be said of children with SEN. Consequently, this study encapsulates the dilemma of how to transform mainstream schools into centres of learning that can cater for diverse needs. The next section gives a brief profile of Kenya which does not directly relate to disability issues but will inform the reader on the general context of the study.

#### **1.1.1 Kenya's demographic profile**

Kenya, officially known as the Republic of Kenya (RoK), is located in Eastern Africa and had a population of approximately 48 million people in 2014 (RoK, 2014). Although the next national census to determine population size will be conducted in 2019 by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (Knbs, online), current national population reviews state the population of Kenya rose to approximately 50 million people in September 2018

(Countrymeters, online)<sup>1</sup>. English is the official language and is used as the language of instruction and examination in schools, while Swahili is the national language. Both languages are taught as compulsory subjects from Standard 4 upwards (RoK, 1999) and are predominantly used for daily communication in major urban centres. The local language dominates all aspects of life in rural Kenya and in all catchment areas, is used as the medium of instruction in primary schools up to Standard 3 (see Table 1 for Education establishment). Research has established that Kenya has the potential to be one of Africa’s success stories because of achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets set by United Nations member states in September 2000 (World Bank, 2018). United Nations global monitoring report has noted achievement of the MDG goal of basic education by 2015 (UNESCO, 2016a). Such efforts illustrate that Kenya has undertaken a substantial restructuring that have primarily galvanised sustained economic growth, social development and political reforms (World Bank update, 2018). However, despite numerous achievements, data show that Kenya is faced with numerous challenges as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Major accomplishments and challenges

Achievements	Sustainable development challenges
Near universal primary school enrolment	Education curriculum
UPE/FPE/FDSE, and increased funding for education	Governance
Highly skilled workforce	Poverty
Growing youth population	Universal health care
Narrowed gender gaps in education	Climate change
Reduced child mortality rates	Loss of biodiversity
Increased spending on health	Low investment and productivity of firms
New constitution	Skills gap in market requirements
Improved infrastructure	Manufacturing
A dynamic private sector	Affordable housing
Pivotal role in the region	Food insecurity

Source: World Bank update (2018); RoK (2010); MoE (2017).

Table 1 highlights the rapid developments made in Kenya to transform the lives of citizens. Emerging evidence shows that low-income families living on less than a dollar a day (Ohito, 2014) especially families of disabled people are likely to be most affected by these challenges due to being marginalised and disadvantaged groups (Ncube et al. 2018).

<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://countrymeters.info/en/Kenya> 1

According to Manji (2015), parliamentarians and civil society cite insufficient legal frameworks to address the challenges facing the country but with devolution in place Kenya stands a better chance of ensuring sustainable development and governance reforms. Besides, although not directly related to disability issues, devolution could probably contribute immensely to the way schools are structured, as explained in the following section and in Chapter 7.

### **1.1.2 Political reforms**

The achievement of political reform in Kenya was within the new constitution in 2010 (RoK, 2010). In this period a bicameral legislative house, devolved county government, a constitutionally tenured judiciary and electoral body were introduced (World Bank, 2011). Kenya was divided into 47 devolved political and administrative counties and each given discretionary power to create solutions to their diverse needs. The primary objective of decentralisation being to devolve power, resources and representation down to the local level (RoK, 2010), and timely disbursement of financial resources to communities (Okong'o and Kyobe, 2018). Overall, with devolution, public participation has become an integral component of governance (Ministry of Devolution and Planning, 2016). Each of the ministries was granted autonomy including Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE). However, the National Government kept exclusive power of a few ministries such as the Ministry of Education (MoE). Hence, education policies of primary, secondary and special schools were not decentralised.

Apart from assuring tranquillity regarding underlying latent political issues in Kenya, the overall framework of decentralisation has the vital role of addressing the most significant challenges of sustainability of resources facing the national government (Manji, 2015). There has been some success regarding devolved authority for example, communities have had the opportunity to make independent decisions without having direction imposed by the central government (Kilelo et al. 2015). Hence, it could be said devolution appears to offer hope to marginalised communities and vulnerable groups because of the discretionary power communities been given and the ease with which communities can access resources. Consequently, this study finds devolution valuable to the creation of inclusive schools since communities are legitimately empowered financially and, at a decision-making level, can contribute to the development of inclusive programmes and activities.

It is possible that with devolution communities have an accessible platform to improve schools and remove physical barriers that hinder access. Moreover, since early childhood programmes have been decentralised, it is a good starting point for setting up inclusive classes within basic education. There is some evidence to suggest that devolution could be a reasonable approach of empowering communities in matters such as inclusive education, as seen in the case of Scotland. Although there are some significant differences between Kenya and Scotland, there are also similarities, such as positive transformation of devolved powers that have given the Scottish Parliament the opportunity to produce Scottish solutions to Scottish problems (BBC Bitesize, online). After devolution victory in the 2011 election, the new government, the Scottish National Party (SNP) gained control over tax and resources previously shared with the other UK countries: England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The immediate implication of devolution was the waiver of university fees for Scottish students at Scottish universities, thus saving students at least £2000, in contrast with students from other parts of the UK who continue to pay their own tuition fees (BBC Bitesize online; Whittaker, 2018). This case demonstrates that devolution represents a significant change for mainstream schools and communities since communities get considerable autonomy over tax revenues and public service management (Ministry of Devolution and Planning, 2016). According to Winkler (1989), change mostly emanates from communities rather than from policy planners. Taken together, the prospect of fundamental changes in politics, economy and society is likely to happen owing to local government's leeway to fund projects that meet the immediate needs of the communities.

One area of need for local communities is the design of and accessibility to schools. Recent evidence shows communities need to comply with the Education Act (Cap 211), Public Health Act (Cap 242) and the Ministry of Public Works Building Standards to develop accessible public facilities (Nthenya, 2011). The School Safety Standards Manual in Kenya (2008) is explicit that school structures should be appropriate, adequate and devoid of any risks to users or those around them. However, investigations show that central government has still not yet succeeded in implementing the Persons with Disability Act law (RoK, 2004) which enforces the creation of specific policies for the design of accessible public buildings for inclusive schools. Therefore, devolution offers a unique opportunity to improve schools, quality and equity of education service provision (Piper, 2018). It seems possible that teachers, with the support of other community members including their local governments, can move the agenda for accessible child-friendly schools. If Sriprakash (2010) findings in

rural India are accurate, teachers can move school reforms that could lead to better restructuring of the physical aspects of their schools, reorganise classrooms for learning and solicit mobility aids for children with special needs. Teachers could also advocate for aspects of safety and comfort in schools (Hastings and Wood, 2002).

### 1.1.3 Education establishment

The Kenyan education system is divided into four levels, which are: (i) pre-primary education (kindergarten and nursery) (ii) primary education (iii); secondary education; and (iv) middle level establishments of education. The structure and organisation of the divisions of education and training is articulated in the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 (RoK, 2005) and further clarified in the Basic Education Act of 2013, paragraph 42, which explains the structuring of education to enable learners to access education and training as being: ‘in a sequence, and at a pace that may be commensurate with the individual learner’s physical, mental and intellectual abilities as well as available the resources’ (RoK, 2013a:28). Table 2 below demonstrates the structure of education and training at all levels.

Table 2: Structure and organisation of learning stages

Age	Current level	Level	Period	Establishment
2-3	Kindergarten	Early childhood development education and child care	1-2 years	Kindergarten in private and voluntary provision
4-5	Nursery	Early childhood development education	2-3 years	In nursery classes with primary school, County government funded, charitable organisations support or private sector
6-14	Standard 1-8	Primary (Compulsory)	8 years	In primary schools, National government funded or private sector
15-18	Form 1- 4	Secondary	4 years	In secondary schools. National government funded or private sector
18+		Vocational Training (pre-employment training as craftsman; artisan; or on the job-training	2-3 years	In government funded technical colleges or with independent providers
		College certificate courses	2-3 years	In colleges
		Higher education (Tertiary-diploma courses; higher national diploma courses	2-3 years	
		Bachelor’s degree	4 years	
		Master’s Degree	2-3 years	In universities
		Doctoral Degree	5-9 years	

The current organisation of education is the 8-4-4 system, meaning that education provision covers 8 years of primary, 4 years of secondary and 4 years of university education. However, this system is in the process of being replaced with a new 2-6-6-3 system which is said to have a more practical framework that nurtures learner competence-based skills and talent. The actual implementation in 2018 will cover pre-school up to Standard Four Grade and move progressively up the system, with the first pioneering students completing high school in 2027. In effect, 8-4-4 will continue until the last Form Four secondary candidates in 2026. According to Sifuna (2016), the government’s own assessments have shown that the current 8-4-4 system lacks flexibility, does not respond to individual needs, and school-leavers lack employability skills. Figure 1 below shows the basic education structural model of the proposed new education system:

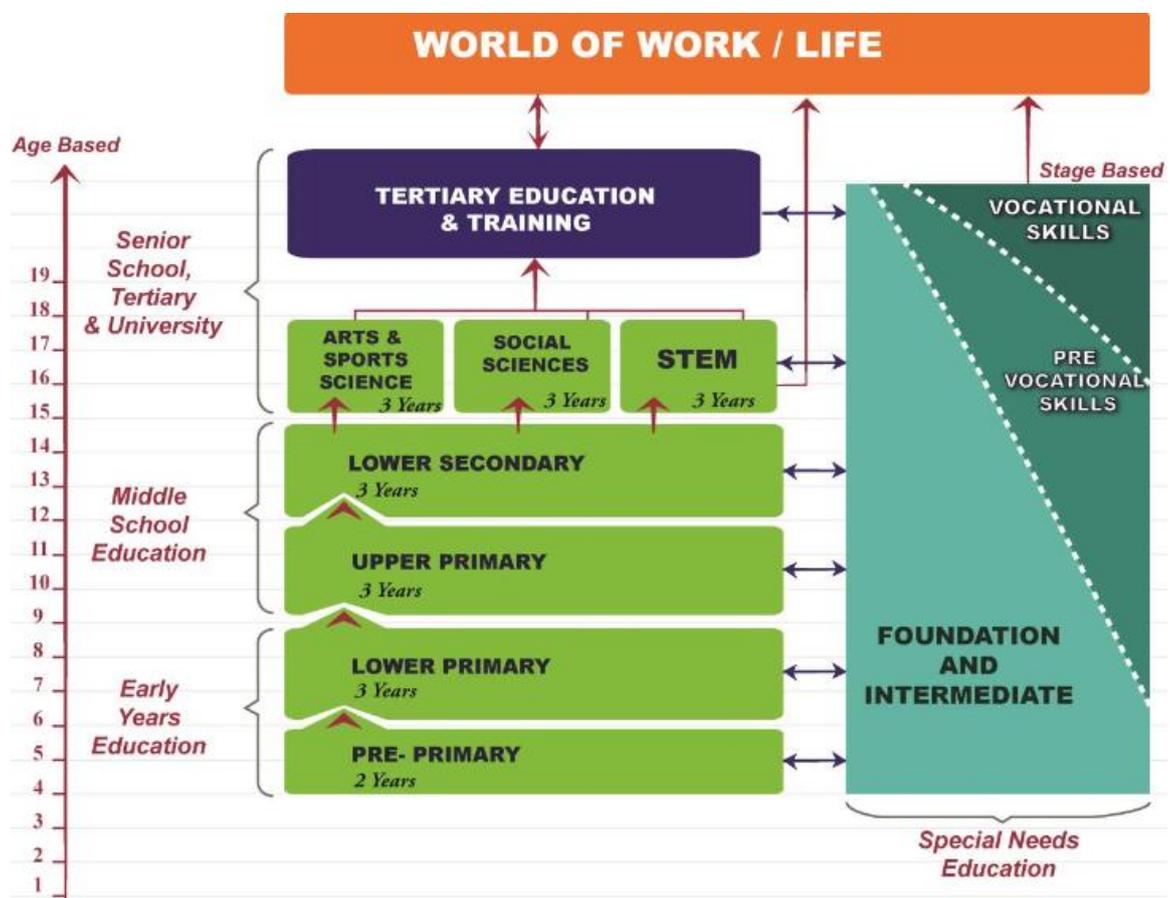


Figure 1: Basic education organisation  
STEM: Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics

(Adapted from Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), 2017:28.

Figure 1 shows the new grades and levels some of which have already been implemented in with new education system. Out of 21,718,362 primary schools (MoE, 2018), a pilot project

for the new education system was to be initiated with 470 sampled early years schools (MoE, 2018). However, one interesting agenda of the new education system is to phase out primary and secondary national examinations by 2021 and replace it with progressive and continuous assessments (ibid). Conversely, the same goals that guide the current system of education will continue to guide the new system and are shown in Table 3.

*Table 3: Kenya's National Goals of Education*

1	Foster nationalism and patriotism and promote national unity;
2	Promote the social, economic, technological and industrial needs for national development;
3	Promote individual development and self-fulfilment;
4	Promote sound moral and religious values;
5	Promote social equality and responsibility;
6	Promote respect for and development of Kenya's rich and varied culture;
7	Promote international consciousness and foster positive attitudes towards other nations;
8	Promote positive attitudes towards good health and environmental protection.

Source: KICD (2017).

The goals shown on Table 3 above are those that guide the current system of education in Kenya and will continue to guide the upcoming one. Nevertheless, despite being said to be improved the new curriculum has not escaped criticism from governments, agencies and academics one them being the Kenya National Union of Teachers (Knut: 2017). The teachers' organisation has expressed concerns of implementing a new curriculum when there is a visible barrier of teachers' level of preparedness; preparation of learning materials and lack of in-depth study of best practices for all learners including teachers (Ouma, 2017b).

## **1.2 The study context**

The government of Kenya recognises the intrinsic human value of education, underpinned by strong moral and legal foundations (Kindiki, 2011). To this effect, some shifts in policy regarding education have been enacted since independence in 1963. These policies have signified improved educational opportunities for all children and increased enrolment at all levels of education. Equally, towards this goal, the government has endorsed various global policy frameworks in recognition of equal rights in education and committed to the right of every child to access to education. International policy frameworks, endorsed and signed by government, have influenced SEN policy. In particular, Article 26 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UN, 1948) remains as applicable today as in 1948, when it proclaimed:

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit (UN, 1948)

The United Nations (UN) drew global attention to all member states that every child has a fundamental human right to education and that this right cannot be achieved unless all children access education. This extraordinary vision and resolve of policy formulators was reiterated in the 1990s when UNESCO held conferences around the world to identify standards of universal Education for All children, without exception. The World Education Conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 marked a global movement by the international community towards providing quality basic education to all (EFA) to children, youths, and adults (UNESCO, 1990). The Jomtien conference was particularly momentous because it ignited global efforts to improve the equity of primary education in an environment where diversity is acknowledged, intentional efforts are made to meet individual needs differentially and access increased (Piper et al. 2018; Sifuna, 2007). It was also conceded that a large number of vulnerable and marginalised group such as children with SEN were excluded from education systems worldwide (Miles and Singal, 2010). International efforts to promote education intensified following the understanding that Education for All was an entitlement. Notably, at this stage of the emergence of Education for All principle, the approaches to be adopted towards teaching children with SEN together with non-disabled peers in the same school was not addressed.

However, it is the UNESCO conference held in Salamanca, Spain in 1994 that gained strength and momentum across the globe as the education conference that agreed on an enhanced approach of combating discriminate on in education against children with SEN. The Salamanca conference is considered as a milestone in the history of inclusive education because of the emergence of the inclusive education principle; the starting point of new thinking in SEN (Yeo et al. 2011). Furthermore, acknowledging, reaffirming and reiterating the global commitment to Education for All (UNESCO, 1994). Most importantly, urging the international community towards inclusive mainstream schools. Therefore, of all the UNESCO conferences, it is the Salamanca conference that challenged attitudes towards the education of children with SEN and was influential regarding inclusive education (Miles and Singal 2010).

The Salamanca Conference provided the platform to affirm the principle of EFA: to discuss the practice of ensuring that children and young people with SEN are included in mainstream school and take their rightful place in a learning society. By renewing the UN's 1994 pledge concerning human rights, the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Educational Needs Education and which came to be known as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). Including Kenya, 92 participating countries and 25 international organisations (ibid) signed the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action. By advocating mainstream schools as the most effective means of reducing discrimination and building an inclusive society, UNESCO ignited the ethical imperative for UN member countries to embrace diversity and enable children with SEN equal opportunity, including educational provision in mainstream schools (Thomazet, 2009).

To address gaps identified in education, a follow-up conference was held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. The Dakar Framework for Action reaffirmed the Statements of the previous education meetings and adopted a world declaration on Education for All (EFA). It also reaffirmed the notion of education as a fundamental right, established the new millennium goal to give every child primary school education by 2015 and identified inclusive education as a significant contributory strategy for addressing issues of marginalisation and exclusion (Opertti et al. 2014; Peters, 2003). Therefore, as established, the initiatives are for *all* children to have the opportunity to learn, while the initiatives of inclusive education are that all children have the opportunity to learn together (ibid). EFA clearly identified inclusive education as one of the key strategies to address issues of marginalisation and exclusion.

As one of the signatories of the Salamanca Statement, Kenya pledged recognition of diversity in schools and agreed on the dynamic new thinking of EFA, policy shifts and development of an inclusive education system to promote the approach of mainstream school Education for All children. Moreover, Kenya committed to ensuring that no child, regardless of diversity of need, social status, economic status or gender, could be excluded from the school system (UNESCO, 1994). By committing to the Salamanca Statement, the GoK reaffirmed to support all children to learn in enabling schools and achieve their full potential. In a nutshell, this study is a follow-up of the changes Kenya has made after signing the Salamanca Statement. Other conferences in which the United Nations have gathered nations together to sit, review and analyse efforts towards making education accessible to all children since 1948 are shown in Figure 2.

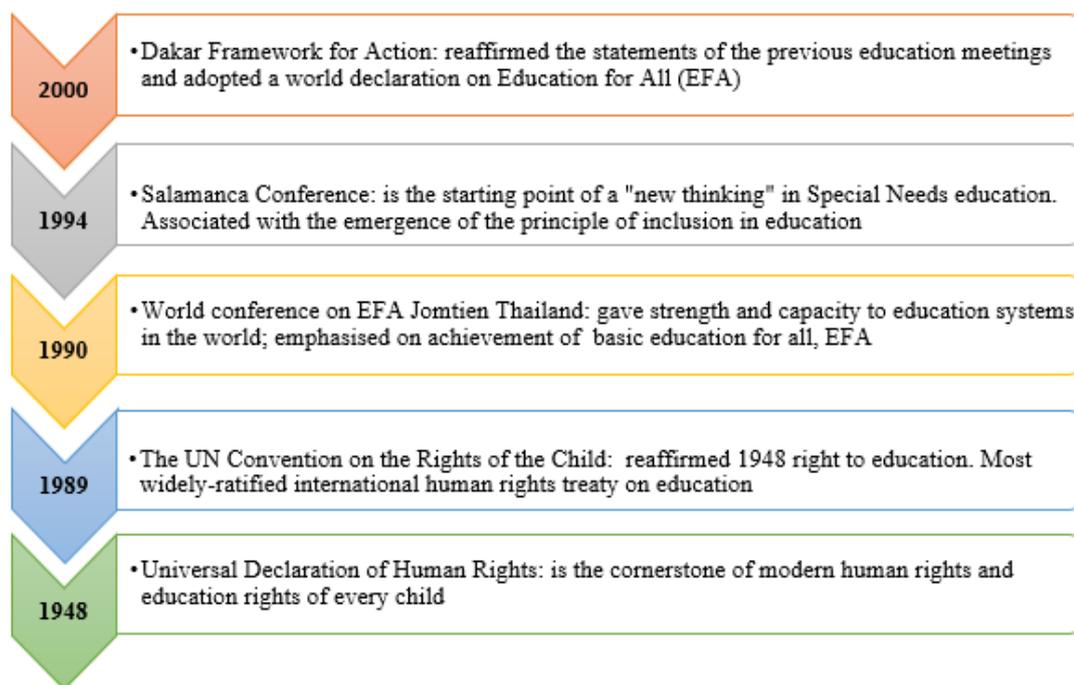


Figure 2: Sequential connection of the major conferences that influenced inclusive schools as Adapted from (Booth and Ainscow, 2016; Mbibe, 2013; UNICEF, 2013; Yeo et al. 2011; UNESCO, 2000; UNESCO 1994: iii; UN, 1948)

Figure 2 above is a summary of the significant conferences (as highlighted above) that have shaped inclusive education. These conferences have given an in-depth understanding of the genesis of inclusive education, including how it has evolved from exclusion to inclusion.

### 1.2.1 Justification for a narrow focus

Inclusive education is a notion that recognises that special learning needs can arise from social, psychological, economic, linguistic, cultural as well as physical (or disability) factors (Kisanji, 1999). This study has adopted a narrow focus on learning needs arising from disability. Focus on a group of children has been widely criticised a fixed narrow focus of inclusion (Armstrong et al. 2011) with a recommendation of a broader perspective that includes all children (Rieser, 2012). Although it understood research should strive to avoid a narrow focus, drawing from writers in the Global south such Miles and Singal, the extent to which more inclusive educational practices are promoted is wanting thus there is need to ‘bring to the forefront the issue of social justice in education’, (2010:1). Disabled children are more vulnerable in education than other groups of children with SEN. However, the extent to which vulnerability is understood depends on the cultural context within which it is being described (Peters, 2003). For example, the UK all children are vulnerable although some are made more vulnerable by a full range of difficulties, for example, children

receiving statutory care, support, in custody or fostered, those living with physical or mental illness, and those being otherwise supported by children's services (Gillie, 2012). Similar to vulnerable groups in the UK, Kenya has a range of children that face risk, uncertainty, and emotional exposure because they live on the street, from pastoralist families, working children or at risk of abuse or neglect by parents or guardians (Ng'asike, 2011; Sitienei and Pillay, 2018).

Most studies are grounded on the premise that gender, poverty and ethnicity have traditionally been the most well acknowledged as well as researched markers of exclusion (Singal, Lynch and Johansson, 2019). However, disability is more often subsumed with poverty in development debates to explain different reasons of exclusion from schools. The deficit associated with disability is larger compared with other sources of inequality such as gender or economic status (ibid). For this reason, within a wide range of vulnerable children, some children are more vulnerable and disadvantaged than others, and need more rigorous support for a stable foundation. Increasing evidence by Elder and Kuja (2018), Kiarago , (2016), Adoyo and Odeny (2015) and Mwangi (2014) show that children with SEN are more disadvantaged, excluded or facing risk of exclusion from mainstream schools due to disability itself. There is growing realisation that incapability for children with disabilities to access high-quality education within FPE is 'a matter of concern for everyone.' (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015:49).

Another reason for the narrow focus is to address the gap left in the fulfilment of EFA and access to UPE/FPE in 2003 for children with SEN. As recorded, when the government announced FPE for all children, there was a surge for government-funded schools. Entry rates increased tremendously, due to the enrolment of out-of-school children and the re-entry of those who had dropped out (Gichura, 2003). However, numerous research studies in Kenya show that despite education being free, many children with SEN did not access mainstream schools (Oketch et al. 2010). Thus, it appears that children with SEN were disadvantaged since, unlike other vulnerable children, most could not voluntarily decide to go to school.

The gap in school participation between children with SEN and non-disabled children is now larger than that associated with gender, rural residence or family wealth (Filmer, 2005). Such discrepancy means that children with SEN are 'much less likely than their peers to be in school' (UNESCO, 2007:48). The narrow focus of this study is a helpful voice to increase

awareness of children who have been denied mainstream education, to raise concerns regarding the need for welcoming and friendly learning environments and most importantly, promote the creation of inclusive schools in Kenya. Consequently, this study takes a narrow focus on children with SEN rather than a generalisation of all groups of vulnerable children.

### **1.2.2 People friendly language**

Language is a powerful tool for communication, and the choice of words taken can be used to either perpetuate social exclusion or promote positive values in communities (Booth, 2017). It has been suggested that between the extremes of ‘political correctness’ (McClimens, 2007:264), and everyday communication there is the opportunity for a manner of address that simultaneously protects and promotes a culture of mutual respect between disabled and the non-disabled persons Hence, the appropriate way of maintaining interactions with people who are disabled is to be respectful in written and spoken descriptions (ibid). For these reasons, this study has made every attempt to adopt appropriate terminology, a suitable form of descriptors that are disability-friendly not only for this thesis but also to promote respect for the humanity of children with SEN and disabled people in Kenyan communities. Therefore, the language used about disability and disabled people is important because it influences expectations and interactions.

Gadamer’s (2001; 1994; 1975) Philosophy of Truth and Method advance a theory on the role traditions play in forming perspectives, understanding and socialisation. Therefore, for real understanding to occur there is need for open-ended dialogue and where neither party is in control (Kisanji, 1998a). A central function of language is the way it simultaneously mirrors and cultural positions and constructs cultural values (McClimens, 2007). Thus, disability is conceived within experiences people have that shape the way they see, experience and reflect on their world (Michalko, 2002). Given the nature of the African languages and cultural values, it could be said a person’s first language is essential, and more so where disability continues to be highly stigmatising (Miles and Singal, 2010). Kisanji (1998b) explored the metaphoric use of language regarding individual difference and the way in which language was used metaphorically in African cultures. Using narrative methodology, Kisanji found the ‘people-first identification of disabled people’ (ibid:4) Further, in a literal translation of the narratives from the community languages to Swahili and/or English, none expressed or contained a general inclusive category similar to the concept of disability (ibid: 6). The writer concluded that either (i) African community see

impairment as personal tragedies for which cure, and help is required or (ii) a conscious effort to refrain from simplifying the experiences and needs of children who are seen as uniquely different. UN agencies have heightened efforts to eliminate prejudice and discrimination against disabled people. A case in point is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) that was signed and ratified by a majority of UN member countries of which Kenya is a signatory.

Guided by the objective to make this research meaningful to Kenyan communities, choosing the language to adopt, including the channels of dissemination, is important (Cohen et al. 2011). Consequently, the most widely accepted aspect of language in Kenya is adopted in order to receive acceptance of the findings, allow dissemination and, most importantly, create the desired transformation envisaged in education: inclusive schools. In using person-first language, Cohen et al. suggest that a researcher must cultivate ways of influencing policy, particularly when policy-makers can and do disregard research findings (2011).

The medical model of disability is dominant because it tends to categorise or create a picture of non-disabled people as ‘better’ or ‘superior’ simply because they are not disabled (Retief and Letšosa, 2018). It also, identifies disability as an individual problem, deficit or something that people have or is part of a person (see sub-section 2.4.1). However, from the social model of disability (see sub-section 2.4.2), disability is not something that people have, it is who they are, any disability they have is created by society (Michalko, 2002). The language used by schools and support services in Kenya is different from that used in England and which this study predicts is likely to confuse readers. While Kenya employs people-first terminology such as *people with disabilities*, the term *disabled people* is used in the UK to conform to the social model of disability (Oliver and Barnes, 2012; Oliver, 1996). Although I support to the same model, to avoid confusion in distinguishing disabled adults and disabled children in the communities and school, this study will adopt the term “children with SEN” rather than disabled children. Thus, within the boundaries of my study children with SEN means students and young people whose SEN reduces their ability to learn effectively in mainstream classrooms. For adults, this study will adopt *disabled people/persons*.

This study has clear focus on disability in general and removal of barriers, rather than on individual disability and impairments. Thus, in this study “children” refers to pupils/ students/ learners/ young people with SEN. It is crucial to mention that, terminology aside,

regardless of disability or not, primary school pupils and secondary school students are children first and learners second, as prescribed in many cultures, including Africa.

### **1.2.3 Getting past the gatekeepers**

Advocating inclusion as a philosophy means that children with SEN should also not be excluded from participating in research ‘whether intentionally or not’ (Garth and Aroni, 2003: 562). In general, researchers aim to gain a deeper understanding of children’s experiences, give them a voice and present them to the rest of the world by accessing their otherwise silenced voices (Richards 2016a). Previous studies have shown that the opinions of learners with SEN are rarely asked for and, if asked, the process is often ‘tokenistic and their views largely ignored’ (Harding and Atkinson, 2009:126). On a personal level, I recognised the need for respecting the views of the learners with SEN, not just as a matter of pedagogical practice but also out of respect for individual human rights (Harding and Atkinson, 2009). I also recognised that, most importantly, children have an entitlement to express their view on matters affecting them (Lundy, 2007; Tomasevski, 2006) and should have a voice in decisions regarding their life and learning within education policy and practice (Goodley et al. 2018). Based on the recognition that children with SEN are central social actors within the inclusive practice, I planned to include children’s voices in the study. However, ethical issues and the process involved in getting permission to interview them limited the possibility of gaining their viewpoints. Besides, cultural and power relationships between children and adults are influenced by cultural values (Wanjiru, 2018) and the power relations of gatekeepers (Rose and Shevlin, 2017) were also factors to be considered.

Literature shows that most African cultures deny a child’s right to be heard, thereby consigning children to the fringes of society where they are mere recipients of the imposition of authority and doctrines by adults (Ndofirepi and Cross, 2015). To be more specific, in schools in Kenya it is the teachers who have the power to make decisions, and thus they play the role of gatekeepers. This can be a problem because, as recent research suggests, difficulty in engaging children in the research process can and does arise due to the respect they hold for adults, especially teachers, who have the power to punish children. Bearing this in mind, most children are afraid to say anything that implicates their teachers. Furthermore, researchers have to negotiate access with teachers who are influential gatekeepers and thus approval (from teachers) does not always guarantee full cooperation from participants (Wanat, 2008).

Furthermore, from the research perspective, researchers are cautioned that pursuit of rich data must never be prioritised over the well-being of the individual, which is especially true when working with children or vulnerable people (Rose et al. 2015). The concept of ‘learner voice is complex’ (Richards, 2016a), there are deeper issues involved and thus needs careful planning and adequate time allocation. Considering these possible limitations, I decided that I should not interview the children directly. Consequently, parents and guardian voices were included to fill the gap due to their role in nurturing the children. Teachers were also included because they are directly responsible for the children’s classroom experiences (Rose and Shevlin, 2017).

Another matter for consideration was the extent to which the children with SEN could fully understand the reasons for their being involved in the research, or the reasons why their opinions and experiences were being sought. Similarly, in instances where a child has learning SEN, the experience of being in an interview could have intensified behaviour. This may then call for the researcher to exhibit caution to avoid the data obtained be seriously flawed (Cohen et al. 2017). Other than that, the task of identifying parents or guardians to participate in this study was not straightforward either because communities sometimes do not know the parents of the disabled children, or even the children themselves. Except with teachers for all other participants disability was perceived as an emotive matter to discuss, customarily avoided or reluctantly addressed. As Goodley et al. (2018:207) recognised, families’ disinclination to talk about disability due to social construction, dominant stereotypes and prejudices associated with quality of life, human productivity and independence. Thus, difficulties with a straightforward sampling were experienced signifying that families prefer not to talk about their disabled children because they are the ones most affected by the idea of a child born disabled (see section 1.5 on positionality).

### **1.3 Education policy for SEN before Salamanca 1994**

There are four periods before the Salamanca Statement of 1994 (pre-1940; 1941-1963; post-1964; 1980-1994) that have influenced the concept of disability in Kenya. The first period is a historically neglected era prior to 1940 when most disabled children suffered neglect and rejection and were isolated from communities (Ndurumo, 1993). During this era, disabled people were regarded as less capable and not readily accepted, even within families,

because of negative attitudes and uninformed beliefs about the causes of disability. In this period the leading causes of disability were said to be witchcraft, curses, or punishment from God for wrong doing. The limitation of a person was considered as contagious and could spread to non-disabled (KISE, 2002).

The second period is the period from the 1940s to 1963 when colonial policies of education were introduced. According to Ndurumo (1993) children were taught the 3Rs (reading, writing and numeracy). Other skills learned in Kenya and in most cultures was work skills and scripture lessons. Similar to the UK at this time in history of special education work skills was gender specific with boys learning woodwork and shoemaking while girls learned cookery, laundry and needlework (Richards, 2016c). In Kenya, schooling was done in separate residential homes/hostels (Abilla, 1988). During this period, disabled people were viewed as incapable of gainful employment, equally a new idea of work introduced to the people (Ndurumo, 1993), and a drain on community resources (Kiarie, 2014). Separating children, who had survived birth and weaning; from families to put them into residential care was a new idea for Africans. Consequently, parents and relatives were willing to hide their infants and support them without the knowledge of the rest of the community.

According to Abilla (1998), the needs of children with disabilities were not adequately provided for by families and communities. Therefore, it could be said that colonial pioneers introduced the idea of separation of children from parents, either to place in custody or to attend school far from home in special education. These pioneers were very few and not qualified as special education teachers (ibid) and, consequently, from the initial steps of education, Africans failed to receive support on how to formulate policy for creating ways to work with a diversity of needs in a school environment. This oversight is a serious concern that continues to persist in Kenya today (ibid). By 1947-48, most people had started to become more accepting of educating disabled children, due to the influence of religion disseminated by the missionaries who had settled within communities. Consequently, the pre-colonial government established legislative acts to safeguard disabled people and through religious, secular and other non-governmental organisations in the country, such as the Salvation Army, three schools for the visually impaired and two schools for the mentally impaired were founded. At the same time, the Salvation Army established the first school for physically disabled children in the country. These first special schools were segregated

and sometimes residential since settlement areas had no mainstream schools or, if one was present, had a prevailing negative attitude towards admitting disabled learners.

By 1961 Kenya had three special schools for visually impaired and by 1986 Kenya had established ten special schools for physically disabled children as after the polio epidemic, affected children were finding it difficult to gain admission to mainstream schools due to society's negative attitudes (Makumi, 1987). Other religious organisations followed this example and established various institutions and schools for disabled children on their mission sites. In 1963 when Kenya gained independence in 1963, there was a renewed commitment to the provision of training for all citizens. It is for this reason that the Ministry of Education (MoE) was formed to ensure quality education and to meet Education for All (EFA) goals. Other organisations formed were the Kenya Society for Deaf Children, the Kenya Society for the Blind and, later, the Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya (RoK 2003, 2009). These organisations continue to play critical role in vital support networks while working in collaboration with the government for the dissemination of disability-related information, news and resources.

Evidence from history shows that educational services for all children, including those with SEN, were introduced and delivered by missionaries during the colonial era. Following independence in 1963, special schools continued to be run by church-based organisations. However, two important events took place after independence in 1963. Firstly, the formation of an education committee known as the Ngala Committee, in 1964, to restructure and formulate policy guidelines for SEN. Conversely, being more concerned with care and institutionalisation, the committee overlooked inclusive education and only recommended integration of children with mild disabilities to learn in mainstream schools. The committee also informed the public regarding different types of disabilities and who was to be considered disabled.

Secondly, also in 1964, the first education commission, the Ominde Commission, was formed. The role the Ominde Commission was to consider the national educational policies of the time and to guide government of the direction for further development (RoK, 1964). The Ominde Commission's recommendations focused on the need for creating awareness of the issues resulting from disability and Education for All disabled children in the country (Kiarie, 2005). It could be said that the first policy by the Ominde Commission in 1964 raised awareness that no child should be excluded, the consequences of excluding some children

and recommended actions that Kenya could take to avoid exclusion. One of the primary recommendations that has influenced current inclusive education is that of equipping teachers with the necessary skills to become familiar with disability at all levels of children's interactions, development and education (RoK, 1964). Their recommendations led to the publication of Sessional Paper Number 5 of 1968, which addressed critical issues regarding the government's role in providing better services for individuals with disabilities. In 1971 a policy on Vocational Rehabilitation Centres was developed to facilitate young people gaining employment (Ndurumo, 1993). The first centre was established in Nairobi, and thereafter ten other centres were started in the country.

It is in the early 80s that disabled people began to be recognised as part of society. In addition, It is in this period that some activists questioned whether the placement of disabled children in separate homes/hostels solved their educational difficulties (Ndurumo, 1993). As a result, policy on special education programmes was customised into an Inspectorate section to deal with the administration and management of the MoE. The Directorate section was assigned responsibility for teachers' professional development for SEN teaching, curriculum implementation and special education upkeep (Kiarie, 2014; RoK, 2009). Other policies followed in this period. One was the formation of a Special Education Curriculum Development Unit at the Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E) to guide curriculum development and adjustment for children with SEN. However, it is the inauguration of Kenya Institute of Special Education (K.I.S.E) in 1986 that marked a vital milestone in the development of SEN and teacher education. The institute was opened based on the functions highlighted on the Table 4 that follows.

Table 4: Functions of Kenya Institute of Special Education

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Provide teacher training courses for teachers of children with SEN.
Provide in-service courses for staff working in all fields of special needs education.
Prepare and conduct correspondence courses for staff in the field of special needs education.
Manage educational and psychological assessment centres and train staff in auxiliary assessment centres.
Manage orientation and mobility centres for training and demonstration purposes.
Manage model training units for integration and inclusive education.
Organise pre-school departments where training and the stimulation of young children with special needs and disabilities can be carried out for the purpose of teacher training.
Function as a resource centre for the production and dissemination of information to the general public on special needs and disabilities.
Conduct research in special needs education.
Maintain, repair, design, produce and assemble specialist materials, aids, equipment and assistive technology.

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Source: KISE, 2018

#### **1.4 Reforms for SEN after Salamanca 1994**

The Salamanca Statement did not culminate in comprehensive policy formulation for inclusive schools in Kenya. However, the MoE did evaluate the status of special education and considered the positive developments in moving from a custodial and care-giving form of provision to one of attempting to meet educational needs (Muuya, 2002). Thus, the concept of segregated residential schools was questioned, with the subsequent adoption of integration within mainstream schools.

The idea of inclusive education is not entirely new in Kenya. The Omidia commission in 1964 first introduced this approach but encountered challenges of prevailing self-governance, absence of a clear legislative and policy change. Moreover, the concept was confused and ill-defined, and there was no follow-up until after it was reintroduced at Salamanca in 1994. For Kenya, it appears this resulted in confusion politically and academically on policy shift in terms of the approach to be adopted to enable mainstream schools to serve all children, including those with SEN and promote inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994). Despite the policy guidelines, goals and objectives resulting from various education commissions, conferences, meetings, needs analysis groups, committees and taskforces. It was not until

2009 that unprecedented policy development was seen in Kenya in the field of SEN through integrated schools (Kiarie, 2014). During this period, the concept of SEN evolved under the National Special Needs Education Policy Framework, which expanded interpretation and understanding of children said to have special needs. This policy also identified some areas of concern that the government of Kenya, through the country's MoE and other stakeholders, could target for growth. The policy articulated objectives and delineated planned strategies as follows:

- i. Improve the quality and access to education provided to children with special needs while addressing the salient issues which determine delivery of quality and relevant education to children with special needs
- ii. Address issues of equity and improvement of learning environments in all schools. Envisaged to ensure inclusive education becomes a reality (RoK, 2009).

However, the policy was too general only emphasising on innovations emanating from special education rather than provide specific guidance on approaches to be adopted for inclusive teaching. Equally, the promise of the abolition of primary school fees as a means of increasing access to education has always been high on the agenda of most of the political parties during elections (Kadzamira and Rose, 2003). One could argue that this is in response to the constraining factor of ratifying international policies. However, national policies emanating from such proclamations have been criticised for aiming at political popularity with minimal significance to national development (Muthwii, 2004; Amutabi, 2003). Such politically motivated policies were observed during President Moi 1978-2002 time in office, when he created an attitude among the citizens that policies are made arbitrarily, as articulated below.

Although President Moi retained the education policies of President Kenyatta (1963-1978) unlike President Kenyatta, who had provided free basic education for the first 4 preliminary years in primary school, President Moi (1978- 2003) declared FPE for the entire 7 primary school years. Government generosity was extended to free milk in all government-funded primary schools to draw children into education. However, considerable dissatisfaction with this education policies were registered with the population due to inadequacies such as the quality and quantity of education freely provided to all children (Muthwii, 2004; Amutabi, 2003). Nonetheless, President Moi's directive did initiate more significant opportunities and

enrolment rates for all Kenyan children in mainstream schools. For this reason, enrolment improved dramatically, and his government claimed to have realised free universal education (Sifuna, 2005). However, the claim was ‘far from the truth because there were still some children not attending school’ (Lelei et al. 2015:133).

The challenges that followed pointed to government inefficacy and ineptitude. Perhaps the most adverse effect of policy and failure was 1980-2003 when the burden of fee payment was shifted back to parents and the taxpayers who had to shoulder the responsibility. In this period, Kenya saw the re-introduction of payment of fees in schools to sustain the cost of free education and cover the expense of free milk. Critics have argued that a combination of economic mismanagement and lack of capacity to absorb the FPE project once aid was reduced led to a new crisis. Due to lack of clear planned policies, education in Kenya remains expensive, especially for parents with children with disabilities (Sawamura and Sifuna, 2008). It is the pledge to relieve the taxpayers of the burden of payment of fees and the promise of reviving FPE for all government-funded primary schools in 2003 that gave President Kibaki (2002-2013) a landslide victory over Moi (ibid). Fees previously charged in primary schools were abolished and children, including those with SEN who had been out of school, were re-enrolled (Gichura, 2003). The FPE policy quickly led to a substantial increase in primary school enrolment in the country, from 5.9 million children in 2002 to 7.2 million in 2003 and 9.4 million in 2010 (Hungu and Ngware, 2017; Ngware et al. 2009; Njoka et al. 2011). Although a fundamental aspect of FPE was the pivotal role of creating a platform for many children to access school, it is in the interest of this study to understand whether children with SEN accessed FPE education in mainstream schools during the Moi or Kibaki tenures.

In the face of public opinion and the MoE, FPE had two significant problems. One was the entry to school of the poor population who had been out of education despite being of school going age, due to lack of uniform and other basic resources. The second was ensuring that once enrolled in school, learners benefitted from quality education (Orodho, 2014; Oketch et al. 2010). Claims of free education and donor funding have been contested in recent years by some writers that financing has left the country in a precarious position (Kombe and Herman, 2017; Mutahi and Ruteere, 2017). Thomas et al. (2011) illustrate the dangers of dependence on donors and suggest donor funding has political side effects. Thus, to ensure sustainability, governments should only embark on long-term projects that they can predict

being able to absorb once the aid is reduced or expires (ibid). Approaches based on funding are noble, but evidence presented in this study by mainstream schoolteachers suggests that some disabled children did not access mainstream school, even with FPE funding.

Recent government rhetoric continues to declare a philosophy of equal educational opportunities for all children, but it can be said that the government needs to plan adequately for implementing both free education initiatives and inclusive education policies. Despite political pronouncements and quick-fix solutions for education, policies have not been beneficial for SEN (Oketch and Somerset, 2010). Oketch and Somerset contend that the quality of inclusive education lack merit on sound policy, commitments and planning. Existing education policy has focused primarily on special schools and, physical, sensory and intellectual impairment. In addition, policy emphasis on special schools and lack of subsequent implementation of the inclusive concept in mainstream schools has resulted in the compromising of pedagogical imperatives and the educational experiences that learners with SEN receive.

FPE policy can be described as a straightforward, ambitious plan to make primary schooling accessible to all children, wherever they live and whatever their family circumstances (Gichura, 2003; Oketch and Somerset, 2010). Additionally, the current policy on subsidised Free Day Secondary Schools promises children with SEN access to secondary schools (Muganda et al. 2016). As established, the government meets the tuition fees of Ksh<sup>2</sup> 10,265<sup>3</sup> per student in accordance with the Free Secondary Education policy, while parents meet other education-related costs. Despite these efforts, the current trend high on the international agenda in the twenty-first century is high-quality inclusive Education for All children and young people, irrespective of global location (Hodkinson, 2016). To address the social and moral obligations of providing Education for All children in Kenya, a clear shift from placement to inclusive education planning within a rights-based context, with clear policies on inclusive education, is paramount (Elder, 2015). There is no doubt regarding the government of Kenya's development of some policy guidelines for special education dating back to 1964. However, it seems following the Salamanca framework a clear policy on SEN and inclusive education is yet to be realised. Moreover, data shows that the

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<sup>2</sup> The Kenya Shilling is the currency of Kenya, the currency symbol is Ksh. £1=Ksh 130

<sup>3</sup> Equivalent to £79 (Central Bank of Kenya exchange rate 14-06-2018)

effectiveness of policy implementation needs to consider since most schools reflect limited presence of children with SEN and almost none disable teachers.

### **1.5 Positionality**

Positionality refers to a description of the position or stands the researcher takes in relation to a specific research task. Positionality is concerned with “ontological assumptions (the nature of social reality), epistemological assumptions (the nature of knowledge) and assumptions about human nature and agency” (Holmes, 2014:2). This section is aimed to provide a clear view of my position and to support the reader towards a better understanding of my research because ‘knowing something of the writer’s identity and intentions helps in responding’ to the researcher’s work’ (Griffiths, 1998:4). Since the researcher’s positionality can influence all aspects and stages of the research process including interpretation of outcomes, it is essential to “lay open” my background and experiences that influence this thesis (Gair, 2012:137). A vital element of this enquiry is that I was part of the social world I am now researching. I understood the intrinsic qualities of the social world under investigation before commencing fieldwork and during contact with the participants; a fact which promoted the participants to elicit candid and honest information (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). No matter how much you try [researcher], you cannot divorce your research and writing from your past experiences, who you are, what you believe and what you value” Bogdan and Biklen (2006: 38).

My positionality implies that my social, historical location might undermine the notion of objective reality (Cohen et al. 2011: 225) since I am not separate from the social process of the study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). However, there is no way I can escape the social world of research nor separate myself from inclusive education issues in Kenya. Academic researchers represent epicentres of power, privilege, and status within their formal institutions and communities of study as well as within the research process of producing scientific knowledge. There is a need to identify oneself as an individual and as a member of various groups, including other social positions we are in at any given time. While some aspects are fixed, such as race, gender and nationality, others are contextual, subjective and open to change over time, such as the researcher’s experiences and history (Holmes, 2014).

I was aware that all aspects of my positionality could influence and disadvantage various elements of this research. The key concern for pursuing the subject of inclusive education was because it was plagued with the issue of representation in research with some researchers

avoiding engaging in fieldwork where they stand to gain the lived experiences of disabled people. Literature shows that some scholars engaged more in textual analysis perpetuating neo-colonial representations and western biases while purporting to speak ‘for’ disabled (Sultana, 2007).

As a secondary school teacher, I was assigned lead responsibility for facilitating the inclusive process of the first student with a mobility difficulty and using walking aids. I was aware of the problems the student was experiencing in the process of interacting with the school environment. I was simultaneously aware of the subjective position and in-between status I had acquired to bridge the gap between the teachers and the students. This development called for reflection on my role as a teacher in terms of skills and good practice to make the students feel included. I identified that the school recognised the importance of personal choices and respected the dignity of the individual but was not structurally or pedagogically ready for the learner. Radical policy shifts were required to promote the approach of inclusive education and to accommodate the learner in the mainstream secondary school. Similarly, teachers were hesitant to create a school for all, and the attitude that children with SEN belonged to special schools was prevalent. In keeping with an inclusive ethos, I aimed to create opportunities for learners to explore their capacity for knowledge generation. Hence, I acknowledged that the student had a wealth of experience to bring to the school to improve inclusion and minimise exclusion. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) point out that researchers should describe the phenomena as they are and not merely how they perceive them or would like them to be.

The process of power relations which the first inclusion played out was critical. I adopted the “Every Child Matters” approach to promote achievement while keeping the learner safe. A collaborative approach amongst positive teachers willing to support the learner helped to overcome some barriers. In addition, a gap in accountability was identified in the various activities that the learner missed, and thus audits of school activities began. Over time other reviews, for example, meetings with multi-agency teams, such as the school nurse, district hospital, council managers and local library staff were incorporated. During this period, I was renegotiating power relations, responsibilities and hierarchy of authority. I had to work around the perceptions of “begging for services” or that agencies were doing a great favour to the child. There is a need for the government to increase the level of support to schools through a clear policy linked to the statutory requirement of Education for All children.

My experience as a parent of a child, who was born with special needs is individually constructed and probably guided the subjective identification on the role of special education coordinator in the school due to my own experience. Having to work with children with special needs is an experience that triggered a range of emotions as a parent and later the same experienced while carrying out fieldwork with parents in this study. The African culture influenced my positionality since disability is generally considered an “unfortunate happening”, and not only affects the individual parent psychologically but also the family standing in the community. As a parent, my connection and motivation are best captured by the poem ‘Welcome to Holland’ by Kingsley (online). However, it should be acknowledged that we can never describe something as it is nor can we objectively’ describe reality as it exists no matter how much reflexivity we bring to the research process. Although the poem originates from a culture different from mine, it captures the experience of parents on realisation their child is disabled, raising a disabled child with SEN, and the inner battles that parents go through (see the poem in Appendix 10). However, what could be a similar experience of parents from all cultures is the complexities surrounding school placement of their child. I was aware of bias and focused on my previous experiences as a source of bias which needed bracketing. I consistently reflected on maintaining the highest standards of a qualitative study.

The combinations of all these complexities, experiences and the passion for understanding participants views has been an endeavour that saw me gain the Ford Foundation scholarship to take a Master’s degree in Inclusion and Special Educational Needs in the University of Birmingham-UK. This scholarship was a reward to the activism, inspiration and advocacy to support children with disabilities access to education in Laikipia West while supporting teachers on good practice in supportive mainstream classrooms. Therefore, when an opportunity to conduct research at the PhD level presented itself through the Vice Chancellors Scholarship - Nottingham Trent University many factors came into play. However, inclusive education for children with SEN was the topic naturally considered. My passion for children with SEN took me back to collect data in the same location in Laikipia where I started. At this point, the concepts of insider and outsider role were closely interconnected in this study, since the two functions appeared to operate on a continuum based on previous knowledge of the phenomenon of study and the location of research. The two associated roles produced opposing researcher poles between truth, objectivity and constructivism which believes an in-depth understanding of the socially constructed subjective world raised

questions for me about ethical research and how to balance both roles and produce research that is mutually designed.

Adopting the subjective approach was undertaken in the knowledge that the education system I aimed to explore is an organised entity embedded within the structure of African cultures. It was crucial to pay attention to positionality, reflexivity and production of knowledge on the unstable issues of cultural influence on education. However, these issues need to be acknowledged and be told in ways that will elicit action and produce good practice rather than create silence and inaction. As an insider/outsider researcher's position this research community creates awareness of the emotive issues relating to disability and the need to be sensitive and empathetic with the participants (see section 3.2.3). Yet, at the same time it was necessary to contain personal involvement and maintain researcher orientation to 'provide an account of their world in their own words' (Henn et al. 2006:14).

## **1.6 Statement of the research problem**

The education system in Kenya has experienced noteworthy curriculum reform to comply with global agenda and respond to international development commitments, including EFA and Millennium Development Goals. Fundamental changes are informed by the need to improve access and equity in the provision of education and to address the national goals of education (Limukii et al. 2011). The central focus of this study was to explore Kenya's commitment to inclusive education since the Salamanca Statement of 1994, including the efforts made in translating the commitment into action sufficiently practical to enable all children to learn together in the same school.

There are factors which could have enabled the successful transformation of mainstream schools being inclusive in Kenya, such as Free Primary Education (FPE) and Universal Primary Education (UPE). Motivated by international instruments, FPE and UPE were launched in 2003 with the target of increased access to Education for All children by 2015 (Orodho, 2014; RoK, 2012; Sifuna, 2007). Independently, in his research on Commonwealth countries, Rieser (2012) found a significant absence of disabled children from EFA initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, there is need to understand the changes required in schools in order to fulfil Kenya's commitment when signing the Salamanca Statement in 1994.

The question remains of teachers' understanding and preparedness for inclusive reforms while at the same time maintaining education standards. The role of teachers has raised controversy, especially since the international community impetus for the implementation of inclusive policies continues (Forlin and Chambers, 2011). The Government of Kenya seems determined to forge forward and realise the inclusion agenda (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015). Nevertheless, there remains the controversial nature of inclusion due to cultural and traditional influences, the exclusiveness of the curriculum, the assessment procedures and practices of mainstream provision. Moreover, the current inclusive strategy is founded on notions of normalcy and deficit approaches to SEN. This study responds to the knowledge gap using a qualitative research strategy to gain a full understanding of the research problem.

### **1.7 Purpose of the study**

It is not until 1994 that Kenya made an explicit formal commitment to the development of an inclusive education system and promised to adopt inclusive education as a matter of principle and policy. Thereafter, the commitment to inclusive education has been reiterated, reinforced and given operative practices in the Constitution of Kenya (2010). As demonstrated through policy, Kenya aims to its inclusive obligations to make education more responsive and uphold the rights of children with SEN to access to education in an inclusive environment. The primary purpose of this study is to explore the inclusion approaches developed in Kenya after the Salamanca Statement, and the changes made to ensure mainstream schools provide support for every child regardless of diversity of need. In addition, explore the effectiveness of the current inclusion and the barriers that hinder different ways of responding to children with SEN. Therefore, Kenya needs to plan and implement inclusive schools. There is indicative need of using the best possible means to achieve the task of creating inclusive schools and plan actions and steps to be taken to achieve the intended set goals. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to answer the following research questions.

## **1.8 Research questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the impact of inclusion for children with SEN after the Salamanca Statement in 1994?
2. What is the teachers' understanding of disability, SEN and inclusive education?
3. What are the current barriers to inclusion in the mainstream schools?
4. What are the inclusion strategies that have not yet been implemented in mainstream schools?

## **1.9 Significance of the study**

This study is significant because it has the potential and will benefit communities, education stakeholders, teachers and children. Through this study, I found that inclusive education is conspicuously absent from research, policy and practice initiatives. Therefore, the study will encourage strong focus on strategic planning for inclusion and formulation of appropriate criteria to guide teachers on a starting point in the implementation of the Salamanca Statement. Furthermore, studying social relationships, various ways of making vision 2030 on education a reality while positioning children and young people within the focus of quality education. No country can claim to be developing if some social problems such as educating is overlooked and if the people who are said to be disabled cannot participate in the development agenda due to illiteracy. I realise that it is not an easy task to create inclusive schools (Thomazet, 2009) but with a clear understanding of what entails inclusion Kenya can build a just, equitable and prosperous nation and one that recognises 'the moral imperative for inclusion in education' (RoK, 2007:2). This research will generate greater knowledge and practical guidance in solving immediate problems of inclusive practices. It will be an important source of providing strategies that can change mainstream school teachers view that all children with SEN should be educated special school. Further, increase effectiveness in the adoption of inclusive approaches.

## 1.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined the context and focus of my study. This section has reviewed the background of the study that underpins the context of the Salamanca Statement, inclusive education, teacher efficacy and pedagogy for the in-depth discussions that follow in the later chapters. I have demonstrated that the focus of my study will be to examine the initiatives the government has taken to achieve inclusive education. It has shown that the government supports inclusion. Mwai Kibaki, the third President of Kenya, serving from December 2002 to April 2013 advanced the government standpoint on matters of education and made it clear that the nation had committed itself to the realisation of the Kenya Vision 2030 targets and envisaged building a just, equitable and prosperous nation. The current president of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta (serving from August 2013 to date), has boosted the agenda begun in 2008 of Free Day Secondary Education (Kamau and Wambugu, 2017). While attending a Pan African Conference on Education on 27th, April 2018 in Nairobi, he said:

We know the problems facing education in African countries and have the answers. What we need now is how to implement the solutions (Oduor, 2018)

The above shows that the government is determined on solving the challenges that hinder success and sustainability of policy. The entitlement to Education for All children in inclusive schools was not stressed in this conference although the president emphasised formation of the right partnerships, leadership and suggested that only adequate funding will solve Africa's education challenges (Oduor, 2018). Nonetheless, the matter of entitlement to education should not be taken lightly. In many western democracies, education and inclusion philosophy is often expressed as a rights issue, and many governments support and promote the education of all children in mainstream schools (Muwana and Ostrosky, 2014). In addition, most nations globally have challenged the notion of separate but equal in education (Peart, 2014), especially for the education of children with SEN. Therefore, the implementation of UPE/FPE reforms and the 2009 draft policy in education epitomises the government's commitment to EFA. However, the government should also acknowledge the moral imperative for inclusion in education (Slee, 2011). The next chapter places the research in context.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Chapter overview**

This chapter presents an overview of the frameworks, theories and assumptions that underpin inclusion and inclusive approaches in relation to mainstream schooling.

Literature review is an integral part of the research process: it is through reviewing previous research that we can sharpen our own research questions and take account of what past researchers have learnt about disability issues, perspectives on pedagogy policy and practice, inclusion, and exclusion in education. In order to have a good balanced and structured thesis, literature review was ordered using the funnel strategy of identifying, group and comment from a broad theory base to a gradual narrowed focus of specific works addressing issues closer to mine. of the involvement and perception of parents regarding inclusive schools, as well as the ability of mainstream schools to provide children with an education that their SEN requires

The rationale of reviewing the literature on inclusive education is to gain deeper understanding, as well as understand the practice of other nations and synthesise what Kenya can adopt from these nations. The social constructionist view of diversity of needs, schooling and the increasing challenges of accessing education make inclusive education of vital concern for parents, teachers, researchers and policymakers. Literature shows that inclusion is the core of any society which promotes fairness and equality of opportunity and which celebrates diversity (Evans and Lunt, 2002). However, the literature reviewed also shows that inclusion in education has generated and continues to generate international educational interest regarding teaching and learning (Azorín and Ainscow, 2018) and the way that classrooms can achieve excellence (Tharp, 2018). In this connection, taken account of both limited, differentiated and segregated access to education will be considered as well as the causes of the persisting condition of marginalisation (Omwami, 2011). Despite education for children with SEN being rationalised within modernisation paradigms and the potential to contribute to economic development (Durkheim, 2013) the functionalism perspective will inform the study on the positive functions performed by education system.

In an observation made by Grech (2009), disability issues in sub-Saharan African countries lack adequate investigation, since they are kept peripheral to the larger development agenda. Consequently, in this study I recognise the differences in educational provision globally but,

where applicable, I also reflect on the corresponding experiences of developing nations' experiences that are parallel to Kenya's. The result is an exclusive focus on western backgrounds where disability literature is diverse. Some authors have noted limited information and research evidence in Kenya on disability issues (Ondari-Okemwa, 2007; Muuya, 2002; Kisanji; 1999). However, most current researchers have noted not only the complexity of undertaking disability research in Kenya, but also the negligible literature on inclusive education (Kiarago, 2016; Adoyo and Odeny, 2015; Mwangi, 2013). For this reason, UK terminology will be used, but where terms differ from the Kenyan terminologies, this will be highlighted. I will further bring together research from other developing countries that have similar experience to Kenya, to fill the relevant gaps, provide insight and present evidence of the development of inclusion in schools.

I will start this chapter by considering a variety of definitions linked to inclusive education. I will also consider the global interpretations of inclusion and the tensions arising from these interpretations. Models of disability will be discussed to give an understanding of the cause of the prejudices disabled people experience in society. These models will be revisited in Chapter 5 (Interpretation of the findings) to highlight how they can be adopted in the context of education. Later in this chapter, I will move on to describe the common barriers to inclusive education in detail. The question of how the concept of inclusion is interpreted in Kenya will also be highlighted, as well as the factors that generally support inclusive education practice. To contextualise the actual research aims and objectives, and to answer the research questions in Chapter 1, I will explore Kenya's current inclusive practice alongside the broader global perspectives. Finally, I will underpin the implications of inclusive practice in Kenya. A summary and conclusion will end the chapter.

## **2.1 Definitions**

Before moving on to review the literature, it is necessary to establish the definitions of core terms. There have been a variety of interpretations of SEN terms, thus it is necessary to clarify my understanding of these terms: special educational needs, integration and inclusion.

### **2.1.1 Special educational needs**

The term disability is defined in Kenya as 'lack or restriction of ability to perform an activity in the manner within the range considered normal within the cultural context of the human

being' (RoK, 2009:5). This definition of disability is multifaceted and likely to raise competing views from diverse cultural contexts due to what communities consider normal. Moreover, defining disability and impairment may exclude some, such as those with cognitive impairment. Thus, defining disability becomes complicated because any group left out indicates failure to consider their experiences, some of which may not correspond to every individual with impairments (Albrecht and Devlieger, 1999).

According to Richards (2016a), the use of the term disability in categorising children with learning difficulties may create contradictions and does not make it clear whether children's learning difficulties are associated with the learners' conditions or the limitations in the education system or society. Therefore, children said to be disabled children have either special needs (SN), special educational needs (SEN) or special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Hodkinson (2015) distinguishes the regularly used terms SEN and SEND, in that special needs do not necessarily amount to a barrier to learning. Hence, a child with SN does not always require access to SEN support. By way of illustration, a child with physical impairment using a wheelchair creates a special need rather than SEN because of the child's reduced mobility, rather than an impairment that hinders learning (ibid). DfE (2014) shows that to support children with SEN use a SEN support plan detailing how the school will support them achieve educational outcomes. For example, the UK SEND Code of Practice addresses four-part cycle to support children with SEN: Assess, Plan, Do and Review (DfE, 2014). This means that the school takes the responsibility to assess the child's difficulties, then identifies the extra support the school can provide in relation to the support already in place and teachers, together with the special educational needs coordinator in the school (SENCO) regularly review how well the plan is working or what needs to be changed.

Terzi (2005) argues that the definition of SEN is complex because SEN exists upon a continuum of abilities and impairments, a fact that reduces clear-distinction thus making it difficult to differentiate between those who have SEN and those who do not. Therefore, conceptualising differences such as disability, impairment and the SEN of children based on this continuum of needs and abilities, is often fraught with difficulties (Hodkinson, 2015). Further consideration that make deciding a definition even more complicated is that, in the background of these attempts, are individual children's lives, hopes and aspirations (ibid). The term Special Educational Needs (SEN) has been used in the UK to refer to children with learning difficulties who may not benefit from the education routinely provided to other

children of their age (Hodkinson, 2015). This term was first used to replace groups identified as having handicaps in the Warnock report (Avramidis and Norwich, 2016; Ainscow et al. 2006). Later, due to ‘radical overhaul’ of SEN policies in the UK (Hodkinson, 2015:x), a definition of a child of compulsory school-going age or a young person having a learning difficulty was adopted using three criteria: (i) has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision (ii) has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age or (iii) has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions (Children and Families Act, 2014).

Scholars, nations and policies use different terms to describe children. One example is the change in terminology from SEN to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Both terms refer to the same category of learners with a learning difficulty which requires special provision to enable them to benefit from educational provision (Education Act 1996; Children and Families Act 2014; Richards 2016a). A change in terminology was demonstrated in Scotland with a much broader definition that embraces SEN as ‘additional support need’ following a legal framework that substantially changed with the amendment of the constitution in 2009 (Hodkinson, 2016; Barrett et al. 2015). Similarly, Wales intended to replace the terminology of SEN with ‘additional support need’, while Northern Ireland adopted SEND for SEN and Disability (ibid: 9). Hence, the terminology used globally highlights an inconsistency of how SEN is defined. Such can be seen with Kenya that adopts the legal definition of SEN as:

Education which provides appropriate modification in curriculum delivery methods, educational resources, medium of communication or the learning environment to cater for individual differences in learning (RoK, 2009:6)

This definition of SEN in Kenya is about the education someone would need rather than defining SEN. Although it is true there are contrasting definitions as seen with SEN/SEND/SNE, there is general consensus that children with SEN in mainstream school’s face difficulties caused by society when the learning environment is not adapted to suit their needs (Fitzgerald, 2018; Armstrong, 2016a; Lamichhane, 2013; Miles and Singal, 2010; Lloyd, 2008; Winzer,2007). For this reason, Kauffman and others (2018) argue the most important aspect to the learning of children with special needs is to focus on individual

learning needs and how those needs are best met. Therefore, despite variation in definitions, it means meeting SEN/SNE/SEND of children require not only placement but also extra support in school to overcome barriers to learning. Moreover, categorising children with SEN as a group having learning difficulties, can imply that they are different from other children who are perceived as normal. In this respect, it means that disability originated from their condition and not the system, society or the school that created the barrier to learning (Armstrong, 2016a; Fredrickson and Cline, 2009). For this reason, and for the purposes of clarity, this study will adopt a general definition of SEN, without categorising into different categories which link children with SEN to any difficulty such as slow acquisition of reading, a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties or physical, sensory or intellectual impairment (Bines and Lei, 2011). The next definition to be considered is integration.

### **2.1.2 Integration**

The concept of integration is seen in this section as a significant influence on the inclusive practices in Kenya since schools are organised in an integrative rather than inclusive manner. The concept of integration is removed from the ideals defended by many researchers and teachers who want to see schools adapt to the needs of each pupil (Thomazet, 2009) and, in some countries, this process means placing children with special education needs and disabilities into mainstream schools. Some writers such as Frederickson and Cline (2009) and Fox (2005), have attempted to draw the subtle distinction of integration as opportunities for social interactions in mainstream schools. The authors suggest that learners are expected to adapt and fit into the schools and prove their readiness by showing abilities necessary to adapt to the school environment, such as activities of daily living (ADLs). Therefore, when transferring from special to mainstream school, children are expected to adapt and fit in without the school needing to change (Mittler, 2012; 2008). Integration in Kenya involves all children learning together in the same school, but there are no interactions in the classroom, natural social interactions only occur in the playground at playtime. Therefore, successful integration depends on the child and not the school. It is for this reason that critics of integration, such as Hornby (2001), challenge integration as an approach based on medical or deficit theory of intervention as opposed to focusing on the children's needs and strengths. Thus, integration introduces some form of exclusion for children with SEN because it is focused on placement and location of the learner while the responsibility for integration is

with the parent and the child (Evans and Lunt, 2002). The term integration was used interchangeably with inclusion as will establish in the next section.

### **2.1.2 Inclusion**

Although many scholars have discussed inclusion in multiple contexts, a consensus has not been reached on a single definition since the Salamanca Statement was issued in 1994. Peters (2013) suggests that variations in literature from across the globe makes it challenging to produce an agreed definition, while the lack of a single standard definition contributes to the confusion that exists within the fields of SEN and inclusion internationally (Florian, 2008; UNESCO, 2005; Thompkins and Deloney, 1995). Inclusion can be defined in a descriptive or prescriptive way, depending on how it is understood (Mittler, 2012). Subsequently, without explicit definitions of the term, readers are left to infer meaning, giving rise to a variety of contrasting understandings (Ainscow et al. 2006). In the UK, the House of Common agreed the word alone invokes a great deal of strong sentiment and aversion, with opposing views being presented to the Committee. Moreover, even keen advocates of inclusion, who regard it as a human rights issue, are also hesitant to define the term precisely (Hornby, 2012). Subsequently, inclusion has acquired several different definitions over the years.

Despite the discourse on inclusion, in education the meaning is about responding to diversity; listening to unfamiliar voices; being open; empowering all members; and learning to live with one another (Terzi, 2008). The work of Disabled people's organisations such as the Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE)<sup>4</sup> is emphatic that inclusive education is education that includes everyone, non-disabled and disabled people (including those with SNE) learning together in mainstream schools, colleges and universities (ALLFIE, online). The emphasis of inclusive education is, learning together, not in separate classrooms but alongside mainstream peers (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015; Loreman, 2014; Florian and Spratt, 2013; Booth, 2011; Ainscow and Miles, 2008; Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006; Avramidis and Norwich; 2002). Inclusive practice has a significant difference from integration in that it implies attitudes and methods of ensure all learners can access mainstream education.

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<sup>4</sup> Available at [www.allfie.org.uk](http://www.allfie.org.uk)

Moreover, restructuring of mainstream schools to ensure that every child, regardless of disability, is fully involved in a school's community (Hodkinson and Deverokonda, 2011).

Inclusion has been defined as 'new thinking' that promotes improvements to education systems whenever possible (Slee, 2001). By way of illustration, Lord and Hutchison (2007) refer to the 'new thinking' as a new paradigm shift in education that means to value human rights and dignity. This implies that any new beginning in education should have clear values, values that reflect diversity, about people and communities. Moreover, the authors emphasise 'new thinking' as a break from the conventional ways of doing things, to a journey where people learn along the way (ibid: 8). Although the Salamanca Statement indicated that inclusion is educationally and socially desirable, precisely how the vision would become a reality remained singularly unclear (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). Nevertheless, inclusive process is seen increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities and reducing barriers within and from education by establishing that inclusion involves:

...a conviction that it is the responsibility of the mainstream system to educate all children (UNESCO, 1994:ix)

The primary emphasis in the above quote is the responding to the diversity of needs in mainstream schools. This view could be conceptualised in terms of nations being called on to adopt the principle of inclusive education as a matter of law or policy (Mitchell 2018; UNESCO 1994). Mainstream schools were called to accommodate learners within a child-centred pedagogy and for schools to be capable of meeting learners' educational needs. Everyone works to make sure all learners feel welcome and valued, and that they get the right support to help them develop their talents and achieve their goals (ALLFIE, 2018). In other words, responding to diversity is the challenge the Salamanca Statement posed to schools that when education is truly inclusive it can benefit all learners, not only those with SEN. According to Avramidis and Norwich (2016), responding to diversity refers to removing organisational and structural barriers to facilitate all schools to accommodate every child, regardless of their disability, and ensure all learners belong to a community (2002:131). Reorganisation and restructuring of mainstream schools certainly absorbs the broader global agenda of school improvement and recognises the necessity and urgency of providing education for children with SEN within the mainstream education system.

Similarly, responding to diversity creates a significant relationship between communities and schools because in the process of removing barriers closer links, collaboration and networking are formed between schools and surrounding communities (De Boer et al. 2010). Close ties within communities contribute to the academic development and social and economic welfare of all children and their families, enabling them to reach their potential (Rieser, 2012). In addition, nations that respond to diversity commit to moving needed services and resources to the child with SEN rather than to move the child where services and resources are located in a segregated setting. Oliver (2017; 1996) suggests responding to diversity means fairness and, if something is offered to all children, then it must be accessed by all children without discrimination (ibid).

Hence, education should not be denied based on disability or any characteristic alone. The idea of fairness encompasses the changing of attitudes, approaches and strategies to ensure that no learner is excluded or isolated from the education on offer (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). Thus, it can be understood that responding to diversity has three principal features, which could be described in the following way:

- The process of increasing the participation and achievement of all children in learning activities within schools in their communities
- The process of reducing exclusion by restructuring the school, policies and practices so that they respond to the diversity of all learners.
- Creating a barrier-free and welcoming school for all children to learn together

Inclusion and exclusion in any country is shaped by its culture and histories (Booth, 2017). Slee (2014) configures inclusive education as a means of shaping an inclusive society to create a legacy of diversity in education, and not a set of adjustments applied to ideas and practices to give the gleam of inclusion. The Salamanca Statement endorsed the principle of inclusive education to challenge all exclusionary policies and practices in education. The statement made demands for the right of all children to a common education, based in the same school and ‘whenever possible regardless of any difficulties or differences a child may have’ (UNESCO, 1994:11).

## 2.2 Global interpretations of inclusion

The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have previously compared definitions across countries (EADSNE, 2009; OECD, 2005). However, comparisons were difficult as the definitions varied, even within nations such as, for example, America, Australia and the UK, and there was considerable variation across countries. Table 5 is a summary of the variations of global interpretations of inclusion.

Table 5: Global interpretations of inclusion

Country	Region	Interpretation	Concerns based on	Source
<b>Italy</b>	Europe	Closing/emptying all special schools and having all children learning together in mainstream schools.	Placement in mainstream education, equal learning, achievement and citizenship opportunities	Lebeer et al. (2007), Ainscow, et al. (2006).
<b>England</b>	UK	Moving towards extending the scope of mainstream schools to include a greater diversity of children	Overcoming barriers to learning and increasing participation for all irrespective of disability, attainment, ethnicity, gender, social background or sexual orientation	Florian (2005;2014), Booth et al. (2002), DfES (2001).
<b>Brazil</b>	South America	Identifying and removing barriers that prevent any pupil at risk of exclusion from accessing the curriculum content	Democratic perspective of decreasing exclusion of those disabled, ethnic minorities and children with terminal diseases	Mbibeh (2013), Peters, (2003).
<b>America</b>	North America	Responding to diversity. Responding to individuals by considering curricula organisation and provision	Participation of all children, social development, creating least restrictive environment and civil rights movement	Dudley-Marling et al. (2013), Terzi (2008),
<b>New Zealand</b>	Oceania	Valuing all children and staff in all aspects of school life. Removing barriers to presence, participation and achievement	Decreasing exclusion of pupils and staff, promoting biculturalism in education	Hayward (2012)
<b>Pakistan</b>	Asia	Physically placing a student with disabilities in mainstream classrooms	Emphasis on extending the scope of mainstream school settings to include learning for children with disabilities	Sharma et al. (2015)
<b>Tanzania</b>	Africa	Broadening educational opportunities for children with SEN and marginalised groups to realise their full potential	Participation of learners with disabilities to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Education for All (EFA)	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (Polat, 2011)

Table 5 is quite revealing in several ways. To begin with, definitions of inclusion and global interpretations of inclusion are diverse (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006). Then, policy priorities are evidently different and sometimes present conflicting discourses regarding values, concepts and approaches to education (ibid). Subsequently, SEN exists upon a continuum of abilities (Hodkinson, 2015) this ranges from physical placement in mainstream school to full inclusion. However, for Riddell (2007), it is much more a matter of political will rather than having appropriate policy frameworks in place. Besides, in most nations despite the political rhetoric, the traditional exclusionary and discriminatory approaches are still in place (Slee, 2014).

As seen, inclusive education may embrace different goals, motives, or provision of services in different context. Yet, according to Avramidis and Norwich (2016), the main goal and purpose of inclusion and inclusiveness is to educate each child whatever their ability, disability or learning difficulty, in an appropriate environment within mainstream schools with their peers. Peters (2004) explains that globally, inclusiveness has specific goals, which can focus on either improved educational performance, quality, proportionality or parental choice. Definitions may develop from various motives, such as: dissatisfaction with the system; economic or resource allocation concerns; educational reform; or attempts to overcome barriers to learning, but most important is the motivation to build inclusive learning communities that promote the learning of all children (Kumar et al. 2018).

As this study identified, there are three key elements of a working definition of inclusion that tend to feature frequently in the literature. First inclusion is a process, meaning that inclusion is a never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity, learning how to live with difference, and how to learn from difference. Viewed from this perspective, differences come to be seen more positively as an impetus for nurturing learning in children with SEN (Ainscow and Miles, 2009; Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). Then, inclusion involves identification and removal of barriers. Like the first view of inclusion as a process, the identification of barriers involves collecting, collating and evaluating information from a wide variety of sources, and disabled adults who have experiences we can learn from for improvements in policy and pedagogy (Ainscow and Messiou, 2018; Booth, 2011; Miles and Singal, 2010). Finally, inclusion concerns presence, participation and achievement of all children. Presence is about being welcome in mainstream schools (Clark et al. 2018; Mittler, 2008), participation relates to inclusion,

enabling increased access to education and schools' social life and the receipt of quality learning experiences whilst in school (Fitzgerald, 2018; Mittler, 2012). Achievement relates to the outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not merely test or examination results (Mittler, 2012; 2008; Florian, 2008).

As illustrated, globally inclusion involves an emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement. This indicates a need for reframing inclusive education and provision for children with SEN in the light of education equality (Terzi, 2014). The moral responsibility is to ensure that those groups that are statistically most at risk are carefully monitored and that, where necessary, steps are taken to ensure their presence, participation and achievement within the education system (Ainscow, 2015; Allan; 2010). As observed, diverse interpretations, understanding, practice and goals of inclusion may generate conflict and tensions in an already troubling educational and social context (Slee, 2014). Conversely, rather than being fixed on definition, the prerequisite is democratic and more inclusive schooling and, for some countries of the southern hemisphere, taking the initial steps of inclusion to overcome barriers to learning, participation and attainment (Mittler, 2012; Eleweke and Rodda, 2002). According to Adoyo and Odeny (2015), Avramidis and Norwich (2002) and Eleweke and Rodda (2002), potentially imperative factors should be maximising participation and minimising exclusion in mainstream schools for all children.

### **2.3 Kenya's perspective of inclusion**

An ethical imperative for countries is to embrace diversity and grant children with SEN equal opportunities to be educated in mainstream schools all of the time, regardless of the degree or severity of the disability (Miles and Singal, 2010; Thomazet, 2009). However, Florian and Rouse (2009) perceptively argue for the importance of planned changes to schools to enhance school experience and quality of education. This is in line with the Salamanca Statement which established the need for stronger links between special schools and mainstream schools (Florian et al. 2002). It is from this background that the concept of inclusive education in Kenya has progressed from segregation to inclusion, with the aim of providing educational opportunities for children with SEN in mainstream education (Kristensen et al. 2004). The authors describe recent changes witnessed in Kenya intended to enrich the lives of children with SEN and learning experiences for all other children.

The overall education policy of Kenya is to achieve EFA in tandem with national and international commitments through specific educational objectives. Since Kenya attained independence in 1963, policies and concepts of inclusion affirming inclusiveness have been formulated, as can be seen through various education commissions and committees (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015). Policy recommendations have steered the provision of education of children with SEN towards inclusive education as seen in Koech Report (RoK, 1999); Kamunge Report (RoK, 1988); Gachathi Report, (RoK, 1976); Ngala Report (RoK, 1964); Ominde Commission (RoK, 1964b). In recognition of the principle of inclusive education, policies have affirmed that no pupil shall be denied entry or excluded from mainstream education on any grounds (Njoka et al. 2011; RoK, 2009).

The right to education for every person is also affirmed in the Constitution of Kenya (2010), and inclusion as a concept is fundamentally subscribed to in The Bill of Rights Chapter 4 Article 43 Sec.1 (f) and Article 54 Sec.1 (b) (ibid). In addition, Article 55 (a) commits the state to take measures, including affirmative action, to ensure individuals access appropriate education and training for persons with disabilities (ibid). Policies such as (Children's Act, 2001; Disabled people Acts, 2003; Sessional Paper No.1, 2005; the National Special Education Policy Framework, 2009 and the Disability Regulating Policy, 2012) are created to make education more responsive to the needs of its citizens and to uphold the rights of disabled people to access education.

A successful system of inclusion requires communities to believe in the efforts of an education system to meet the needs of all learners (UNESCO, 1994). Equally, parents require reassurance of the capacity of schools to understand and effectively educate their children, especially those with special needs. In response, the government has initiated a long-term development blueprint for the country, Vision 2030, motivated by a collective aspiration for an improved society. The aim is to provide adequate, dynamic and quality education to all learners by 2030. Implementing remedies in such long-term plans is very important, not only for the well-being of children with SEN, but also for the development of an equitable societies and local communities (Mitchell, 2018). However, the key issue with the long-term development plan is the conflict that arises due to the collective social responsibility and procedures required to ensure all children receive quality education.

A useful interpretation in light of Kenya's position is the call for consideration of appropriate policies (Amutabi, 2003). The author, a renowned Kenyan educationist, demands for

education reform and paradigm shift policies that consider learner diversity. He pinpoints the current education policy, namely 8 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education and 4 years of university education (8–4–4 system), as inappropriate. He says that delay in policy review is likely to have educational effects that are complicated and cause undesirable ripple effects, which can last over a long period. Consequently, there is growing consensus for changing the education system to make education's Vision 2030 a reality (Muricho and Chang'ach, 2013; Sifuna, 2008).

Another perspective on education guidelines is that of Mwangi and Orodho (2014), who argue that the majority of children with SEN do not access education, despite the existing national policies. The authors highlight the efforts made by the government to reduce exclusion and increase inclusion by implementing Free Primary Education (FPE). However, exclusion remains extensive despite primary school enrolment increasing from 6.1 million in 2002 to 9.4 million in 2010. Nevertheless, there remain matters of concern. One is the lack of data on children with SEN who access FPE (Murori, 2015). Another is that in some nations a fraction of children remain excluded from education due to lack of uniform or fees, which an issue seen as a violation of the right to education (Tomasevski, 2006). The Kenyan government has acknowledged tensions in education policies and practices, especially in relation to SEN and inclusion in education. Consequently, concerted effort to review the curriculum was observed in October 2015 when the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) introduced a participatory approach to collect data on Kenyans' views and recommendations concerning the existing 8-4-4 system of education.

According to Mbua and Sarisar (2013), the government aims to improve performance and service delivery of Public Service<sup>5</sup>, which includes the MoE (RoK, 2005) in the realisation of Vision 2030. The 1994 Salamanca Statement calls on nations to address barriers in education regarding communication, environment, policies, protocols and procedures as well as staff training (UNESCO, 1994). Correspondingly, a directorate was formed in Kenya to monitor inclusive activities with disability as a consideration in all ministries (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015). The aim was alleviation of the poor management of public resources and the introduction of accountability and service delivery that had hindered the realisation of

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<sup>5</sup> A commission that monitors and evaluates government organisations code of conduct, administration and practices. It has the mandate to ensure efficiency and effectiveness using powers conferred by the national legislation (see <https://www.publicservice.go.ke/index.php/homepage/mandate> )

quality education. Moreover, emphasis was placed on the promotion of inclusion based on the principle of non-discrimination, an idea advocated in international educational policy and human rights (UNICEF, 2013; UNESCO, 2005; UNESCO, 1994). Efforts to decrease the number of children with SEN excluded from mainstream schools have taken two distinct routes. One route is the recent approach of focusing on improving the capacity of mainstream schools to accommodate diversity amongst pupil.

The second route which is special units is characterised by the attempt to integrate children from special schools into mainstream schools and classes through a range of provision (Galloway, 2018). Central to this approach is children with SEN spending part of their day with peers of approximately the same age while attending special needs classes for the remainder part of the day (Florian et al. 2002). There appears to be acceleration in ensuring the success of as seen with numerous collaborations with non-governmental organisations such as Sight Savers International and Leonard Cheshire Disability. Notwithstanding this development, shortfall of legislation is observed in guiding the initial steps of implementing inclusion, as regards which schools are to be involved and also where responsibility for implementation lies (Rieser, 2012). Undoubtedly, this is a major cause of confusion as some children are already in the system but remain excluded from active and meaningful participation (Miles and Singal, 2010). It is important for the government to specify the aims, objectives and goals to be achieved by the development of special units. Equally, it should also make clear the criteria for creating special units and whether there is to be a future focus on the involvement of all mainstream schools nationally as explained in the section that follows.

### **Special units**

The creation of special units in the mid-1990s was in response to the Salamanca Statement call for obligatory access and an acceptable level of learning for every child with SEN within mainstream schools (UNESCO, 1994). Further, an endorsement of accommodating children with SEN needs within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting diversity (ibid: viii). UNESCO, in particular, declared that enrolment in units be only for the relatively small number of children with SEN who cannot adequately attend mainstream classrooms or schools, and not for every child who has SEN. Consequently, Kenya's approach towards inclusion is a bottom up approach involving schools and communities, while using limited resources to address the inclusion commitment, as signed in 1994.

Whilst success of special units must not be discounted, the social model approach is adopted to demonstrate society has made effort to minimise the disabling barriers of access to education in the face of limited resources. However, these units are excluded from mainstream school activities thus making the approach debatable.

Other factors play a vital role in the 'special units' approach for learners with SEN. First, there is increasing awareness that attainment of EFA will only be possible with the participation of all children in education and therefore there is the need for more attention to be directed towards SEN children who are harder to reach (Miles and Singal, 2010). Secondly, due to paucity of special schools in their neighbourhood, children have been forced to leave their families to attend special boarding schools away from home (Kiarie, 2014). However, some parents were apprehensive that boarding schools posed the risk of bullying or irreversible loss of primary attachments with siblings and environment. Therefore, when joining special units, instead of boarding, some children with SEN started to remain at home with their families, thus promoting social inclusion when learners get to participate socially in the community activities. Another factor is the common recognition of the rights of disabled people, including the right of disabled children to education at community, national and international levels (Bines and Lei, 2011). Finally, by being seen regularly in schools, there has been a significant shift away from negative attitudes influenced by traditional values and associated cultural beliefs towards disabilities, particularly for children with SEN (Polat, 2011; Yeo et al. 2011; Abosi and Koay, 2008).

Although the terms integration and inclusion are often and confusingly used interchangeably in reference to special units in Kenya, there are substantial conceptual differences between them in terms of their values and practices (Polat, 2011). Consequently, the implementation of special units is termed as inclusion in Kenya, while, actually, it is integration. An equally significant aspect of special units embraced by most mainstream primary schools is the ease of enrolment, implementation and management, in contrast to mainstream primary schools which require whole school restructuring. Essentially, this is not the case with secondary schools, which have a computerised enrolment schedule from qualifying primary school candidates, unlike primary school which enrol children directly from home. In Kenya, government sponsored secondary school enrolment is based on outstanding performance in the national primary examination, known as the Kenya Certificate Primary Education, at the end of class 8 (13-14 years).

At the same time, affirmative action for children with SEN is absent in local secondary school enrolment. Like all other candidates, children with SEN must earn their place in secondary schools through good academic performance, which is very competitive, unless they qualify for a special needs secondary school based on the category of their disability (Koros et al. 2013). Under such circumstances, schools sometimes make children repeat classes. The improvement of performance or good ranking using the repetition of grades approach has been subject to criticism as resulting in high dropout and slow transition rates (Orodho, 2014; Hungi and Thuku, 2010; Glewwe, 2002;). Therefore, a complex relationship exists between transitions from primary to secondary school in Kenya. According to Muriuki (2015), the government's specific educational plans for 2012 and beyond has been to create 560 new special secondary schools and integrated units to absorb all learners into secondary school education. Additionally, the number of special units increased steadily to over 1882 by 2015, compared to only 15 special and integrated secondary schools. Consequently, affirmative action is required to inform transition from special unit to mainstream primary and then to mainstream secondary.

Notwithstanding such criticism, the popularity of special units remains largely undiminished. Muuya (2002) considers 'special units' a positive approach to education for some children with SEN since it enables learners, who could not otherwise receive an education, access to school despite being segregated in learning. The author notes the benefits of being included in other activities not necessarily classroom based such as interaction with mainstream peers, circles of friends and the identity of community and national belonging. Lamichhane (2013) suggests a major aspect of education for children with SEN, however limited, is that it contradicts existing cultural assumptions regarding inclusive education so that those families that are ashamed of their child's disability might see other children receiving education and choose to educate their children. The government of Kenya together non-governmental organisations have made efforts to reinforce the enrolment of vulnerable children in special units and mainstream schools through motivations such as free education, boarding schools, uniforms, books, stationery and food (Ng'asike, 2011; Ngugi, 2016). Nevertheless, minimal enrolment of all children is still prevalent.

An equally significant aspect for the education of children with special needs, it has been noted that a dilemma remains in finding an appropriate system that would effectively provide

quality education for children with SEN (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015). Several studies suggest despite introducing special units, integrations could be a difficult educational reform for developing countries due to deficit of experience in educating children with SEN (Chapman et al. 2010; Frederickson and Cline, 2009; Kisanji, 1998a) . Subsequently, despite government emphasis on creating adaptable and suitably resourced special units in Kenya, such a reform should only be considered as an initial step towards inclusion (Kiarie, 2014). It is almost certain it is a broader social reform of building an inclusive society by encouraging children with SEN into education. Notwithstanding the criticism of introducing more special rather than inclusive schools, the Government of Kenya still considers maintaining special schools and increasing special units to be important (Kajilwa, 2016; Lynch et al. 2011). In the introduction of more special units there is the economic justification by Salamanca in 1994 to be considered which recognised the cost-effectiveness of establishing and maintaining schools that educate all children, rather than set up a complex system of different schools for specialised groups of children (UNESCO, 1994).

As a consequence, special units could be acknowledged as social inclusion. However, it is equally important not to overemphasise their ability to provide appropriate and adequate education for children with SEN. This is because inclusion based on the perception of participation in special units accessing a different curriculum from the other children is not inclusion in its truest form (Farrell 2004). Farrell notes that for it to be said that a child is included, they must actively ‘belong to, be welcomed by and participate in a mainstream school’ (ibid: 7). Likewise, the child’s diversity of interests, abilities and attainment should be recognised as enriching school life and be encouraged. It is understandable that Kenya is dealing with issues of access and improving physical environments for the child with SEN in mainstream schools (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015; Kiarie, 2014; Njoka et al. 2011), nonetheless Kenya committed to the Salamanca Statement. It is paramount not to disregard the influence of culture on matters of education for disabled learners. It is also vital to consider the influence of Salamanca, as seen with the creation of special units A more detailed account of special units is summarised in main findings of the study in section 6.2. A reflection and lessons learned in Kenya post Salamanca 1994 will be explained next.

## 2.4 Tensions arising from inclusive education

As seen in the previous section, the interpretation of inclusion has caused misunderstanding globally caused by limited understanding of inclusion and exacerbated by socio-economic considerations. These factors appear to prompt divergent views and debates on education provision for children with SEN. According to Stubbs (2007) these debates result when inclusive education is perceived to apply to people with certain characteristics such “special needs” or when it is equated with a particular type or form of education, life stage or location. Moreover, when the values and practices that underpin education for children with SEN is guided by the medical model attitudes that eventually result to exclusion (Rieser, 2016). Such views reinforce the perception that education provision is based on the learner’s characteristic of “special” as opposed to “normal”. Therefore, emanating from such attitude’s debates revolve around the learner’s location whether to be located in special school, integrated special units or mainstream school inclusion. Currently in Kenya, debates are shifting towards a focus on special units annexed to the mainstream school. The divergent thinking on learner’s placement are highlighted in Figure 3 below.

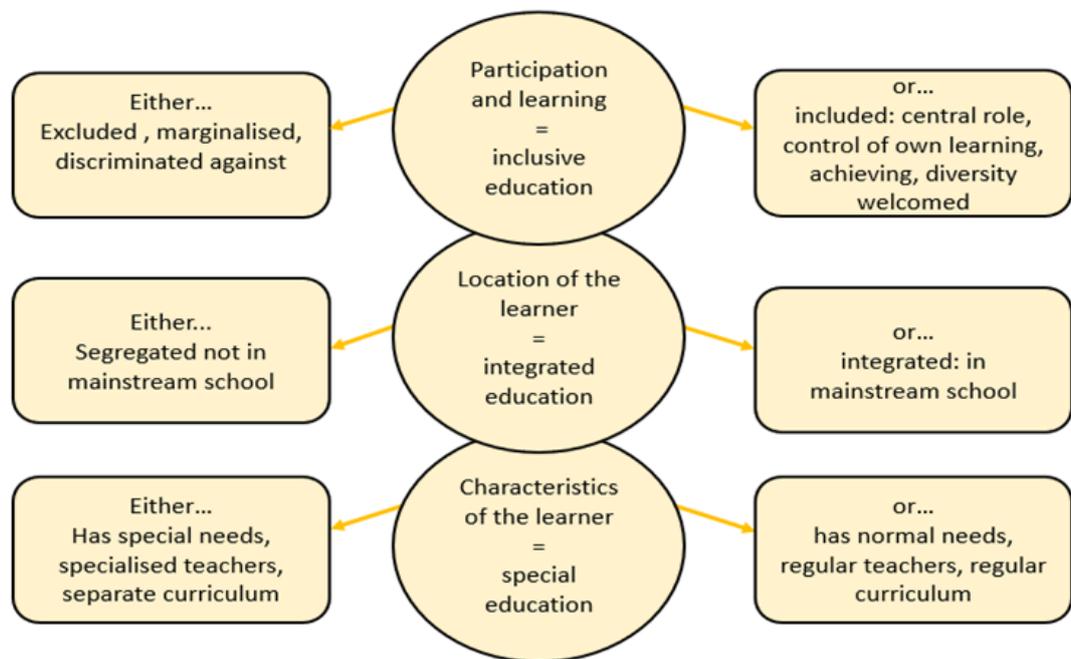


Figure 3: Divergent debates about forms of education for children with SEN  
Source: Adapted from (Stubbs, 2007:47)

Location of the learner thinking as adapted from Stubbs 2007 stimulates much debate because of the traditional understanding of education provision for children with SEN

traditionally being in special schools. Stubbs suggests that these debates tend to get polarised over issues of location, including such segregation based on the characteristics of the child rather than looking at inclusive education in a broader, rights-based context. Moreover, they overlook the efficacy of inclusion and the learning experiences that children gain in supportive environments. According to Wang (2009), arguments and debates arise as some educators find that segregation offers security, sufficient adult support and the flexibility of curriculum offered since it is specifically formulated for children with SEN. On the other hand, however, other educators argue that mainstream schools offer more effective means of enabling children with SEN to become better self-supportive adults in the future (ibid). A further argument is against separation of special education and general education students as it affects everyone in both schooling environments i.e. mainstream and special schools.

Apart from debates on location, another point of debate for countries' is the introduction of a new practice altogether in the developing countries that are economically disadvantaged and still in the process of implementing UPE and EFA (Sharma et al. 2015; Ahmmed et al. 2012; Sharma and, 2008) to move EFA forward. Therefore, an element that might cause divergent views and tension for inclusive schools is funding (Florian and Rouse, 2009). However, the field of education remains confused on what action and strategies need to be taken to move policy and practice forward (Ainscow and Ceaser, 2006). The conflicting views in Kenya are reflected in the recent developments in EFA initiatives and whether inclusive education has or has not been achieved. While the government has posited that compliance to the global agenda of FPE and UPE for all children in 2003 achieved inclusive education, inclusive education has not been created due to the significant absence and isolation of disabled children in mainstream schools in Kenya (Rieser, 2012; Stubbs, 2007). Thus, debates and scholarly arguments continue to reflect whether inclusive education has been successfully created in Kenya based on increased enrolment in mainstream classes and integrating most children with SEN into mainstream schooling (Muricho and Chang'ach, 2013; Otiato, 2009; Amutabi, 2003). Therefore, from these debates tensions arise because some people feel inequalities continue to persist for children with SEN in terms of entry into mainstream schools (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015).

Divergent views have also been common in other nations, due to varied interpretation and understanding of inclusive practice, or complex beliefs arising from the values and experiences of different communities (Yero, 2002). Other differences have arisen from issue

of teaching, learning and school experiences of children with SEN (Miles and Singal, 2010). There may be a need within teacher education, curriculum development, and policymaking to depersonalise the debate from the medical model perception of problems teachers perceive in children with SEN, limitations of training or problems that relate to funding to a more interactionist approach that makes sense of the problem as not just in the learner but also located between teachers, learners, the curriculum and resources provided by the government (Westbrook, and Croft, 2015).

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) found diverse understanding not only of approaches but also perspectives such as the term “school” when used in education circles. Dissimilar understanding is evident when referring to most children with SEN accessing inclusive education for the first time in 2003 (Gichura, 2003) and all learners benefitted from quality education (Orodho 2014; Oketch et al. 2010). There seemed to be dissimilar understanding of the meaning of school and quality, for example, school can mean one room for all children in a few rural areas of developing countries (Avramidis and Norwich (2002), or dirty floors, corrugated tin walls, no running water or no electricity due to minimal government funding (Elder and Kuja, 2018). In developed countries, the same word might mean an institution designed to provide learning spaces, including recreation spaces (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). Similarly, the meaning of the term “inclusion” might not factor into a common definition for all which could be the cause of tensions experienced in implementation of the approach.

### **Different understandings of inclusive policy**

Works of Gadamer (1867–1928) translated later by scholars such as Weinsheimer and Marshall. (1989); Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1982) show that people interpret the world around them based on epistemological perspectives because individuals perceive then address social problems differently. For example, understanding of inclusive education, definition, process and policy to align with the perspectives of the Salamanca initiatives appears to cause tensions. Both sets of authors concur that when individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds communicate for a common goal, outcomes can be plagued by misunderstandings, misrepresentations and misevaluations. Kisanji (1998b) cites that the cause of tension and debates on inclusive education can arise from misunderstanding of declarations and statements made in recent years by the international community through the United Nations or by other specialists to promote the rights of disabled people.

Consequently, a fundamental paradigm shifts in developing inclusive practice from integration is of major concern, especially for developing countries that are in the initial phases of the integration process.

Arising from a new change in basic assumptions, advocates of full inclusion have caused confusion and tensions globally (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1998). They argue that instructional practices and technological supports are readily available to accommodate all children in the same schools and classrooms that children with SEN would otherwise attend if not disabled (Mulvey, 2014). Their main motivation is that children make friends, influence attitudes about disability and improve social skills. However, one issue that has brought divergent views is the reality that most developing countries lack 'sufficient resources to develop a policy of full inclusion' (Hornby, 2012:56). Considering the significance of inclusive education, it could be said that 'inclusion is not a matter of where one is located but rather where one feels they belong (Warnock and Norwich, 2010). Moreover, inclusion can neither be imposed as a duty on all parents for their children (Cigman, 2010) and nor can those who fail on inclusive education be said to be violating their children's rights (Singal, 2005). Nevertheless, the Alliance for Inclusive Education group of disabled people who represent a strong disabled 'perspective' indicate that location and belonging matters and that schools should not be allowed to make people feel that they do not belong (ALLFIE: 2018), where schools fail on inclusive education they should be regarded as violating children's rights .Going by the formal debates and arguments around the location of the learner, it is certain that some children with SEN could be excluded and marginalised from education provision.

Accordingly, UNICEF (2011) argued that tensions and conflicts in education result in the right to education being far from fully realised. Although significant efforts have been made to overcome the historic discrimination and exclusion children with SEN experience, in countries like Kenya, the right to basic education for some children with SEN remains elusive (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015). Additionally, education provision measures are fragmented and un-coordinated within educational organisations (ibid). The national goals of education in Kenya explain the ideals that the system seeks to accomplish in terms of knowledge, skills and values for the learners to ensure all children realise and benefit from education. Accordingly, the formulation of the eight goals of education although not fully realised by all is meant to specify more precisely which qualities are thought most desirable to develop among Kenyan citizens (Mwaka et al. 2013). Rather than maintain national

cohesion by engaging citizens in policies, tension in Kenya could be said to arise from the top-down bureaucratic characteristic the system assumes by making decisions at the top, then communicating down to the people whose responsibility is to bring the decisions into effect (Wanzare, 2002). Those implementing the decisions include administrators and teachers at the local level who have, in theory, no choice but to implement the decisions as they are directed such as, for example, changing set books, examinations, fees structure, and curriculum and discipline procedures in schools (MoE, 2008, Namaswa, 1989 in Muricho and Chang'ach, 2013). Consequently, tension and divergent views regarding inclusive education arise because decisions made at the top of the system are often remote from the ground and may be insensitive to some of the realities of local school and classroom situations (Muricho and Chang'ach, 2013).

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

To develop an understanding of inclusive education, it is essential to explore how society constructs disability. Such an understanding provides a lens to investigate Kenyan society's positionality on educational provision for children with SEN, thus locating it within a theoretical framework. The medical model, including the cluster approaches that have evolved within it, and the social model are both significant to this study, particularly in guiding the discussion chapter and to provide an insight into the attitudes, conceptions and prejudices of non-disabled people towards those who are disabled. In addressing the challenges of inclusion, the models reveal how society delivers or limits access to resources and services for children with SEN. It is important to note that the social model will shape focus on how society can devise strategies for meeting the needs of children with SEN (see sub-section 2.5.2). Westbrook and Croft (2015) hold the view that philosophical orientation of social thinking regarding disability can influence how teachers treat and interact with children with SEN in schools. The following section describes these two models in detail.

### **2.5.1 Medical model of disability**

The medical model of disability, or the "personal tragedy" model, is the traditional and dominant model of disability (Oliver, 1996). Disability from this perspective is considered as a problem for an individual as it limits personal functioning. Disability is discerned as the result of some physiological impairment due to damage or the consequence of a disease, and the solution lies in medical intervention by being treated by professionals with medical

training (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000). Disability is contextualised in terms of “fixing”, either with therapy, medicine, surgery or special treatment to make individuals, like everyone else (Peters, 2003). As Peter suggests, educational solutions to disability deficit concentrate on segregating disabled children to ‘special’ places due to their ‘special needs’ to receive ‘extra support’ (2003:62).

Consistent with the Alliance for Inclusive Education, the medical model of disability makes disabled people feel inadequate because of a loss of all the things they would like to do but cannot do, such as goals and dreams that seem unobtainable, and feeling that they are a burden to family and friends and a problem for doctors who cannot cure them (ALLFIE, 2018). Michigan Disability Rights Coalition<sup>6</sup> which is justice movement comprised of disabled people themselves argues that within this conflict of deficits, disabled people are expected to see their impairments as their own problem. Furthermore, that disability is their problem they will have to make best use of and accept that there are many things they cannot accomplish (Oliver, 1996). Viewed from this lens, in education children with SEN may be seen as lacking something, having a deficit or being considered “abnormal” due to the influence of the deficit model of disability and subsequent stigmatisation.

Society’s focus in the medical model approach, is on an individual’s limitations and uses negative labels about disabilities (Richards, 2016b). Furthermore, it fails to focus on barriers within education and teaching practices or the environment that restricts disabled people’s mobility and ability to communicate or function effectively within communities (Hodkinson, 2015; Barney, 2012). Evidence in support of this position is put forward by Mukuria and Korir’s (2006) position that the medical model in Kenya has been influenced by traditional African beliefs, cultural perspectives and religious practices. For this reason, disability becomes the defining characteristic of individuals with disabilities by the use of labels such as crippled, retarded, immature, stammers, physically impaired, orthopedically impaired and neurologically impaired (ibid:49).

The overall perspective reflected by the medical model of disability is that human beings are flexible and can be altered, while society is fixed and rigid, and thus emphasis is on adaptation to the environment (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000:158). Consequently, courage, independence and willpower are all lauded when a disabled person proves that overcoming

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.copower.org/leadership/models-of-disability>

a disability is a matter of individual effort (Johnston, 1994). Furthermore, at societal level, the medical model reduces ‘the importance of political, economic and social factors’ (Garth and Aroni, 2003:564) that contribute to the continuing oppression and marginalisation of disabled people. At school level, special education has sometimes been provided as a supplement to general educational provision (Ainscow and César, 2006). For this reason, children with SEN are excluded and marginalised from mainstream schooling due to their medical problems, since they cannot perform tasks as well as or the same as non-disabled children. Consequently, they are provided with a special education separately (see section 1.3) Areheart (2008) has pointed out how the medical model can become deterministic, especially if emphasis is placed on individual causation.

The medical model is not only applicable in schools in Kenya but also in most of Kenyan society. In their research on the constraints experienced by elite athletes with disabilities in Kenya, Crawford and Stodolska (2008) observed a pre-modern view of disability that is strongly normative, meaning that people are considered disabled on the basis of their being unable to function as a ‘so-called’ normal’ person does. Roush and Sharby (2011) also observed disabled people being portrayed stereotypically as helpless, dependent and needing care including exclusion from participation in many life experiences including employment and independent living. In a societal context, the medical model dominates charitable, religious and rehabilitation thinking (Barnes and Mercer, 2005), which are discussed in the next section.

#### **(i) Charity approach of disability**

The charity approach, also known as the welfare approach, has a view of disabled people as passive recipients of benevolence and benefits (Bines and Lei, 2011). The fundamental problem identified within this approach is society’s attitude and imperative duty to children with SEN. Access to services and resources comes from consolation, compassion, or to aid expediency (Gabel and Peters, 2004). However, there is inconsistency with the needs of disabled people being provided as a right, rather than being handed out as charity to supposedly passive, grateful recipients (Turmusani, 2018; Burchardt, 2004). The charity approach is a significant area of interest for this thesis, since it has an influence on inclusive education in Kenya and is the basis for the current establishment of many special units in mainstream schools. Many scholars hold the view that education is a vital tool in the development of any country, including Kenya. Hence, immense investment to reduce social

inequality is required (Muricho and Chang'ach, 2013; Amutabi, 2003). Lamichhane (2013) draws attention to the portrayal of disabled people by influential groups in society, such as charities and other organisations, as inherently negative through images of pitiable people, primarily disempowered and in need of help. Traditionally, charities are used in the competitive business of fund-raising, depicting disabled people as victims of famine, poverty, child abuse and other circumstances. While this can be true, Oliver (1996) argues that the graphic illustration of the 'victim-image' in televised appeals are negative and thus found offensive by many disabled people.

At societal level, charity is a possible explanation as to why some parents of children with SEN, including those with mild disabilities, prefer special schools where services are offered for free within the confines of public charities, rather than mainstream education (Winzer, 2007). The first literature of historical analysis of education in Kenya from 1881-1991 by Bogonko in 1992 demonstrates this approach as being applicable in early education by missionaries. Ndurumo, in 1993, identified the charitable and religious approaches in the early development and management of special schools in Kenya. Watanabe (2007) argues that, rather than promoting empowerment and inclusion into society as equal members, delivery of services by various non-governmental organisations and religious institutions encourages dependency or passive attitudes on the part of disabled people. Taken together, it appears that countries with scarce resources like Kenya rely on the charity approach to maintain education for children with SEN. The next section of this paper moves on to describe the religious approach resulting from the medical model.

## **(ii) Religious approach of disability**

In many cultures and societies, religion remains a fundamental constituent of people's social and embodied reality. Ogechi and Ruto (2002) report African tradition as frequently cross-culturally explaining the causes of disability. The authors reveal that the reason given for disability is either based on culturally oriented causes or is religion based. Therefore, the religious or moral approach to disability issues communicates a powerful social account within which disability is regarded as a disease emanating from oneself or one's family; a curse; unexplained misfortune; punishment from God (ibid:72). In this regard, disability is to be treated or cured for a person to attain normality. Owing to such beliefs, religion portrays disabled people as lacking in something or being incomplete (Crawford and Stodolska 2008). According to Avoke (2002), such traditional beliefs gained ground in conventional African

societies because of superstition and a belief in eugenics as well as understanding of the nature of disability. However, increased urbanisation and western influence has rendered traditional belief systems outdated. Avoke suggests, therefore, that this model is prevalent when people are particularly superstitious, fatalistic or have an unfamiliar view of causes of disabilities or disability itself (ibid). Difficulties arise, however, when majority of Kenyan society ascribes to this religious approach of disabilities and, increasingly, Christians deny traditional beliefs but reinforce the philosophical and rhetorical underpinnings of healing disability through prayer.

It is rather contradictory that the biblical perception of disability encourages a negative view of disability (KISE, 2002) and a strongly normative view, which considers disabled people on the basis of being unable to function as a normal person would (Roush and Sharby, 2011). This view is in consideration of 80% of Kenya's population being Christian, it is likely they will adopt the teachings of the old and the New Testament explaining that all people are created equal and in God's image.

Additionally, some Christians seem to follow the demonstrative perspective of faith that claim restoration of functions and miracle healing after prayers (KISE, 2002). Although there is no medical evidence except testimonies of those who claim they know someone who was healed, some preachers claim to have faith healing abilities. Conversely, it seems the Bible reflects that disabled people must suffer affliction before some future spiritual reward. Efforts to eliminate all forms of prejudice and discrimination against disabled people have been made in Kenya through laws and legislation such as the National Disability Laws passed in 2003, whose mandate was to implement the rest of the act on disabled peoples' rights<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, in 2010, as mentioned in the previous chapter, disability rights were recognised in the Kenyan Constitution. However, going by the advertisements for healing on billboards, radio and national television, religion continues to influence the views of Kenyan secular society and permeates social, economic and political spheres of life, including disabilities. In the next section, I will present the rehabilitation approach of disability.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, comprehensive legislation providing for rights and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and other services such as employment policy, promotion and safeguarding at work.

### **(iii) Rehabilitation approach of disability**

The rehabilitation approach is grounded in the medical model, with a focus on disability as a problem of the individual directly caused by a disease, injury or some other health condition that necessitates treatment and rehabilitation (Mitra, 2006). In a school setting, the learner is provided with the tools to improve their lives towards a higher level of independence (Stucki et al. 2007). Countries with scarce resources like Kenya face the challenge of rehabilitating all children, resulting in some children being left out of educational provision, although the rehabilitation approach cannot be disregarded since it has influenced interventions for children with severe special needs in special schools (Shakespeare, 2013). However, despite being seen as a service to students with disabilities, special education has increasingly been positioned as an oppressive force and diverse perspectives operate in tension with each other regarding this model. Evidence for this position being that some children despite being in a position to never get to learn with non-disabled peers. Still a closer look shows some parents seek the middle ground, reserving the right to have their child placed in a special school education environment as preparation for future mainstreaming (Connor and Ferri, 2007).

Notwithstanding other parents feel that special schools limit the learner's interaction with the real world, as they spend most of their time with others like themselves and separated from family and peers over a prolonged period (Kiarie, 2014; Oliver, 1996). Consequently, rehabilitation in special schools away from mainstream schools makes it difficult for the learner to face the real world and is thus increasingly positioned as exclusion (Rieser 2012; Muuya, 2002). The construction of disability from this perspective is criticised as being partial and limited while ignoring the sociological and psychological aspects. Critics, therefore, have found sensibility within the social model of disability, as discussed next.

#### **2.5.2 Social model of disability**

The social model of disability is important to the study of inclusion in Kenya as it provides the intellectual and methodological tools needed to create inclusive schools. The strength of the social model is the workable framework it provides for *thinking through* the barriers created by institutionalised practices of society (Oliver, 1996), and informed by disabled people's perspectives, rather than just professionals' views (Goodley, 2016). Disabled people are a minority group who have been discriminated against and living in societies that are

oblivious of deficits within the environment that disable than (Rieser, 2012; Terzi, 2010). However, the social model enlivens the understanding of disability as a human rights and social justice issue (Turmusani, 2018).

Proponents of the social model of disability maintain disabled people have difficulties because society creates barriers, such as discrimination and prejudice towards disabilities (Mung'ala-Odera et al. 2006). Indeed, society can adjust the external environment so that disabled people are not excluded (Loreman and Forlin, 2014). Thus, the social model of disability can be used to enable people to understand and discover that being disabled does not have to be viewed negatively as failure or weakness (Shakespeare, 2013). This perspective can result in increased understanding and acceptance of disabled people in the society. According to Rieser (2012), the solution to the problem of disability is not in *curing* individuals with disabilities, but in the restructuring of society and removing barriers they face in everyday life. UNESCO has adopted the social model of disability, as have most disabled people's (UNESCO, 1994:7).organisations based on the premises that their problems have been compounded by a disabling society that has focused upon their impairment rather than their potential (Barnes, 1992).

### **Entitlement approach**

The entitlement approach is based on rights and equity and is more recent (Sen, 2017). The model can be linked to both international declarations on the rights of education for children with SEN and to dissatisfaction with the charity model (Bines and Lei, 2011). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, declared that everyone has a right to education (Booth and Ainscow, 2011; UN, 2007). Since then, many treaties have been adopted by nations to reiterate and guarantee these rights legally (Peters, 2007). The entitlement to an inclusive mainstream education imposes a duty on mainstream schools to provide for all pupils without exception, welcome them and adapt to their diverse needs (Cigman, 2010). However, many schools around the world fail to provide an experience that can meaningfully be called an education that might correspond to this entitlement. A school can fulfil the right to education, but it is “neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for entitlement to quality inclusive education” as highlighted in human rights documents (McCowan, 2010:514).

The FPE exemplifies this distinction of entitlement to education in Kenya, essentially launched in response to UPE and EFA. A commitment to fulfil EFA saw Kenya's government encounter challenges regarding implementation and insufficient attention to quality inclusive education, overcrowded classrooms and teacher and learning material shortages (Oketch and Rolleston, 2007; Somerset, 2009). Despite the considerable literature on the right to education and EFA, such ideas have had little discussion, as observed in the approach to FPE, UPE or consideration of the nature of education that might correspond to learner entitlement (McCowan, 2010). In addition, insufficiency of discussion and planning left unanswered questions regarding the number of children with SEN in Kenya who were entitled to an education but were excluded due to disability.

Initially, in 1973, Bandman saw entitlement to rights as encouraging a more careful and objective distribution of resources and raising concerns regarding the risk of infringing the rights of disabled children in some way. Historically justice for children with SEN has been outplayed by considerations of utility or, even worse, convenience (Thomas and Vaughan, 2004:21). According to Rieser (2016) the human rights framework to develop and build inclusive practice, methods of teaching and learning that underpin human rights approaches would ensure all children are included successfully in schools unless such education is incompatible with the 'efficient education of other children', or the wishes of the child's parents (Florian et al. 2016:11). According to (Rieser, 2012; 2014; 2018; AAFIE, online) this could be interpreted in any way a school likes and lead to integration or exclusion. The entitlement approach to inclusive education also clarifies the role of the learner as a rights holder with entitlements and the role of the government and its institutions as duty bearers (Clough, 1999). This implies children with SEN can receive education 'without negative attitudes, fear, the inertia of existing education systems' (Rieser 2016:163) that are exclusionary.

Affirming education as a right for all children, Tomasevski (2006) corroborates the ideas of Bandman, namely that children do not have to beg to be educated because education is their inheritance, a birth-right that remains unchanged and thus, an entitlement. The key issue is society withholding this entitlement, because children cannot halt their growth and therefore their education should be prioritised so that they do not lose it (ibid: 249). Tomasevski was consistent that children should be made to feel they own education rather be made to feel it was a favour. She reinforced the idea that although children lack "a political voice that would

enable them to secure their education through the political process” (ibid: 500), various international conventions have been formed to reaffirm every child’s birth-right. Therefore, the entitlement approach gives a strong, legally binding framework for the development of policy and practice in education (Gibson, 2015).

Nevertheless, the right to education has not escaped criticism. Hornby is probably the best-known critic of the rights issue. He argues that several activities and experiences in schools fall short of fulfilling the right to education, and also represent abuses of children’s other rights (Hornby, 2012). Hornby maintains that confusion exists between human rights and moral rights expounding on the widely held view that since someone has a human right to a certain option, does not necessarily mean it is morally the right thing to do. He argues it is more important to fulfil the right to appropriate education that meets specific needs for children than the right to be educated alongside mainstream peers (ibid). Consequently, to be educated alongside their peers in mainstream schools for some children with SEN is not morally correct nor the best option available (Hornby, 2012). This argument does not reflect those of groups like Alliance for Inclusive Education (who are disabled themselves) who feel such standpoint subordinates equality.

Within the context of this research and in light of Kenya, it is clear that the entitlement approach to free and appropriate quality education would ensure all children are included in education without confusion of location. One major drawback in Kenya however, is direct and indirect costs that impede access to education. For example, in Kenya, is the hidden costs of school uniform and shoes which are unaffordable for most parents. Hence, even if education is said to be free, only children of a few families could effortlessly afford entry into schools (Sawamura and Sifuna, 2010; Sifuna. 2005). A reasonable approach for consideration is that if education is a right, free and compulsory, then children have a right to completely fee free education, since children cannot meet the cost themselves (Tomasevski, 2006). Another interesting consideration is one raised by Rieser (2016), on disabled people themselves, parents, teachers including researchers’ projection over the years of the efficacy of inclusive education. Yet, despite inclusion being said as a good educational practice it has taken too long to be implemented in education systems globally (ibid). Subsequently, the government of Kenya should determine to meet all costs including all payments being progressively eliminated for children to achieve their entitlement to education.

### **2.5.3 The relevance of the two models to this study**

Practitioners have a choice between adopting the medical model view, with the risk of labelling and dividing learners or adopting the social model view by emphasising that all children are the same and merit common provision (Terzi, 2010). This study adopts the social model of disability because it works much better for the disabled people and as the disabled people themselves say, there will always be disabled people (ALLFIE, 2018). Therefore, if society denies them the opportunity to access the same education, work and social opportunities as everyone else there will be adverse implications for their opportunities and quality of life (ibid).

In relation to this study it has been established that society has erected barriers that limit the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream classrooms. Barnes and Mercer (2005) suggest that, unlike the medical model of disability, the social model directs focus away from individual functional limitations to the barriers created by disabling environments, attitudes and cultures. Additionally, the social model has a holistic approach that underscores the interrelationship of these barriers in everyday life, such as inaccessible education, inadequate disability support services and negative cultural and media representations. The perspective of this model has much to offer schools in setting appropriate contexts within which inclusive practices can develop (Loreman and Forlin, 2014) especially in consideration that inclusion is mainly dependent on the teacher's positive attitudes about it (Stella et al. 2007).

The advantage of the social model is the ability to provide the potential for disabled people to think about disability as caused by the negative attitudinal beliefs and physical and communicative barriers imposed on them, rather than the effects of their own impairments. The medical model perspective notes the importance or value of specific individual interventions in the lives of disabled people such as, for example, medical, rehabilitative and educational interventions. On the other hand, the social model emphasises that these interventions are insufficient to achieve inclusion in society. The social model provides understanding on the onus of removing barriers that exclude, disadvantage and discriminate against children with SEN as the collective responsibility of society which should aim to enable all learners to access education (Oliver, 2004). In the case of Kenya, social model can be embraced in Kenya to put pressure on the government to exacerbate policies that enable inclusion for children with SEN in mainstream schools. In this study, the social model is used in the interpretation of the findings and discussion to develop a link between current

inclusion and interventions that can be made for successful inclusionary behaviour. The next section describes the challenges to inclusion and resultant barriers in schools involved in this study.

## **2.6 Challenges to inclusion**

Inclusion denotes physical presence in a mainstream school (Polat, 2011). While there are innumerable known benefits for presence in an inclusive school (UNICEF, 2013; UNESCO, 1994), there are also some prominent factors which impede efforts to include all children with SEN in mainstream schools in many nations (Hastings and Oakford, 2003). Ainscow and Sandhill found these factors making inclusive education ‘the biggest challenge facing school systems in the world’ (2010:401). Evidence has pointed to most nations facing the challenge of moving educational policy and practice in a more inclusive direction (Ainscow and Messiou, 2018; Norwich, 2014). This shows the complex nature of policy making and interpretation, especially in relation inclusive education (Armstrong, 2016). In particular, the challenges in addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalisation as exemplified in the African region with most countries facing implementation and organisational challenges of creating inclusive schools (UNESCO, 2017; Rieser, 2012). This is true in the case of Tanzania (Kisanga; 2017; Polat, 2011); Uganda (Emong and Eron, 2016); Malawi (Paget et al. 2010); Ghana (Deku and Vanderpuye, 2017); Nigeria (Brydges and Mkandawire, 2018); South Africa (Donohue and Bornman, 2014) and in Kenya (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015).

Notwithstanding a determination to embrace change, a difference is observed between the noble intentions of the Kenyan government and the stated intentions of the Salamanca objectives concerning inclusive schools. Literature reviewed showed there are factors that challenge sound pedagogical practices such as for adapting curriculum content (Westwood, 2018) diversity of needs in a class, improving beliefs and attitudes (Carew et al. 2018). Avramidis and Norwich (2002) identified these challenges as internal factors because most are caused within the school by the teachers, children or systemic influenced. UNESCO (2015) and Sawamura and Sifuna (2008) on the other hand identified external factors influencing education. While this is true, literature suggest that the challenging factors are both external and internal because inclusive education involves practical application and engagement with both external and internal principles of inclusiveness (Azorín and Ainscow, 2018). Figure 4 that follows is a summary of these factors.

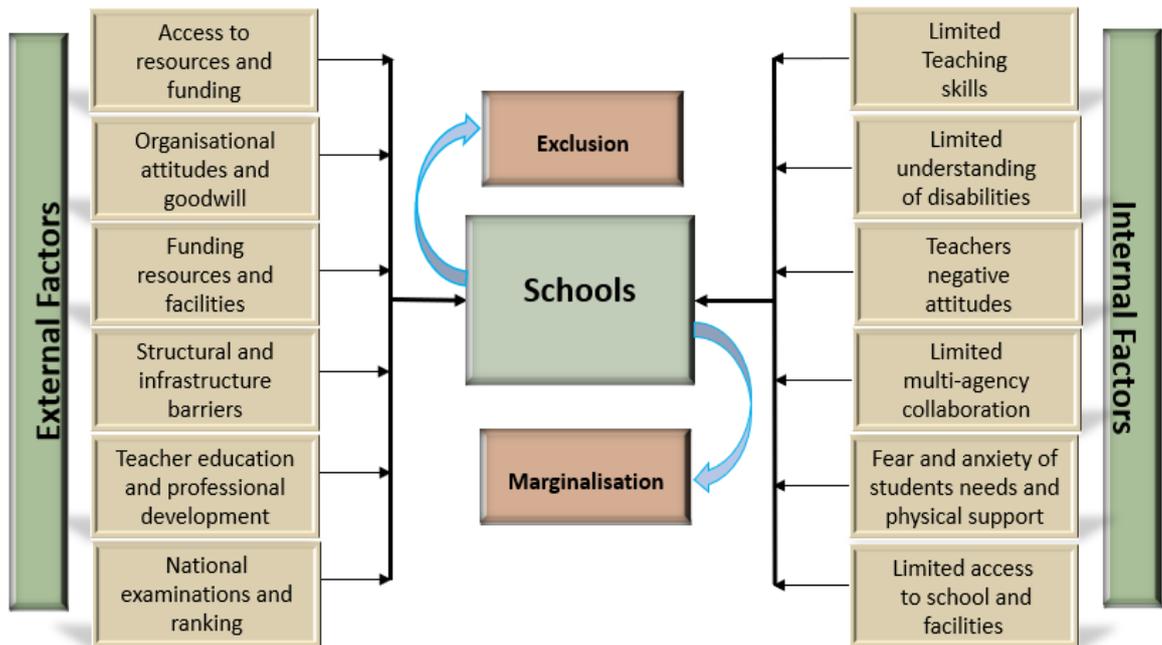


Figure 4: External and internal factors influencing inclusive education

The two categories summarised as above are the factors that influence implementation of inclusive schools. This means that the success of inclusion depends on how well these factors are met, modified or adapted to meet the needs of children with SEN in mainstream schools. Failure produces polar opposite of inclusion that is exclusion and marginalisation as Figure 4 above shows. The next section moves on to discuss these factors.

### 2.6.1 External and internal factors that influence inclusive education

#### External factors

A striking feature of education in Kenya is the rapid development it has experienced over the last two decades (Muuya, 2002). Of central concern are the external factors that have a bearing on government efforts to improve inclusive schools. External factors relating to governmental involvement such as access, attitudes, examination results, ranking funding, cost sharing, teacher training, architectural barriers, are also addressed. Before discussing the external factors, it is important to mention that in this thesis, the terms organisational and systemic factors are used to refer to government efforts to influence education.

After committing in Salamanca to a rights-based perspective on education, globally inclusive education did not receive support from most of the governments involved. Paucity of resolutions may account for the poor provision experienced by various nations (Abosi and Koay, 2008). It is after the Dakar conference in 2000 that the Kenyan government made a concerted approach to ensure accessibility and implement policies that promote access to education for all children (Odebero et al. 2007). One of the external challenges that Kenya was facing was equitable access to school provision (UNESCO 2009). This challenge of access could be attributed to discrepancy of planned provision for children with SEN in mainstream schools not only for children with SEN, but for all learners (Elder and Kuja, 2018). To alleviate access through a planned process, UPE and FPE were introduced in 2003 with the aim of making education accessible and provide opportunities for a full cycle of basic primary education to all learners (Abuya et al. 2015). However, this free education still did not ensure education provision for Children with SEN in mainstream schools (see section Table 13). As indicated in the literature, improved infrastructure is necessary but not sufficient for inclusion without a change of attitude “among school professionals and in the wider community (Polat, 2011:57). In addition, according to Rieser (2016), negative attitudes based on traditional thinking still act as a significant social barrier to education. Thus, if a community is prejudiced against children with SEN or teachers disregard them in the classrooms, then discriminatory practices are bound to propagate. One such example is the school practice of screening learners to eliminate low achievers because of wanting to retain learners who will improve a school’s overall performance in national exams (ibid).

Literature shows that changing attitudes is the major step towards school change and successful services for all children (Elder et al. 2016; Beacham and Rouse, 2012; Miles, 2002; Thompkins and Deloney, 1995). However, previous studies have shown that change does not take place in a policy vacuum. It begins, rather, by addressing the entire schooling culture through the context of policy guidance (Warnock and Norwich, 2010; Vislie, 2003; UNESCO, 1994). Literature has indicated that distinction expressed through policy and organisational structures is paramount in curriculum pedagogy and school ethos (Terzi, 2008; Oliver, 2017, 1996). As in Kenya’s case, a distinction should be made through a review of education policies to challenge negative attitudes and create inclusive schools (Mukuria and Korir, 2006). The barrier of negative attitudes, stigma and discrimination and the challenges posed to education as found in schools and communities (see 5.2.5).

Moreover, due to the globally dominant model of schooling inherited by African countries during colonialism and perpetuated subsequently by post-colonial governments is adopted in Kenya (Harber, 2018), most schools are essentially traditional, nondemocratic and authoritarian. For example, in addressing the First Kenya National Conference on Inclusive Education on 14th March 2016<sup>8</sup>, the Director of Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) Elkanah Lang'at identified the traditional paradigm of exam ranking as a major systemic challenge. The director identified the undemocratic and authoritarian models of education that are fundamentally examination-oriented. Subsequently, it becomes a challenge to create inclusive school. Literature highlights that the main learning activity of mainstream schools is directed towards preparing learners for national examinations; to raise schools mean grades and to improve ranking (Hungu and Thuku, 2010). The highly competitive examination system requires the reproduction of rote learning rather than critical thought (Harber, 2018). Subsequently, learners and parents are preoccupied with certificate-status and considerable dilemma of selecting “good standing” schools for their children (Sawamura and Sifuna, 2008).

Although basic education in Kenya is understood to mean primary education, globally the notion of basic education includes secondary schooling (World Bank, 2005). In this respect, secondary school education not only plays a significant role in providing the youth with the opportunity to acquire basic education but also empowers them to pursue higher education and develop skills leading to greater labour market productivity (Maras and Aveling, 2006). Nonetheless, existing research shows that exam results is the major barrier of transition to secondary school (Oketch and Rolleston, 2007) since the process for entering secondary school correlates with performance in national primary examinations, namely the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education. Selecting entrants to the next educational level leaves most children especially those with SEN feeling different (McArthur et al. 2007). It demonstrates they cannot access any level of education without a form of sorting, filtering and selection (Durkheim, 2013, Pickering and Walford, 2002). Ranking examination results implicitly implies that outstanding academic performance is because of hard work done by teachers and students (Sawamura and Sifuna, 2008) schools ranking at the bottom globally are labelled as the worst (Harber, 2018).

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<sup>8</sup> KISE Website: [www.kise.ac.ke](http://www.kise.ac.ke)

Ki-Moon (2013) notes the difficulty of emphasis placed on examination results and especially the primary exams meant for transition purposes within levels. Accordingly increased global attention is on all children to attain basic literacy and numeracy skills. The transition from primary to secondary education is essential in the school lives of children but may have short-term and long-term consequences if not well planned (Topping, 2011). The Millennium Development Goals Report indicated that of the 137 million children who started first grade in 2011, 34 million were likely to drop out before the last grade of primary school (Ki-Moon, 2013). This data translates into an early school-leaving rate of 25 per cent; the same level as in 2000. Literature highlights, that Sub-Saharan Africa, has the highest rate of children leaving school early in the world, two out of five children who started primary school in 2010 dropped out in (ibid:16). Despite the limited research on transition rates within levels and going on to secondary school in Kenya, evidence from this study suggests that transition is generally restricted for children with SEN. Of note is that Oketch and Somerset (2010) have identified a tripartite of exclusion in Kenya of children: those who never enrol at the school, those who enrol but drop out before completing the full primary cycle and those who remain at primary school but are disadvantaged in various ways such as being low achievers, low-attenders and repeaters.

Correspondingly, Hughes et al. (2013) state that due to a relatively weak performance in the selection examination, a majority of children with or without disability fail to earn a place in secondary schools. However, there are other indirect, factors that influence access to secondary school education, with possible explanations such level of household income; number of children in a household; sex and age of a child; location of the learner (whether in urban or rural areas); school fees requirement; number of secondary schools per square kilometre (Ngware et al. 2006:535). A challenging factor could result from organisational management level is that transition rates can improve gradually even when there are no useful evidence-based strategies for adapting curriculum content, learning activities, assessment and resource materials (Westwood, 2018). Systems have been known to have interest in high enrolments and favourable statistics, as opposed to provision of quality education and removal of barriers (ibid). Westwood suggest there is urgent need to overcome transition challenge through means such reduction of all educational expenses and provision of further support through funding (2008:113).

The challenge of funding is a major cause of slow progress towards the implementation of inclusive education, since without funding county departments are short of making meaningful progress given the high levels of poverty in many communities across Kenya (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015:51). Moreover, small school budgets impact negatively on the quality and delivery of education (Hungu and Thuku 2010). It is for this reason that on 5th October 2015, primary and secondary school headteachers warned of a looming educational crisis. The heads held that retaining of funds and grants over a long period not only affected learners and school management, but also resulted in feelings of vulnerability. Conversely, implementing inclusive schools not only becomes critical when teachers and support workers remain unpaid (Daily Nation Correspondent, 2015), but also threatens the achievement of UPE when “participation of all children is not secured” (Bines and Lei, 2011:419).

The resolutions made at Salamanca reaffirmed global commitment to give schools “the highest policy and budgetary priority to improve their educational systems to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences and difficulties” (UNESCO, 1994: ix). Nonetheless, it remains the case that SEN provision is considered a priority on policy but not on expenditure in many developing countries of Africa. However, being inclusive comes at a cost and schools need resources to support children with SEN (Eleweke and Rodda, 2002). The authors suggest various reasons for discrepancy in planning for SEN as:

- (i) The needs and structuring environments for persons with special needs are expensive ventures;
- (ii) The needs of the “normal” majority should be addressed before considering those of individuals with special needs who are in the minority;
- (iii) Expenditure on services for children with SEN is considered “less important” and therefore “a waste of scarce funds” and that even with the best training some of them will perpetually depend on the taxpayer, never to become “tax-payers” themselves (ibid:118).

One of the negative aspects influencing access to education in Kenya is the paradigm shift of cost sharing education with parents (Otieno, 2016; Marcucci et al. 2008). Literature over the years has shown a cyclical process of children missing classes due to various categories of poverty that parents experience (Karimu, 2018; Peters, 2003; Chaikindi et al. 1993). According to Eleweke and Rodda (2002), the estimated cost of providing special provision

and other services for SEN pupils is three times greater than the cost of providing for a student without special needs. This means that even if each school receives government grants regularly, parents must bear the costs of boarding fees and personal expenses. In a press report made in Kenya by the MoE in March 2015, the education Cabinet Secretary called on all regional education coordinators and county directors to ensure they fulfilled fees guidelines without exception. According to Otieno (2016), special school fees are capped at Sh37, 210 (£298). These rates are exclusive of a government subsidy of Sh13, 000 (£104) per child. Therefore, total fees per year stand at Sh53, 554 (£428) While the government takes the higher cost of education overall, parents contribute more in tuition fees than the government, as seen in the fees guidelines reported in the Daily Nation, March 2015 .Consequently, cost-sharing poses a challenge for inclusion as regards parents who are poor and cannot afford to pay, and thus free education is far from “free” (Sawamura and Sifuna, 2008). The result is a negative effect of access to quality education (Wambugu and Mokoena, 2013).

Other hidden factors in cost sharing, according to Johnstone (2003), take different forms, such as sharp increases in tuition fees, boarding fees, books and other costs associated with children’s living expenses, which may have formerly been covered by the government (Marcucci et al. 2008). Cost sharing in education has not escaped criticism from parents, agencies and academics (Miguel and Gugerty, 2005; Sifuna, 2007) and of central concern to this study are both the financial implications and consequently access to education for children with SEN. According to the World Bank (2016), of the estimated national population of 46.1 million, 23 per cent of Kenyans live on less than 1\$<sup>9</sup> a day. Hence, school fees paying further compounds inequities in education and makes universal education unavailable to most children with SEN (World Bank, 2016; Rieser, 2012). Furthermore, the option of educating a child with SEN to ensure independence and self-supporting becomes limited or a choice between them and their non-disabled siblings due to the high cost of education (Munyi, 2012; Rieser, 2012; Lynch et al. 2011). Another cultural expectation is that the non-disabled siblings will be better able to support their disabled sibling(s) in adulthood (Groce, 2004; Ogechi and Ruto, 2002). Peters (2007) unequivocally argues that children with SEN do not have to be disadvantaged by exclusion from schools due to shortage of resources. Furthermore, it is not a problem for the individual child or individual

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<sup>9</sup> Equivalent to £0.81 (UK pound)

families. Thus, if children with SEN are left out of educational opportunities, then “it is the lack of education and not their disabilities” that will be the cause of lack of opportunities in life” (ibid: 106). The next section considers internal factors that influence inclusive education.

### **Internal factors**

The internal factors discussed in this section are only separated from the external factors discussed in the previous section to give clarity to the reader, otherwise they are interrelated, interlinked and interdependent and need to be understood as reliant on one another in impeding the implementation of inclusive education. Although inclusiveness ignites a moral imperative for countries to embrace the diversity of all children without barriers (Slee, 2014; Florian and Linklater, 2010), Figure 4 highlights elements in schools that hinder inclusion. However, inclusion is difficult to implement when teachers are not sufficiently supported through training to work in inclusive ways (Beacham and Rouse, 2012; Rouse, 2008). A study conducted by Richards in 2000 parallels current teacher education in Kenya, as she observed teacher training packages as failing to make purposeful links between general and special education and, consequently “institutionally sanctioned to perpetuate educational segregation” (2000:120). Richards also perceived conflict with preparing new teachers to face diverse classrooms with children of different abilities as many of the teacher trainers had never experienced diverse classes in their own classroom teaching (ibid:79). Hence, Richards suggested the need for teachers to receive comprehensive training programmes and to share the experiences they gain to contribute towards genuine inclusion (Richards, 2016b). This calls for a collaborative and systematic effort between schools, training colleges, universities and educational systems to ensure cohesive teacher preparation and competencies through training (Forlin and Chambers, 2011).

Schools have been known to often exclude, or refuse to include certain children, due to teachers shortfall of requisite knowledge and skills to teach them (Florian and Linklater, 2010). According to Abosi (2003), such feelings and misconceptions develop from a lack of clear understanding of disabilities, functioning and causes. He suggests that confidence and new attitudes can be acquired through training, lectures, seminars, symposia and mass media. because for clear majority of teachers, working with disabled children and other medical difficulties brings numerous challenges (Fox, 2000), and inclusion of such children

not only evokes fear but also creates anxiety and uncertainty for some teachers (Thomazet, 2009). Thus, in such instances, it is necessary to provide the skills and strategies that enable teachers to teach inclusively, by providing more opportunities for them to gain the knowledge and skills to overcome their fears (Forlin and Chambers, 2011). Additionally, ensuring long-term support for teachers necessitates the fullest commitment by educational organisations to train, mentor new teachers and provide constant and appropriate professional development (ibid).

Moreover, despite the constitution in Kenya being clear as regards direct and indirect discrimination on any grounds, including religion (RoK, 2010), it cannot be disputed that there is continuing disparity in educational provision in Kenya. This means that there is continuing disparity regarding educational services for children with SEN, some created by religious, traditional and cultural beliefs. These and other disability-related factors continue to be debated since they create a dilemma for practitioners (Terzi, 2010) and hinder access to mainstream schools (Mukuria and Korir, 2006). Difficulties arise, nevertheless, when an attempt is made to limit children's access to schools on the grounds of fees payment or school uniform, a feature borrowed from private schools and imported into public education, thereby privatising public education (ibid). As Tomasevski (2006) and Klees and Qargha, (2014) noted, children with SEN are indirectly denied access to education and thus disabled by society through imposed hidden charges such as fee payment to facilitate access education.

Other studies suggest there is widespread uncertainty in schools regarding the suitability of including children with SEN who require extra support and teachers with functional teaching competencies (Forlin 2002:135) as the degree of acceptance varies depending on the severity of the disability across both physical and cognitive categories (ibid). Therefore, teachers' attitudes are most negative towards the inclusion of children with more complex needs, such as emotional issues and challenging behaviour, mental health issues and severe physical disability. As previously stated in the literature by Avramidis and Norwich (2002), there is evidence that teachers' attitudes to supporting children with SEN and willingness to make inclusive education possible vary according to the extent of disability. Over time extensive literature has developed to show that mainstream schools have been more willing to include learners with mild learning difficulties, moderate hearing loss and partial visual disability (Kauffman et al. 2018). Several authors have recognised that children's needs were intricately linked to those of their teachers (Galloway, 2018; Srivastava et al. 2015). A

similar finding was made in this study and is discussed in more details in chapter 5 (see section 5.3.3).

## **2.6.2 Overcoming inclusion barriers**

The Salamanca meeting steered the way forward for future inclusion by all nations in calling governments to “adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education by enrolling all children in regular schools unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise” (UNESCO, 1994:ix). Authors instrumental in the understanding of inclusive education express the same sentiments (such as Mittler, 2013; Booth and Ainscow, 2011; Ainscow et al. 2006) and advocate for the need to formulate clear, inclusive policy to guide the inclusive process and practice around the world. Governments are called to consider formulating policy that sits concurrently with additional support and removing barriers, otherwise, there is the risk of exacerbating disability (Stalker et al. 2012:1). Developing good inclusive practice involves institutional change that requires all schools and other educational settings to identify factors that may inhibit teaching and learning and ways of overcoming barriers to inclusion (Thomazet, 2009). Although it is true there are complexities and dilemmas both at the level of policy formulation and implementation; stakeholders should share and build on their own existing knowledge as well investigate other strategies that are child-friendly (UNICEF, 2013; Polat, 2011). Governments can benefit from improving factors that deepen inequalities such as promoting the welfare of families of disabled children (Armstrong et al., 2016; RoK, 2009).

There is a plausible link between clear policies and the role that teachers play in the success of inclusion that should not be disregarded (Eleweke and Rodda, 2002). This makes the teacher the crucial person in determining the success or failure of effective inclusion. Equally, crucial in significant progress towards creating more inclusive and equitable approaches to teaching and learning (Rose and Shevlin, 2017). In this respect, concerns regarding training to enable teachers to support children educationally should be addressed, since some children are disadvantaged in education, especially those with SEN (Booth, 2013; Mittler, 2012; Lloyd, 2008). For example, if teachers have low expectations towards them, such children are unlikely to receive a satisfactory, inclusive education (Deku and Vanderpuye, 2017). Given that inclusive education is the process of removing barriers and increasing educational opportunities for all children the major solution for Kenya is to make schools a welcoming place for all children, regardless of their diversity (see section 6.4.1).

The complexities of the processes involved and the challenges that must be overcome to promote more inclusive schools need to be acknowledged within different contexts (Azorín and Ainscow, 2018). According to Rieser (2012), teachers should be trained to acknowledge differences, respect for personal identity and holistic approaches to support all children in inclusive classrooms. In addition, creating inclusive schools in many countries is not a simple process and there are bound to be fears and doubts regarding how diversity can be addressed and the extensive changes there to create inclusive schools (Thomas and Loxley, 2001). In this respect, a comprehensive planning guide for inclusion is an overriding prerequisite (Booth et al. 2000). It is also imperative for Kenya to explore a useful starting point to develop inclusive criteria to be used by teachers, parents and learners. This process cannot be “a one man/group show” rather necessitates an in-depth analysis of the views and experiences of key stakeholders on the current inclusion.

## **2.7 Literature gap**

As found in literature Njoka et al. (2012) questions the ability of the 2009 Kenyan National Special Needs Education Policy Framework to ratify and promote the principles of the Salamanca Statement signed in 1994. So far, policy approach is characterised by obstacles of theoretical vacuum and crucial engagement with the realities of inclusive education (Armstrong et al. 2011). To fill the gaps of education policy such as training on inclusive teaching integrated rather than inclusive schools have been promoted (Carew et al. 2018). Moreover, research to date has continued to show the most common challenge is the ambiguity of goals for inclusion, a factor seen as to interlink with various other challenges surrounding the implementation of inclusive policy (Elder and Kuja, 2018; Adoyo and Odeny, 2015; Lynch et al. 2011; MoE, 2008). As other nations of Africa, Kenya points to an inclusive perspective that is limited with capacity to build schools that the collective statement encompassed in 1994 (Chitiyo and Muwana, 2018).

To date, a considerable body of research has sought to understand special education in Kenya (Muriuki, 2015; Njoka and Syallo, 2013; Kiarie, 2014; Munyi, 2012; Murugami, 2009; RoK, 2009; Mung'ala-Odera et al. 2006; Muuya, 2002). Scant literature available is keen on inclusive education as a human right, most of it more focused on specific policy for inclusive education and SEN such as SEBD (Kiarago, 2016) or emergent issues such as funding (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015; Mwangi and Orodho, 2014), clearly a limited attention on the process of creating inclusive schools. However, the most current research that shares some

similarities with this study is that by Elder and Odoyo (2018) which has suggested an initial step of creating inclusive schools through school and community collaborations to increase the population of children with SEN in mainstream schools. The work addresses teacher attitudes including genuine access to learning experiences that respect individual differences. The ongoing research has a focus too on the complexities inclusion committees encounter in creating sustainable and replicable inclusive practices (Elder and Adoyo 2018).

As Westwood (2018) noted attempts to understand, differentiate and implement the principle of inclusion is not just a one-off affair but as ever-evolving continuous practices. Continuity and improvement to improve inclusive practice seem to be true in the UK, where the emergence of education as a right and has provided strong impetus for change (Miles and Singal, 2010). Yet, criticism from within cites a legal framework that renders inclusive education inaccessible for some children including decreased political will to enforce inclusion. Furthermore, it has been argued that policy has not been sufficiently comprehensive to give a consistent approach to teacher training and development to promote inclusive teaching (Booth, 2017; Grimaldi, 2012; Booth, and Ainscow, 2011; Clough, 1999). This shows that starting inclusive schools requires continuous quality improvement and that is why it is seen as ongoing process (Azorín and Ainscow, 2018).

Although a growing body of literature shows positive gains in education not only in Kenya but also in most developing countries for children with SEN (Chitiyo and Muwana, 2018; Jain and Prasad, 2018; Muwana and Ostrosky, 2014; Mont and Nguyen, 2013). Literature proposes that awareness of the problem is the first step towards understanding and solving it at all levels (Booth and Ainscow, 2011). Nations cannot reach full social, economic and political potential by ignoring or marginalising people with disabilities (Lamichhane, 2013). Therefore, nations such as Kenya need to learn from a conceptual metaphor by the CSIE Strategy 2016-2019 that it is not enough to emphasis on access, right to education and equality without policy in place because it would be like ‘issuing a ticket but keeping the door locked’ (Booth and Ainscow, 2011).

Studies such as Wainaina et al. (2011) examine inclusive education from a human right viewpoint and therefore point to policy and legislation which have been introduced, but have not emphasised education as a human right. Nonetheless Armstrong, (2016a) established that policy on inclusion has been reduced to a change in language instead of a shift in pedagogy that is child centred and that the language of inclusion becomes more ambiguous

with continued use in practice. In Kenya's Vision 2030 point to policy gap and that government view of inclusive education comes from a legislative perspective where citizens are perceived as having equal access to legislative processes and political freedom (RoK, 2010). In many western democracies, inclusion is often expressed as a right for every child and generally understood to mean efforts to support and promote the education of all children in the mainstream education (Elder, 2015; McCowan, 2010). The equality aspect of education is reiterated by the Kenya National Human Rights Commission (KNHCR), which states that:

...persons with SEN 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 (KNHCR, 2014:8)

It could be argued that KNHCR acknowledged how to censure exclusionary practices education in Kenya. However, it is the MoE that proposed, in 2009, to enforce affirmative action in the admission of children with SEN at all levels in mainstream schools (RoK 2009:38). Indeed, the government was supporting inclusive education albeit somewhat cautiously by not making a radical move to insist on all mainstream schools be inclusive. Mere promotion of inclusive policy is being insufficient; instead, nations should aspire to move policy to implementation in order to accommodate the diversity that continually exists within societies (Thompson and Timmons, 2017). This study has sought to fill this gap by introducing a new thinking that there is a process that can be adopted in Kenya to make mainstream schools successful inclusive schools (Booth and Ainscow, 2011; 2016).

## **2.8 Chapter summary**

In this chapter, I have established the initial key definitions needed for my research and reviewed the literature available to relate my work within an overall context. The literature review has informed the study on the global interpretations of inclusion and the tensions arising from the various viewpoints. I have explained how the models of disabilities have influenced understanding of disability and commented on their relevance to this study. Although inclusive education is facing many barriers globally, I have focused on the challenges that may impede efforts to include children with SEN in mainstream schools in Kenya. This is because while the government of Kenya has made efforts to improve

participation, access without quality leaves the education system vulnerable, and negatively affects access, achievement and retention and transition, as well as failure to meet the goals of equity and justice (Polat, 2011).

Despite an international commitment to provide every child with educational opportunity, the view that children with SEN are marginalised in mainstream schools is demonstrated in this chapter and that all learners have an equal right to be provided with education. Nonetheless children with SEN do not have less human right just because of their educational needs, which may require additional resources (Lynch et al. 2011). On reflection, Kenya post-Salamanca 1994, has shown some minimal commitment genuine access to inclusive classrooms while education as a human right has not been demonstrated in action (Rieser, 2012; 2016). The question that arises from the literature reviewed is how best to create inclusive schools that provide quality education for all focused upon personal strengths rather than weaknesses to enable children with SEN get not only a sense of belonging but also improve their learning. These questions and realities are explored in the interpretation of the findings Chapter 5 based on the research findings of Chapter 4.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Chapter overview**

There are multiple definitions of research, taking different meanings to different audiences in different times and circumstances and is an on-going task for individual researchers to clarify their understanding of research to the audience (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012). In undertaking research, researchers use varied approaches in the location of new facts and findings aimed at achieving different knowledge outcomes, presenting what they propose to study (Adams et al. 2014). After the initial step of framing context related questions and linking these key questions with the literature review (Bryman, 2015), the next step is exploring the theoretical underpinning and perspective of this study.

In this Chapter, the focus of the exploratory research, methodology and specific methods used will be described. I will endeavour to clarify my understanding of two essential terms; research and methodology. Having defined what is meant by the terms, I will move on to locate the research within existing knowledge of research methodologies, theories and paradigms, and then justify the choice of the research design used for the study, explaining the adoption of particular approaches rather than others. It is also imperative to clarify the suitability of the data collection methods and the process, respectively. Another noteworthy aspect I will discuss is the procedure for data analysis, limitations of the study and, finally, the relevance of ethics to this study.

### **3.1 Conceptualisation of research knowledge**

This section explains my understanding of research since the fundamental requirement for an individual researcher is to demonstrate their understanding of research to their audience. Defining research becomes more difficult due to the various meanings and images invoked in people's minds of research as being academically-related activity carried out in universities, producing scholarly writing and publishing or laboratory experiments. A more academic approach to the definition of the term 'research' also results in a more elaborate response because of a variety of methods being adopted to explore a particular research problem, methodologies of inquiry and similar interpretation of facts against existing theories (Adams et al. 2014). In accordance with Clough and Nutbrown (2012), research can be defined as an investigation of an idea, subject or topic for a purpose which enables the

researcher to extend knowledge. Clough and Nutbrown propose that research offers the opportunity to investigate an area of interest from a particular perspective. Mouly (1978) indicated that research is an attempt to understand complex problems in the environment using three broad contemporary and overlapping ideas, namely experience, reasoning and research (see Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013).

Regarding educational research, Clough and Nutbrown established that the purpose is not so much to prove something but more to investigate, question and explore (ibid: 4) issues which lead to clearer understanding of a situation. Cohen and others (2013) agree Clough and Nutbrown that the researcher tells the story during the process of asking questions, exploring problems and reflecting on what emerges. Therefore, research broadly aims for change in society while the researcher holds the responsibility of ensuring change emanating from the newly created knowledge leads towards the betterment of society. Having synthesised the definitions of research, my research extends to understanding complex problems in my environment and the nature of the under-researched topic in Kenya concerning the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools.

There are three elements for conducting a research which are considered as: personal, practical or intellectual (Maxwell, 2012a: 24). As a researcher, I understand that personal curiosity to find out something is not enough to undertake a study of this size thus there is the need to establish a clear, practical goal of research to understand the subject of investigation. Although the personal impetus for this study comes from initial curiosity and experience as a teacher, the functional outcome of this research is to make change for the better for children with SEN who are not included mainstream classes due to their diverse needs. A focus on mainstream schools not only highlights the challenges schools face to ensure all children learn together but, it is hoped, also rekindles the keystone agreement made at Salamanca in 1994. Similarly, the practical goals of research are focused on 'meeting some need, changing some situation or achieving objectives' (Maxwell, 2012a:28). While it is not possible to envisage the eventual outcome of this research, one certainty is that a complex gap of knowledge will be filled to an extent.

This knowledge gap relates to the implementation of inclusive practice for all children. Ultimately, when complete, a helpful influence will be created for communities to be more inclusive and contribute positively to attitudes towards the education of children with SEN. The intellectual goals of this research focus on gaining insight into the phenomena of study

and contribution to knowledge. Regarding intellectual goals, Newby (2010) notes that education researchers should aim to convince others that what they have ascertained is valid and if evaluated should show trustworthiness such as credibility dependability, confirmability (Robson and McCartan 2016; Bryman; 2012; 2016; Schwandt et al. 2007; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Guba, 1981). My intention for this research was to locate issues that will influence Kenya policy planners and decision-makers regarding a starting point for inclusive schools and, ultimately, this will instigate change so that all children can benefit from education.

When beginning the research process, researchers are advised that research is not an arbitrary activity (Henn et al. 2009), and represents “a way of working, following a set of rules, procedures and methods” (Newby, 2010:19). It is not explicit nor effortless and there are occasions when the requirements of the standard do not match the reality that the research has to deal with, thus creating complications for a new researcher (ibid). In addition, the benefit of the adopted methodology is to aid understanding, in the broadest possible terms, of the process of inquiry that is endorsed (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013). As Bazeley (2013) points out, the complexity of research is to delimit theory and discover how an inquiry should proceed while maintaining the rules and procedures of research. With this understanding in mind, I aimed to use the best approach to identify the theoretical and knowledge position from which the research question would be explored. Bazeley (2013) proposes that no strategy is better than another. Instead, an approach should arise primarily out of the research questions themselves.

Specifically, my study adopted a qualitative inductive exploratory approach to understand new situations, significant concepts and issues in inclusive education. The assumption that qualitative research is inductive rather than deductive often translates into a claim that it is exploratory (Creswell, 2014). My choice of exploratory approach was determined by the size of the research, resources available and aspects like timescale for conducting the study. To accommodate qualitative methodology, an interpretivist view was adopted to allow the opportunity to interact directly with the research participants whilst considering the research issue that shapes inquiry (Denzin, and Lincoln, 2008).

## **3.2 Research knowledge and theoretical considerations**

The sub-section clarifies how my research links to and is influenced by theories and knowledge. I will explain the procedures of this research and justify the reality brought to the research work through the choice of methodologies and methods. Robson and McCartan (2016) note that the nature of the research and the timescale aspect of conducting research determines the investigation methodology to be adopted. Bellamy (2012) highlights the contentious understanding of issues in a community as stemming from the way people think and interpret the world, and not necessarily from the different theoretical considerations of research methodology that researchers adopt. From the position of an interpretivist concerned with understanding people's experiences, I did not stand back nor remain emotionally neutral. My agenda was increasingly to understand what was real for the participants to construe the meanings they made of their experiences (David and Sutton, 2011; Robson, and McCartan, 2016). These aspects have been strengthened by the broad approach of the research design and data analysis methods.

### **3.2.1 Philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks.**

The philosophical assumptions of ontology and epistemology were adopted in deciding on how best to research this study. Ontology is 'what there is to know about the world' (Arthur et al. 2014: 4) and relates to what constitutes reality. On the other hand, Epistemology nature and forms of knowledge and concerns ways of knowing the world (Creswell, 2013; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011), in addition, ways knowledge can be created, acquired through deduction or by testing the strength of theories (Crotty, 2014), or through induction, which is how knowledge and theories are developed from the data collected (Arthur et al. 2014). My ontological assumption for this study is that knowledge or reality is a product of human consciousness and does not exist independently (Crotty, 2014) and that the social world has important social attributes such as opinions, beliefs, feelings and assumptions that cannot be studied by measuring them objectively. The epistemology assumption adopted in this study explains how knowledge is produced through research methodology and methods, maintaining ethics, rigorous data analysis and, ultimately, dissemination to the readers (Cohen et al. 2011).

Creswell (2013) observes that philosophy means the use of abstract ideas and beliefs which can be personal or away from the experience and cannot be eliminated but, rather, inform

any research, while philosophical assumptions are typically the first ideas in developing a study and understanding how norms relate to an overall process. Therefore, philosophical conventions inform qualitative researchers of the choice of theories to guide their research at an ‘abstract level’ (ibid: 15). Researchers are said to reflect these personal beliefs and philosophical assumptions in their research, even when they are not conscious of doing so. The position I come from as an interpretive researcher is from the knowledge that methodology in research is grounded on paradigms, which provide a conventional pattern to study the phenomena.

Hammersley highlights that questions regarding different approaches to social science and the *nature of knowledge* that research can produce are borne out of the broader debate about paradigms (2002: 38). Therefore, a paradigm can be defined as:

An idea that at any point in time all those working in a particular area, field or subject adopt common ways of working and common ways of looking at issues (Newby, 2010:660)

Paradigms are imperative to all research communities since they shape how research is carried out and permits the development of any given scientific field (Trafford and Leshem, 2008). Furthermore, acquisition of a paradigm portrays the researcher’s view of the world through perceptions, interpretations and understanding. With the social construction of reality assumption in mind, I adopted an interpretivist paradigm to yield better understanding of inclusive schools through the development of a single case study, drawing on primary sourced data within a qualitative methodology (Burton and Bartlett, 2005).

Hallebone and Priest (2008) assert that it is essential to choose the paradigm most suited to the orientation of a particular study to accomplish valuable research which enables depth of understanding. Miles and others (2013) suggest that there are various empirical frameworks which fit different epistemologies and paradigms supporting diverse methods of data collection and analysis techniques. To ensure the quality of the findings, ensure the rigor of the inquiry and prevent issues of consistency, neutrality and bias respectively, I endeavoured to maintain trustworthiness criteria for qualitative research (Schwandt et al. 2007).

### **3.2.2 Interpretivism**

The foundation of this research is construction of knowledge from social reality and people's world-view and how their understanding of their world shapes the decisions they take within that social reality (Robson 2011; Radnor, 2001). However, social sciences as a discipline cannot penetrate into what lies behind social reality or reveal the ultimate truth, because there is no single tangible reality. Knowledge not only consists interpretation of the meaning of facts gathered but also theories and principles gathered through interaction with the environment. In other words, social phenomena and their meanings depend on social actors such as the researcher and participants to work together to construct knowledge (Bryman, 2015; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). It can imply that knowledge is constructed as a result of peoples' interactions in social events (Rickert 2009).

Interpretivism also known as constructivism (Cohen et al. 2011) or social constructivism (Creswell and Poth, 2017; Robson 2011) was considered most appropriate paradigm to construct understanding on the current practice in Kenya. Unlike post-positivism, interpretivists perceive knowledge as subjective and believe that objectivity is impossible for revealing the truth. Thus social reality can be understood within people, who are active rather than passive interpreters of the social world when constructing meaning from interactions with their environments (Cohen et al. 2011). They might have basic knowledge of the phenomenon being observed: ascribing meaning to their world and in interaction with each other (Radnor, 2001). The interpretive research paradigm holds that people make sense of their social realities, using qualitative research methodologies to investigate, interpret and describe social realities (Cohen et al. 2011; Bassey, 1999). In the selection of research design, a subjective position was adopted to explain that the world is given meaning 'from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors' (Saunders et al. 2009:111). That is to say people's perceptions are influenced by the way they view the world in which they are variously immersed, how they interpret reality and how they interact with each other. To make sense of the individual's world the researcher and research participants are interdependent and mutually interactive.

### **3.2.3 Insider/outsider position**

The concept of insider or outsider role to mean the extent to which a researcher is ‘located either within or outside the group’ being researched, is advanced as follows:

...the outsider researcher position is considered more neutral and enabling objective view of reality to participant’s social world. The insider research may understand the group being studied before entry into the research site (Gair, 2012:137)

The concepts of insider and outsider role were closely interconnected in this study, since the two functions appeared to operate on a continuum based on previous knowledge of the location of research, including the phenomenon of study balanced within the two associated roles. Adopting the subjective approach was undertaken in the knowledge that the education system I aimed to explore is an organised entity embedded within the structure of African cultures. I adopted an insider researcher’s position in the study group because I am familiar with aspects of disability and some participants’ issues, considering my direct experience as a parent and a teacher. Therefore, being an insider of this research community creates awareness of the emotive issues relating to disability and the need to be sensitive and empathetic with the participants (Gair, 2012). Continued engagement with the participants was enhanced by immersion and blending in to get the ‘inside feel’ while guarding against ‘going native’ (Guba, 1981: 84-85). For instance, I was treated as an insider during the interviews with teachers and discussions with parents, at times being expected to offer suggestions. As Mocanu (2015) outlines that researchers should not assume fixed research ideas on what is anticipated owing to complex, unpredictable multiple realities of what is perceived as reality. Being an insider, local expressions multiple realities some of which could have been confusing for an outsider were understood. Therefore, although I was an insider with prior insight into the research context, I regarded such knowledge as insufficient. I also assumed an outsider position, open to new ideas through the meanings and understandings that the participants developed (Rabe,2003).

From a realist ontology and constructivist/interpretivist epistemology, I approached this research with the understanding that there is a real world that exists independently of personal beliefs and construction (Maxwell, 2012b). People in this social world have their own intentions, feelings and emotions, influenced by each other as well as the setting in

which they live. Through the participants' own words during interviews, I gained insight into the reality from the different perspectives of how the participants viewed inclusion in regular schools. I also interpreted what the teachers' world was like from their point of view and from the parents' aspirations to change schools to environments that are child-friendly.

However, given the range of disciplinary backgrounds of the participants, research is meant to remain neutral and unbiased whilst not influencing the research participants (Yin, 2018; Eisner, 2017; Glaser and Strauss, 2017; Silverman, 2017). It would be incorrect to claim there was no bias in this study. However, I was aware of the risk of neutrality while entering the social world of the research participants to collect data (Brannen, 2017). Personal biases, assumptions, values and any individual characteristics were repeatedly questioned. Every attempt was made to remain focused, give unbiased research interpretation by separating previous experience as a professional member in the same social world inhabited by the research participants. Open-ended questions were modelled and asked to elicit conversation between two trusting parties, isolating influence on research participants to endorse a specific response (Flick, 2014). In this respect the research participants shared knowledge without requiring approval or confirmation from the researcher who endeavoured to remain as neutral as possible while the research participants spoke from their own perspectives.

### **3.3 The Research design: selecting methods and approaches**

Practising researchers inevitably hold philosophical positions which influences how they conduct their research (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2015). According to Creswell (2014), research design is a plan of action that guides the researcher through the entire research process, from data collection to analysis, in accordance with the research objectives and research questions. Therefore, a choice of research design reflects the researcher's decision regarding the priority given to a range of dimensions of the research process. It also explains the strategy used by the researcher based on how the research will be carried out; the kind of knowledge the researcher will be looking for and the order of research activities such as sampling, data collection, data analysis and how to report the findings (Radnor, 2001).

To achieve the aims and objectives of this research, an exploratory case study design was found more flexible to enable collection of data from mainstream schools in Kenya produce in-depth understanding of the research. According to subjectivist ontology, truth or meaning comes into existence when researchers engage with the realities of the world (O'Leary, 2017).

However, different people may construct knowledge in different ways, even regarding the same phenomena as seen in this study where teachers and parents were partners, actively involved in the generation of meaning in different ways. Although different people attribute diverse meanings to the same phenomena, the meaning is constructed in different ways (an aspect overlooked by the positivist model). For example, diverse meanings of the understanding of inclusive schooling reflect varied interpretations of the social world. For this reason, questions were approached qualitatively using a lens of people actively involved in the research

A significant finding of any research is one that has ‘meaning or representation’ (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007:774). Interaction of participants’ interpretations construction of meaning was made possible by social interface with the research participants themselves. Qualitative researchers tend to seek to construct meaning from their data. In this study, social interaction with the research participants resulted in data which had an insightful impression on the nature of their world. In this regard, participants of this study were interpreters and co-producers of meaningful empirical data (Goldkuhl, 2012). The meanings constructed were analysed as themes which had a bearing on the findings of this study presented in Chapter 4.

### **3.3.1 Research design and exploratory approach**

An exploratory approach is best suited to investigate the case study which forms the basis of my research, interrogation of findings and, in essence, the entire research process. The purpose of exploratory approach was to gain a deeper understanding of the individual experiences of the research participants, an effort to engage with their world and make sense for those involved in this form of social action, based on their historical and social perspectives (Bryman, 2015). This study is concerned with society and social meaning in order to understand educational issues in a community, interpret a social problem such as inclusive education and identify the direction in which educational provision and thinking for children with SEN is moving in Kenya (Thomas, 2013; Donmoyer, 2000). Newby (2010) identifies exploratory research as an inductive examination of a subject to unravel a problem, illustrative, and not a way to validate emerging theory. Similarly, the exploratory researcher starts from unknown territory, hoping to learn more about the ‘significant factors of human interaction in social settings’ (Denscombe, 2014:67).

According to Brown (2006), exploratory research tends to address new problems when sufficient research is not available, or the problem is not apparent. Other approaches, such as descriptive or explanatory, cannot fulfil this purpose. The procedure is helpful for generating ideas, understanding a phenomenon's thought process and provides insight into attitudes and perceptions (Neelankavil, 2015). Conversely, the adoption of any new knowledge from this exploration rests on the understanding and judgement on 'how', 'why' and 'what' to learn from the experience of teachers and parents (Thomas, 2017:32). Findings made from the exploration are not aimed at giving policymakers and readers a conclusive solution to challenges facing current inclusive education, but rather suggest approaches that have not yet been tried or tested to create inclusive schools.

However, being an exploratory study, participants as part of the society that has created barriers of access to inclusive schools and curriculum were also prompted to suggest strategies for improvement to remove these barriers. The data elicited from teachers and parents produced data which reflects values, norms, attitudes and beliefs which could not otherwise have been understood using other approaches. According to Saunders et al. (2009), researchers reflect on their beliefs and philosophical assumptions to best link theory and practice within the overall research process. Therefore, an exploratory approach not only provided a focus on participants' perspectives on their social world but was also most suitable approach to adopt, capture the voices of the research participants and make sense of their social world (Murphy et al. 1998). By using the exploratory approach, I gained data characterised by:

...richness and fullness of descriptions and details with real people in real situations which was crucial in exploring the participant's world and understand their ideas, perceptions and expectations more clearly. (Saunders et al. 2009: 482).

The exploratory approach unveiled a multiplicity of factors that have interacted to produce a plethora of issues, including attitudes arising in and out of the meaning communities attach to disability which according to their construction of the world is vulnerability. Thus, a combination of participant responses and observations produced variations between an understanding of children requiring protection, experiencing mental or physical health issues, learning disabilities or being sickly, all of which surfaced implicitly within the exploration. As the study revealed such bias is widely held in Kenya (Elder and Kuja, 2018; Ogechi and

Ruto, 2002). Within the interrelationship provided by the exploratory approach, a link between dilemmas, social norms and facts within the reality of community set-ups were identified. For instance, teachers who participated in my research discussed concerns not included in the interview questions, such as leadership, that produced a novel insight to their experiences that would not have been accessible otherwise (Stebbins 2010).

The primary aim of exploration is to generate inductive data, concepts and propositions supported by sufficient credibility through controlled data analysis at the secondary stage (ibid). Using an exploratory approach allows inductive strategy which does not fully generate theory initially but, rather, is often used as a background to qualitative investigation (Bryman and Bell, 2015). For this reason, the relationship between theory and research regarding inductive strategy is used in the interpretation of the findings of this thesis. Overall, apart from the exploratory approach, no other could have provided the in-depth, unique opportunity to understand the research topic, enhance interpretation and research findings and provide recommendations in Chapter 6.

### **3.3.2 Unsuitable approaches**

One decision that research has to make from the onset is the strategy to approach in order to complete a research study. The selection of the research approach depends on the paradigm that guides the research activity, such as ontological beliefs about the nature of reality and humanity, and epistemology that informs the research and the methodology that underpins the research study design (Marshall and Rossman, 2014; Tuli, 2011). When this decision was made, a positivist paradigm could not interrogate my research. The criteria of positivist paradigm were found unsuitable for research work being carried out from a systematic approach or for highlighting the objectivity and passivity of human beings (Creswell 2013).

The positivist position of neutral, objective knowledge is based on sense experience and can only be advanced by use of experimental, objective methods such as observing research participants in the laboratory or sending out research instruments such as questionnaires to the participants (Cope 2014). Although such measures may be appropriate for scientific research, they were not necessarily found suitable for this research due to the complexity of human nature in the context of educational or any other social research (Cohen et al. 2017). In addition, inclusive education or exclusion cannot be measured or counted as in natural sciences (Berg and Lune, 2012). Those who favour quantitative methods rely on data

collection methods that focus on gathering “*hard data*” and statistical techniques, including statistical computation to present evidence in quantitative form (Brannen, 2017; Denscombe, 2014; Sarantakos, 2005). However, this study is guided by interpretive epistemology and constructionist ontology which seek to understand participants’ experiences, as interpreted through the researcher’s perceptions (Miles et al. 2013; Tuli, 2011).

I was interested in the engagement in the social world of the research participants and how to tease out the multiple perspectives and meanings that the participants constructed of the social phenomena. This process involved talking face-to-face and observing their social world within their context and, at times participating in activities. Involvement in the research participants’ social world allowed a deeper understanding of inclusive education to a level that statistics cannot count or measure. I was the crucial ‘measurement device’ (Silverman, 2016: 237), fully involved, listening to the participants’ diverse views, active in the research and not detached. This closeness with the research participants in the field enabled a rich, detailed and extensive description of social phenomena that the participants have experienced, and which could not have been collected in any other or using any different enquirer approach (Creswell and Poth, 2017).

Although some methodological strategies determine the generalisability of the data, interpretive epistemology appeals to qualitative researchers for its involvement in the approach to a participants’ social world. The researcher can interpret transcripts, interview recordings, notes from focus groups or participant research (Crotty, 2005), with the purpose of identifying in-depth details of the topic being investigated. According to Silverman (2016; 2015), positivists and post-positivism focus on measuring the possible causes of a phenomenon that influences an outcome using statistical tools. Thus, validity, reliability, objectivity, precision, and generalizability are used to judge the rigour of quantitative studies, whereas qualitative research can use fundamental criteria to judge the quality and outcomes of qualitative data, such as its’ trustworthiness, transferability, dependability, confirmability of validity, reliability and objectivity as crucial considerations in the interpretivist paradigm (Creswell and Poth, 2017; Mertens, 2014; Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

This study could not have taken a panoramic view of inclusive education or look at trends, proportions and prevalence of particular traits of people as happens in surveys. It would have been difficult to resolve problems of creating inclusive schools through systematic enquiry, often visualised as a cyclical process that is embedded in action research. Other qualitative

approaches such as documentary analysis would not have allowed a holistic view of the participants in naturally occurring settings ‘through the researcher's eyes’ (Silverman, 2016: 63) and see things that I might otherwise not have seen if using structured techniques or quantifying data. For all the reasons mentioned above, my research adopted a flexible, exploratory interpretivist approach where teachers and parents were partners of the study, with the common goal of identifying the challenges that hinder inclusion within mainstream schools.

The case study was selected to provide a way of understanding the research participants and their world and how they functioned within that world. Nonetheless, according to Stake (2005) other forms of qualitative research, such as ethnography could have been considered for the considered a case study. However, the intent of ethnography is to determine how culture works within an entire culture-sharing group rather than to develop an in-depth understanding of a single case or to explore an issue using the case as a specific illustration. My research was not about how culture works, but about closeness to a real-life situation and people’s view of reality. Thus, an in-depth understanding of real conditions was achieved through proximity to the participants’ reality and from their feedback which helped enhance my learning processes as a researcher.

### **3.3.3 Case study approach**

This study was found best located within a case study approach. The strength of a case study is allowing for detailed information that would not normally be obtained through other research designs (Denscombe, 2014). Fisher (2007) clarifies that, given the adaptability of case study research, many variations and possibilities enable a researcher to give a holistic account of the subject of investigation. In particular, it is easier for a researcher to focus on the ‘interrelationships between all the factors’ (ibid: 59), such as people, groups, policies, and technology that constitute case studies. Unlike other experimental designs, where the research design is dedicated to imposing controls on variables, the case is a ‘naturally occurring phenomenon’ (ibid: 56) existing before the research project and continuing to exist once the research is complete Hence, the purpose is a compact case study that is:

...more useful for the practitioner and more interesting for social theory than either factual findings or the high-level generalisations of theory. (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 238)

Methods employed to understand a case were insightfully selected to ensure fair and unbiased coverage worthy of discussion in real life and the natural setting context (Yin, 2018; Stake, 2013). This study is a bounded case focused on six specific sites, three teachers in each school, making twenty-seven interviews in this research. The case is defined and explored within specific parameters, such as precise geographical location, seven-month time frame data collection in the field during which the case was investigated, and definition identification of the participants involved in the case (Creswell and Poth, 2017). The selection criteria were based on the homogeneous case sampling of schools as units of research due to their similar characteristics and unique identity, which permitted a holistic perspective of inclusive schools. At the beginning of this research, I acknowledged that teachers had sufficient knowledge to contribute to the theoretical understanding of the subject (Creswell and Poth, 2017; Guest et al. 2013). Hence, information collected was from their experience and not hearsay (Tansey, 2007). Moreover, parents in the study were viewed as a reliable source of information with proven records as guardians/ carers of children with SEN.

In adopting this case, I had not planned to access the whole population of Nyahururu Schools or the larger Laikipia County since it would not have been feasible to produce a mass study of schools. The rationale for choosing the case methodology was because it is an approach that directly addresses the problems and issues of practice central to the development of strategies that yield usable knowledge (BERA, 2011-applicable at time of study). Therefore, it was not for comparison purposes, replication or extending new theory (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). However, readers in other parts of Kenya can utilise ideas from the findings and recommendations of this case study and harmonise with their own experiences (Stake, 2013; Edenius et al. 2010) or for comparison of empirical results with a purpose of understanding people's motivation (Yin, 2009). To avoid looking through one lens, several single cases of schools, teachers and parents were investigated to allow multiple aspects of the phenomena to be revealed and understood. Newby (2010) highlights approaches that are pertinent to case study methodology, such as a case being typical or unusual, to explore solutions to an existing problem or because something works well, is unique and others feel they can learn from that case. I considered the single case study approach worked well since I had a holistic view of the various facets of the barriers of inclusion and how they are linked, rather than dealing with isolated factors (Yin. 2018).

### **3.3.4 The study population**

The geographical location of this research study is in Laikipia County in Kenya, in one of the five administrative sub-counties of Laikipia County known as Nyahururu. The other four sub-counties are Laikipia East; Laikipia North; Laikipia Central; Laikipia West. The choice of Nyahururu Zone schools is inspired by a more significant understanding of this area owing to being resident there for thirty-five years. The target population for this research was teachers in government-aided mainstream schools, and parents of children with SEN enrolled in mainstream schools. Having been a high school teacher in this education zone, I understand the hierarchy and how things work to access information. For this reason, despite being part of the school community, support staff do not have a link with educational policies and practice as teachers do. Therefore, secretaries, bursars, technicians, cooks, groundsmen, cleaners, librarians and drivers were not included in the samples.

### **3.3.5 Criteria for sampling the study population**

The study population was selected based on teacher interactions with children from various socio-economic, environmental and cultural diversity levels, unlike private schools which are owned and managed independently of the state by individuals. The distinctive shared feature is the involvement of the local community in some of the responsibilities of school management and organisation, with teacher salaries, stationery and a small subsidy for maintenance being government responsibility (Onsomu et al. 2004). The selected primary schools implement free and Universal Primary Education (FPE/UPE) while day secondary schools implemented free secondary education (FSE). The schools have good transport links and all within an hour's walking distance of the participants' homes. The participating teachers were all trained by the government, recruited and registered by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and employed by the MoE. Since successful implementation of inclusive education reform depend mainly on experience and the goodwill of educators (Mittler, 2012), all teachers in the study have worked in mainstream education for a period ranging from 5 to 35 years. Some participants held senior management responsibilities in their schools such as Deputy Headteacher, Head of Department or senior teacher or class teacher. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and schools, information that could help identify participants such as the names of individual participants and schools, job titles and level of training were all anonymised. Schools and individual teachers were coded as shown in Figure 5 that follows:

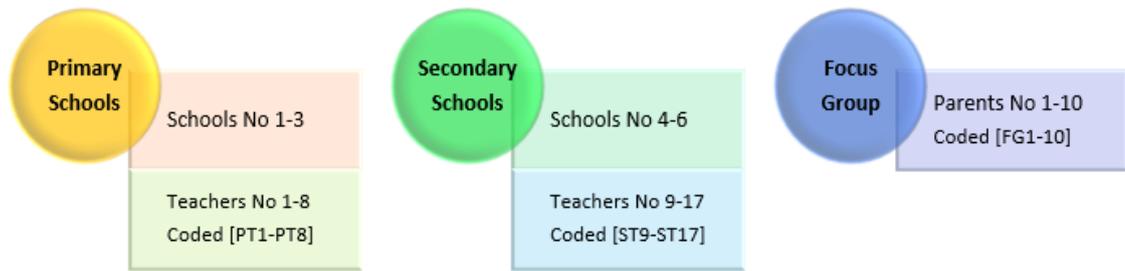


Figure 5: Anonymised schools, individual teachers and parents

As Figure 5 above highlights, the information that can help identify individual participants and parents was anonymised. Codes for this study were used to relate to the file numbers starting from 69-87, and which is reflected in the findings in Chapter 4 (see Appendix 3 and 5). Thus participants' comments appear as PT1:69, ST17:87.

### 3.3.6 Approaches to sampling

According to Ryan and Bernard (2003), sampling is a fundamental task to ensure that there is sufficient data as a precursor to creating credible research. Therefore, the qualitative sampling methods used for this study conform to the questions, goals, and purpose of the investigation with the end goal of achieving intellectual depth (Marshall and Rossman, 2014) and reducing the knowledge gap in SEN. Qualitative sampling has discernible commonalities across qualitative paradigms in that it takes place in ordinary naturalistic settings where people 'do' their lives (Marshall et al. 2013).

Additionally, the emphasis is on sampling as a process that incorporates the sum of participants, the frequency of contacts with each participant, and the length of each contact to produce quality implications emanating from the key findings (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). Cohen and others (2013) propose adopting advance consideration factors such as sample size; representativeness; access; and strategy before deciding on a sampling strategy (ibid). My study incorporated all these recommendations. Nevertheless, one of the limitations encountered was that of representativeness, which Thomas (2017) acknowledges as being difficult to attain in single case studies. However, instead of representativeness, as exploratory samples are often used in small-scale qualitative research to principally gather 'new insights' (Denscombe 2014: 24), I endeavoured to be an active sampler to generate insight into inclusive education in mainstreams schools in Kenya. I structured my study in a manner to enable the use of all these recommended factors.

The two approaches to the selection of samples that researchers can use are probability or non-probability sampling (Langer, 2018). Probability sampling was rejected because it is concerned with statistical theory relating to getting a representative sample (ibid). As I aimed to produce an exploratory sample, not a representative sample, I adopted a non-probability approach to avoid reliance on pure chance sampling. While some authors such as Tongco (2007) argue probability sampling is innately superior to non-probability sampling, such cannot be readily applied to interpretivist qualitative research since the methodology does not aim for far-reaching generalisations. Four types of non-probability sampling strategies were considered. These were quota sampling, convenience sampling, purposive sampling and snowball sampling.

According to Tansey (2007) quota sampling aims to ensure that specific characteristics are present in a sample proportionate to their distribution in the broader population. With quota sampling, particular dimensions are guaranteed. However, absence of sample selection rules may lead to over-representation of subjects or inadvertent interviewer bias, thus excluding samples with specific characteristics. Murphy et al. (1998) suggest pragmatic considerations should be integrated with a commitment to drawing out samples in a systematic and principled way. Consequently, I rejected quota sampling to avoid omitting potentially helpful respondents and additionally because chance selection might result in more significant sampling bias. The other three sampling strategies adopted to meet the research objectives were the convenience, purposive and snowball strategies.

#### **i. Sampling participating teachers**

Purposive sampling was used to sample individual teachers based on the belief that they would be more informed about inclusion and SEN more than others in the community (Cohen et al. 2011). Representativeness in the sampling was achieved through purposively preselecting some teachers via the recommendation of the headteachers. Mertens (2014) reveals that researchers that adopt an interpretivism paradigm tend to purposively select their samples with the aim of identifying information-rich cases that allow in-depth understanding. Other research concurs with the logic of purposive sampling as being able to choose cases that are 'information-rich' (Patton, 2002: 230). The main concern of the current study is to acquire in-depth information from teacher and parent opinions to understand their points of view from within the world in which they operate. The Zonal Educational Officer provided a frame for the primary and secondary schools within the zones that were nearby and

accessible by foot. It is this frame I used to approach headteachers to pre-select participating teachers. Consequently, purposively selecting the first sample of schools presented no significant issues. It is the second sample of focus group participants that posed a significant challenge of sampling. I felt that the purposively chosen sample for this study was information-rich (Yin, 2018), as demonstrated in Table 6.

Table 6: Sampling matrix of participants and institutions involved in the study

Target Groups	Target Schools	Catchment area	Language Medium	Sample		
				Female	Male	Total
G1 Teachers	P1	Urban	English	2	1	3
	P2	Suburban	English	1	2	3
	P3	Semi-rural	English	1	1	2
	S1	Urban	English	1	2	3
	S2	Semi-rural	English	1	2	3
	S3	Semi-rural	English	0	3	3
G2 Parents	FG	Combined	English Swahili Kikuyu	7	3	10
<b>Total</b>				13	14	27

P: Primary School; S: Secondary School; FG: Focus Group

Table 6 highlights the samples size of this study. The samples were more representative, as often used in qualitative interpretive research (Gummesson, 2005), principally to gather ‘new insights’ and gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena of research (Denscombe, 2014: 24; Gummesson, 2005).

## ii. Sampling participating parents

The first research question for this study was designed to understand the impact of inclusive education in Kenya. Thus, the parents’ points of view were paramount in order to answer the question. As Jones and Symeonidou (2017) and Lloyd (2000) observe, the best outcomes for inclusive education is the parents being the driving force for demanding inclusive education, lobbying for inclusive policy and calling for collaboration with professionals. Consequently, an important aspect that was carefully deliberated was the participation of parents of children with SEN in this study. However, their participation depended on whether

they were available, interested and willing to participate in this study and in a focus group due to reasons addressed in Chapter 1 (see subsection 1.2.3). Hennink (2014) recommends a focus group sample of participants who have shared experiences. Bryman (2012) recommends participants with similar backgrounds to uncover a range of perspectives. Gaining sufficient numbers for the focus group took significantly more time than anticipated. Respectively, rather than suspend the focus group interviews due to lack of participants, an alternative was to request that the one available parent suggest other participants. Consequently, two more nominees were contacted and the accumulation of ten parents achieved.

I adopted convenience sampling and purposive sampling with the definite purpose of addressing my research goal and answering the research questions. Marshall and Rossman (2014) state that the epistemology and ontology that underpin study design should be compatible with the methodology of the research. It is important to mention that when I was preparing for this research, snowballing was not an approach I had anticipated using since my perspective was that parents would be available to meet the criteria for choice owing to social construction of disability (see sub-section 5.2.3), resulting in attitudes and stigma that make parents hide their disabled children or fail to reveal to friends they have a child who is disabled. In contrast to the individual interviews, after three months in the field, only one parent was purposively selected to participate in this study. Eventually, following the snowballing approach, fifteen parents were available, from which only ten were purposely sampled the five parents left out had their children attending residential special school and therefore their reality was not appropriate for this study.

### **3.3.7 Ethical issues in fieldwork**

The principles and ethics of research should be identified as an integral part of designing any research to decide, from the onset, whether it is feasible to collect data in the intended way (Newby, 2010; Trafford and Leshem, 2008). The ethical issues that need to be taken into consideration are extensive. Therefore, there were implicit and explicit ethical dilemmas facing this study. Social researchers are expected to approach the research methods task ethically regardless of the research paradigm or research approaches adopted (Denscombe, 2014). This study was guided by British Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research in UK (BERA, 2011) and National Council for Science and Technology (NACOSTI) which is the research governing organisation in Kenya. Accordingly, I entered the field with the

knowledge that collecting information about people raises ethical issues that need to be addressed. Thus, I had to consider and comply with ethical principles both during the design and implementation of this study in the field and while the project was being conducted.

This being an overseas project, potential risks to myself or research participants were envisaged by the university via a risk assessment drawn up by the Director of Studies and submitted to the NTU Doctoral School, well before fieldwork began. The university was concerned about my safety because while I was getting ready for field research BBC reported a militia group had attacked students in Garissa University College, Kenya killing 148 students and injuring 79 or more (BBC news online, April 2015). The university made clear that the opportunity was there for me to contact my Director of Studies any time during my fieldwork, especially if I felt exposed to any risk. However, such a need did not arise. Due to the advance preparations in place, ethical concerns surrounding this project were not initially anticipated while planning for field research. I had gained full consent from Nottingham Trent University and I hoped to do the same once in Kenya.

However, once in the field, ethical dilemmas became apparent due to the process of getting research approval. This is because new research regulation in Kenya required all Kenyans studying abroad at PhD level to seek affiliation with a local university before applying for a permit to conduct research. Despite I had to be in Kenya with time constraints of six months, it was essential to collect accurate data. Nothing could be more disconcerting than the long wait for clearance. Some authors have noted some practices which create ethical dilemmas for social scientists when a decision of absolute right or wrong cannot be made instantly (Cohen et al. 2017). The process of seeking affiliation with a local host university and getting a research approval certificate constituted an ethical dilemma of whether to access schools and involve participants whilst waiting for official consent or do nothing as I waited for clearance. Eventually, the solution was to go back to the affiliated university and work in the library while awaiting clearance. I could not override the approval decision since maintaining ethics in research is not an option but an essential feature of all legitimate research. Failure to do so would compromise researcher's integrity and the ethical principles they profess to uphold (Cohen et al. 2017).

To obtain data from participants is not a neutral activity, I planned to work in a way that reflects the moral position that this research legitimately allowed. I had to consider my position as interpretive insider research within an environment where I previously worked

and establish appropriate ethical boundaries at the outset (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002). Saunders and others (2009) maintain that ethics in research concerns the appropriateness of the researcher's behaviour about the rights of those who become the subject of their work and cautions researchers that the implications of the research affect participants.

Researchers must conduct 'good' research (David and Sutton, 2011:41) during a process which involves careful consideration of all the issues that pertain to accurate data collection, honest reporting and to remain within the limits of empirical study (Mertens, 2014). I intended to conduct this research through the ethical principles of social research and 'good practice' as recommended by David and Sutton. Equally, Nottingham Trent University Graduate School Ethical Guidelines ensure that research is conducted according to the code of ethics, a process the University upholds as an on-going process from the design to the conclusion of the study. Nevertheless, the question of what constitutes research was guided by my values as an exploratory researcher.

As an exploratory researcher, I designed this research from the unknown in an attempt to gain clarity of the area and determine the inclusive nature of education. Accordingly, I understood that the situation in the field was fluid, and that it was not feasible nor ethical to manipulate the circumstances that children with SEN find themselves in mainstream schools. The exploratory nature of research is to be willing to change direction as a result of the revelation of new data and new insights while retaining focus. Thus, it was essential to maintain high ethical standards when conducting the research to respect the right and dignity of the participants by treating them as equal partners in the study. In this respect, I was not in a privileged position in society that justified conducting my research at the expense of the participants, irrespective of whether this study may significantly positively influence the Kenyan community. Importantly, I took it as my responsibility as a social researcher to obtain prior approval from the Ethics Committees at Nottingham Trent University and also in Kenya from the National Council for Science and Technology (NACOSTI).

BERA (2018) recommends the consent of those involved. Participants were provided with information sheet to give them understanding of the purpose of my research so that they could make an informed decision on whether to participate in the research (see Appendix 8). Consent was gained from education officers, school managers and parents (see Appendix 9). It can be said that participants voluntarily contributed to the study based on informed consent and sufficient information of the research aims and objectives. The participants had

sufficient information to arrive at a reasoned judgement about whether or not they wanted to participate (Denscombe, 2014). Ethical obligations placed upon me the role and responsibility to be open and explicit and to protect the interests of the participants from any ethical malpractices brought into focus. As Creswell and Poth (2017) suggest, when researchers are open, they are more receptive to the participant feedback and revelations of their social world.

In Kenya, I had to contend with the nationwide teachers' strike which contributed to all government-aided schools shutting down for five weeks. While Chavez (2008) agrees that there are advantages that being an insider researcher can bring, this can also be weakened or strengthened by the way a researcher interacts with their participants. I had the advantage of knowing the community and, as a former teacher I had previously witnessed industrial action against the government. The need to be empathetic with teachers and, at the same time, complete my research was a dilemma.

From my own previous experience, I was anticipating threats to both the participants and myself arising from travelling to the locations where the industrial meetings were taking place. In addition, I did not take it for granted that the participating teachers to this research would not be prone to retribution from other teachers for choosing to participate in this research instead of joining the teachers' union meetings. The foresight that such accusations were highly likely to lead to bullying and psychological harm were also given consideration. I did later find myself in a difficult situation in one school when one head teacher appeared uncomfortable with my presence. It took reassurance that I was there specifically for data collection and had not been sent to spy on the aftermath of the strike.

Those who contribute in research should be protected from harm (Seidman, 2013; Ritchie et al. 2013; Berg, 2004) and they 'should be no worse off at the end of their participation than they were when they started (Denscombe 2010:331). In other words, no long-term repercussions stemming from their involvement should be allowed. However, there was a significant hindrance to the parents' participation. As mentioned earlier, the implication of the ongoing teacher strikes meant the possibility of parents declining to participate due to child care issues or consideration of travelling to unsafe locations. A fundamental moral and ethical concern was the health and safety of those children being left behind as they could not be brought to the research venue due to the requirements of needing to be fully focussed during the interview process. Bryman (2015) indicates that, although it is not possible to

identify whether harm is likely in all circumstances, there was a need to address safeguarding participants from possible harm. Therefore, to safeguard the children from potential harm as parents attended the interviews, the practical idea of sending messages to parents in advance was considered. In the ensuing phone messages to parents, leaving their children under adult care during the interview attendance was reiterated.

**(i) Ethics considerations in sampling**

Once approval was gained, I proceeded to access the population of interest. Initial contact was with the headteachers who consented for their schools to participate. From the meetings with headteachers, names of possible teachers were suggested, based on their roles in the school. On the first meeting with every participant, by way of introduction, I introduced myself within the purpose of the research, the nature of the study and their roles within it. Potential participants received a description of my research and conditions and procedures to be adopted, both verbally and in an introductory cover letter. I also explained the length of the interview times, including the use of a recorder to record the conversations. While in-depth understanding is the nature of exploratory research and a means of retaining ethical relationships with those being researched, there are ethical difficulties to such an approach of data collection (David and Sutton, 2011). Reassured that the research purpose was understood, participants were given time to consider their participation. After one week I returned, and those who were happy to proceed were given information sheets which they were requested to read and sign as an indication of their consent to voluntary participation in the research (see Appendix 9). The same pattern was replicated with parents in the focus group.

It was my responsibility to protect their rights and interests of the participants and I reassured all participants of anonymity and confidentiality. However, although I assured anonymity for all research participants, it appeared the teachers, unlike the parents were not overly concerned about identification. The parents needed reassurance that their children names would be protected. As I felt proficiency concerning confidentiality, probably resulting from interactions with multi-agency support, I again clarified that I would not reveal identities nor disclose information that might be traced back to the parents or anyone else. I also further clarified that their responses would remain confidential. It was also made clear that if a quote from an individual were to be used in publication, I would alter the details of the individual

to inhibit recognition (Bazeley, 2014) and in such circumstances, codes would be used (see section 3.3.5).

I was conscious of the dangers involved in researching sensitive topics. Accordingly, participants were made aware they could withdraw at any stage if they so wished. Disability issues cause much sensitivity so discussing disability openly is frowned upon in case the same fate befalls whoever is discussing the issue. One consideration when framing the interview questions was an understanding the participants did not completely rescind the right to privacy by providing informed consent. Consequently, questions that may have caused emotional involvement or delved into private realms that they did not wish to make public were avoided. It was also essential to give participants a sense of self-esteem when questioning about inclusion. Thus, I took time to explain the basic tenets of government policy on SEN and inclusive education, then reiterated the purpose of the research. At the same time, teachers expressed their unfamiliarity with interviews as a method of research; they mentioned that all previous researchers had left questionnaires with the head teacher who in turn had distributed them to willing teachers to complete. Once more, I reassured them that they could stop if they did not wish to continue with the interview; however, none felt they needed to withdraw.

Throughout the study, I made every effort to conduct my research in accordance with ethical guidelines. Nevertheless, the reality of conducting research posed many challenges. Despite being aware of what research is and that research is rigorously conducted, no amount of literature could have prepared me better than the actual experience of fieldwork. Notwithstanding, my conduct 'was guided by absolute ethical standards, a higher-order moral principle which did not vary according to situations' (Cohen, et al. 2013:87).

#### **3.4 Selecting and developing research tools**

An underlying premise of selecting study tools is not just the fundamental ethical tenet of safeguarding the rights and welfare of the research participants but also an understanding that they are capable of interpreting and attributing meaning to the events in their environments (Bryman, 2016). Interpretivists believe that realities constantly evolve and there can be no single reality. I designed rigorous data collection tools to create multiple realities and learn something new from multiple actors. Similarly, multiple tools gave the benefits of probing more deeply with a purpose to achieve the objectives of the study and

in-depth understanding of the phenomena of research. My role was to ensure the participants' voices, feelings and ideas were heard while I gained an understanding of their world-views. Moreover, due to the sensitivity of disability-related issues, I sought strategies and procedures that offered an opportunity to identify concepts that are ordinarily uncomfortable to discuss. Creswell (2014) cautions against using a single tool for data collection and underscores data collection from multiple sources as most favourable for comprehensive balanced research. To ensure data collection remained purposeful, I prepared an interview guide and an observation guide to maintain focus on the research objectives during data collection.

### **3.4.1 Piloting stage**

A pilot study plays a vital role in foreshadowing research problems and issues by highlighting gaps and wastage in data collection; its main purpose being to guide the planning of the main investigation (Yin, 2018; 2009). Marshall and Rossman (2014) suggest piloting facilitate broader and highly significant issues of any research such as validity, ethics, representation and researcher health and safety. It is also a significant stage, as mentioned by Smith (2007), for the researcher to understand their own ability to conduct a major study and eliminate broad barriers such as mistrust of the agendas and more narrow ones like resistance to audio recording.

The first exploratory phase in this study was a pilot study for the individual interviews, conducted from 13th to 26th October 2015 in a secondary school in Kenya. The same process used for the pilot study was adopted for the main study, and five teachers took part in the pilot. I started by explaining the purpose of undertaking the research, the expected role of those who were willing to participate and the anticipated outcomes of the research. Those happy to participate were assured of confidentiality and anonymity in that no information would be shared with non-appropriate others (e.g. school administration) or via publication. They were also informed that they could withdraw at any stage of the research process. This understood, we agreed on a two-day interval to allow time to read the brief and consent forms and consider their decision of whether to participate or not. Accordingly, four teachers signed the consent forms and as their consent was based on informed, free decisions regarding their involvement.

The outcome of the pilot study was the identification of challenges that could have emerged during the interviews; specifically one question being too long and two others needing rephrasing (see Appendix 2 and 3). According to May (2011), the pilot stage can result in the revision of how questions are laid out, and how questions are worded to ensure they mean the same to all respondents, hence increasing the reliability, validity and practicality of the research tools. Initially, I had used the word “mainstream” in reference to government-aided schools, but I realised unfamiliarity in the Kenyan context and therefore changed to ‘regular’ schools. As noted, “regular” and “public schools” were used interchangeably by most participants.

Other interview questions were rephrased and familiar terms used. For instance, the second question “what is your understanding of the term inclusion?” was rephrased to read “Could you say something about inclusion?” to avoid teachers feeling that they were being tested. I also noted that at the end of every interview participants did not ask any questions but, instead, added more information that was not included in the interview questions, leading to an additional question “Is there anything else you would like to add about the education of children with SEN in regular schools?” The responses given to this question in the findings added a deeper understanding of government involvement in inclusive schools (see section 5.5.5). Another emergent issue was the timing of the sessions. The first interview lasted 20 minutes, which seemed too short to produce rich data. This concern was most likely due to my lack of interviewing skills. I wrote down probing questions that enabled acquiring more information from the research participants. To this effect, I found the process of interviewing the remaining three participants more controlled, lasting 45-60 minutes, suggesting I had gained confidence in the skill of interviewing. Noting the compelling nature of the last three interviews, I found it essential to ask the participants about their experience of the interview and that the questions had been appropriately refined. The main reason being to understand participants’ views about the process, if they felt they had expressed their views appropriately or the questions asked had addressed the central features of inclusive education. Maxwell (2012a) proposes that interviewers should avoid leading questions which result in bias when interviewing.

The feedback I got from the pilot study suggested that for interview question 5 “*How should an inclusive learning environment be structured?*”, participants comprehended the question to mean that inclusive schools should be different from other schools. From this

understanding they compared and contrasted special and mainstream schools, which was not the initial objective of the study. All three piloting participants reflected the issue of clarity. As commented in the feedback session the word “structured” was confusing, and their understanding of that question was not comprehensive. I concluded that asking how an inclusive learning environment could be “structured” was technical jargon that was creating bias, emphasising differences, with one likely to be a source of inequality. I rephrased the question to read “*In your opinion, what do you consider to be a favourable learning school environment for children with SEN and disabilities?*” The intrusion of personal bias and expectations is a challenge often faced by researchers when conducting interviews, but which was avoided in this research through the feedback from the pilot phase participants and constant reflection and self-evaluation. These precautions made it as easy as possible for participants to answer the interview questions (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

The second exploratory phase was a pilot study for the focus group interviews, conducted from 13th to 26th December 2015. The initial plan was to pilot the focus group interview with parents, but this was not possible due to the problems arising with identifying parents (see section 4.3.6 on sampling parents). Nevertheless, since the purpose of this pilot study was to test the adequacy of the research instrument and assess the feasibility of the main study, I did not want to take the risk of embarking on the main focus group interviews without piloting. For this reason, two lower primary school teachers and three special unit teachers and one support staff member (a total of six, all from different schools) were used in the pilot study. In the process of piloting I identified that due to the sensitivity of the recorder, it needed to be placed in one static position to avoid constant movements, capturing all noises including the rustle of clothes and papers. One logistical challenge identified with pilot participants was time-keeping. Correspondingly I realised the same might happen during the main study, which it did, but this time I had organised for refreshments as we waited for everyone to arrive. Thus, by designing the protocol of a pilot study, I was able to ascertain that the project was realistic and workable (Marshall and Rossman, 2014).

### **3.4.2 Individual interviews with teachers**

One of the most significant sources of case study information and research tools for data collection is well-conducted research (Bryman, 2013), one which permits entry into the research participants' world to understand their 'experiences' and 'perspectives' (Silverman, 2017: 146). In terms of the interview, a significant aspect is flexibility since if a question is misunderstood, it can be re-phrased, issues can be explored deeply, and questions can be repeated to ascertain if the participant is giving an accurate version of the matter being discussed (Newby, 2010). Cohen and others (2017; 2011) recommend that researchers use interviews if their approach to research is built on the understanding that knowledge is not external to human subjects but is made between human interactions. The interview will then be considered a flexible tool that allows use of multisensory channels such 'verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard' (ibid: 409).

The interviews I carried out were guided conversations rather than structured questioning using semi-structured interviews aimed at exploring the research questions and pursuing the ideas I had formed that led to an interest in investigating inclusion matters. In other words, although I was pursuing a persistent line of enquiry, my questioning was fluid rather than rigid. Thus, it was possible to follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which questionnaires can never do (Yin, 2018). The data collection method using standardised structured interviews was rejected because this approach provides insufficient flexibility (Seidman, 2013). Moreover, researchers have specified sets of research questions to be investigated while endeavouring to maintain distance with the participants but not to be seen as aloof in the process of seeking to gain knowledge (Bazeley, 2011). Therefore, a standardised format as a process of pursuing knowledge would have rendered my study inefficient since flexibility and adaptability was significant. My study required an interview method that encouraged new ideas to be brought to this research without making the participants feel they were being interrogated. It would have been 'absurd and counter-productive' (Bryman and Bell, 2012:446) to assume a degree of social distance with teachers and parents participating in this research some of whom I have known for many years

Another consideration was the time-consuming nature of semi-structured interviews, especially in exploratory research where significant in-depth understanding is required even when little or virtually nothing is known about the subject area (Creswell, 2013; 2014). A guidance interview schedule, a sample of which is attached (see Appendix 3), was found

essential for keeping a clear focus, guide the discussion and enable understanding of the world from the participants' points of view within the scheduled time frame. McNamara's eight principles on preparation stage for interviewing were applied (McNamara's, 2009). To avoid distraction, each of the interviews for the first group of participants was conducted in the classrooms either at lunchtime or after school hours and each participant received a travel ticket refund and an additional Ksh<sup>10</sup>300 shopping voucher to recognise the time taken to complete interviews.

Having established initial contact, I explained the purpose of the interview to the research participants in both groups, addressed the terms of confidentiality and the format of the interviews. Some of the skills I found useful in the process of interviews were verbal skills, body language and demonstrating empathy, which enabled a better understanding of the views and opinions of participants of their social world in their own words. Preliminary questions were based on an interview guide that focused on asking participants about their experiences of inclusive schools for all children irrespective of disability but allowed for leeway with follow-up questions and probes. A framework of 10 questions was used as a guide for the individual interviews to provide consistency across the first sample group, with eight questions for the second group. The purpose of delineating some questions was to ensure that I asked questions that were relevant to the focus group, as two questions (Q6 and Q7) concerning teaching resources and teacher training, were found irrelevant to this group. Semi-structured interviews were adapted to suit parents and meet the intended objectives of this research (Bryman, 2012). All teachers were asked the same common core of questions using the same interview guide as indicated in Table 7.

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<sup>10</sup> Equivalent to £2.30

Table 7: Interview schedule for teachers

Focus	Key questions
1. To explore participants' understanding of SEN and disabilities.	a. Who are the children considered to have SEN and disabilities in your school?
2. To explore participants' understanding of inclusive practice.	b. Could you say something about inclusion in your school?
3. To explore teachers' general attitude to inclusive schools/learning/teaching.	c. What is your view of admitting children with SEN and disabilities into this school?
4. To explore existing criteria used for enrolment of children with SEN.	d. How do you identify children with SEN and disabilities in your school?
5. To explore participants' understanding of inclusive schools.	e. In your opinion what do you consider to be a welcoming school environment for children with SEN and disabilities?
6. To explore the availability of resources enabling inclusive schooling.	f. What resources do you use in your teaching to ensure that all children participate in learning?
7. To explore if participants are trained for inclusive teaching and if they have the skills to accommodate children with SEN.	g. Tell me what training your school/ local education office/MoE facilitates for professional development in SEN
8. To explore the challenges of creating inclusive schools.	h. What are the challenges of educating children with SEN and disabilities in regular schools?
9. To explore perceived strategies for improvement to make schools more inclusive.	i. What progress has been made towards addressing the challenges you identified earlier?
10. Repetition of Q2 and Q3 to validate participants' views of inclusion.	j. How do you feel about inclusive schooling in Kenya?

The research participants' answers were attentively followed up with further probing. Sometimes I would also repeat significant words given by the participant. This was to ensure that I was not dominating the conversation but reflecting on the answers provided. All the interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's permission. A small, visible tape recorder was placed between the interviewer and the participant. It was made clear to the participants that if they did not wish to have the session recorded, I would take notes which would be shown to them. However, such a case did not arise, so all the interviews were recorded. The audio recording always began after assurance to participants that their responses would be treated as confidential. The interview session was concluded with a reminder I was available to be contacted using the mobile number and my email address that I had given. I also clarified that my Kenyan mobile number would only remain active for the

seven months I was in Kenya. However, I reassured the participants that my email address was permanent and active while my UK mobile would reactivate once I returned to the UK. In the event that they wanted to contact me via email while I was working on the research, I directed them to the Nyahururu Catholic Church information desk, the Zonal Education Office information desk and the numerous cyber cafes in town. The sessions always ended with thanking the participants for their time.

Using semi-structured interviews as a method for data collection presents some issues. Challenges arise from how the participants view the researcher, especially regarding age, sex and ethnic background (Denscombe, 2014). Sometimes such a view can affect willingness to divulge information or participants can change their behaviour because 'interest is being taken in them' (Thomas, 2013:141). Nonetheless, the purpose of the case study is to explore a topic of interest and get an indepth understanding the phenomenon of interest (Yin, 2018; 2013; 2009).

### **3.4.3 Focus group discussions**

The core framework tested in the pilot study was adopted for the focus group interviews, which were conducted in a local Catholic Church conference room and lasted for two hours. The original methodology planned was to use semi-structured interviews with teachers only. However, it became evident that to provide balanced information and ensure minimal researcher bias, it was more productive to add the focus group to the research according to Max Weber work in 1864-1920 (in Ritchie et al. 2013:7). Before commencing the interview, I introduced myself, thanked the participants for responding positively to the interview invitation and allowed a brief session of self-introduction. The reasons for recording the session and the impact of speaking simultaneously was mentioned, which all the participants affirmed to have understood. A clear explanation was given to ensure understanding of the purpose, the procedures, the participants' involvement and ethical requirements, including the right to withdraw at any point. Once all details were understood, participants completed and signed consent forms.

Principally, I used the focus group interviews to gain a wider perspective on the issues raised by the teachers concerning potential barriers to learning and participation for students with SEN in mainstream schools. Embedded in the focus group technique was the opportunity to validate data from the individual interviews with teachers. According to De Boer and others

(2010), inclusion and inclusive education were initiated by people with SEN, parents of children with SEN or both, to defend children's rights to equal participation opportunities in education. Therefore, the parent voice strategy was considered essential since parents can and have exerted considerable pressure in the formation of policies in education (Vlachou et al. 2016). Unlike teachers who gave their understanding of inclusive education as individuals, the focus group offered the opportunity to study ways in which individuals make sense of a phenomenon and construct meanings around it. The focus group comprised being parents of school-aged children with SEN who, at the time of the study, were being educated in mainstream school classes, either with support or independently. Other parents of non-disabled children were not included in this study for practical reasons although there is understanding of the influence they have had on educational issues in Kenya, including the role they increasingly play in mainstream school organisation. Parents of children with SEN were found to be a sufficiently representative sample of the population to generate rich insight and information based on their experience of children with SEN.

Considering I was looking for a range of opinions, perceptions, ideas or feelings that parents in a focus group have about inclusive schools, I opted for the most realistic and convenient language to use. There was general agreement that the interview would be conducted in a mixture of three languages, depending on the language the individual participant was conversant in (Kikuyu, Swahili and English). Kikuyu is used within families, Swahili is the national language, and English is the official language used in schools and offices in Kenya. Rubin and Babbie (2010) recommend open-ended and straightforward questions starting from the more general to the more specific. Consequently, the questions were carefully rephrased and sequenced so that they were logical to the participants and easy to understand. The questions probably seemed spontaneous to the participants, but a careful input and consideration had gone into ensuring a natural, logical sequence intended to make the session more conversational (Krueger, 2014).

The focus group approach adopted provides diverse and 'holistic understanding of parents lived experiences' (Ritchie et al. 2013:13). Thus, besides generating understanding of the parents' experiences in their engagement with mainstream schools, I thought the focus group method was particularly useful in bringing parents together. In a small group, they were able to give each other mutual support and explore their knowledge and experiences with the freedom of discussing issues they believed to be significant (ibid). Table 8 displays the parents' interview questions.

Table 8: Interview schedule for parents

Focus	Key questions
1. General exploration of mainstream schools, inclusive learning, inclusive teaching and neighbourhood learning	a. Tell me about the school that your child attends.
2. To understand if parents have control of school enrolment	b. Who decided which school your child will be enrolled in?
3. To explore assessment, identification and placement of children with SEN in mainstream schools	c. How was your child admitted to that school?
4. To explore participants' views of the school they want <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Explore the availability of resources</li> <li>➤ Explore attitudes</li> </ul>	d. In your opinion, what is a good learning environment for your child?
5. To explore the challenges parents face in mainstream schools	e. What are the challenges of educating children with SEN in regular schools?
6. To explore perceived strategies for improvements to make schools more inclusive	f. How can the challenges you have mentioned be solved?
7. The general approach to understanding education for children with SEN	g. Is there anything else you would like to add about the education of children with SEN in regular schools?

Table 8 shows the key questions asked to the focus group. To promote a level of dialogue during the interview process, I adopted a facilitator role. Facilitator location reflects on the epistemological position in working with a group both professionally and personally rather than individuals within their social world which influences the way they construct knowledge (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Participants were engaged with open-ended questions which not only helped to explore and construct knowledge about inclusive education or inclusive matters, but also bring out people's differences.

However, there are disadvantages of the focus group that I encountered while using the semi-structured interview format such as some members trying to dominate the discussion to the exclusion others. However, I maintained the dynamics by ensuring that everyone had the opportunity to speak. I also observed the group was too large and would have been difficult to manage on my own if I had not used a recorder. Finally, at the end of the session, I thanked the members for their participation and explained briefly what would happen with the data I had collected.

### **3.4.4 Observations**

The term observation refers to methods of generating data which entail the researchers immersing themselves in a research setting or site so that they can experience and observe at first hand a range of dimensions in and of that setting (Mason, 2018). The research follows an ‘angle’ (Thomas, 2009:6) that needs investigating or it could be an apparent discrepancy between the researcher's observation of the world and the situation that is reported by others. For others, it could be curiosity or seeking answers to understand social actions, behaviour, interactions, relationships, events as well as situational dynamics. Drawing from Thomas (2013) unstructured observation is consistent with the interpretivist paradigm where researchers immerse themselves in a social situation. Unstructured approaches allow the observer substantial flexibility to collect data. Since there are fixed and fast rules to adopt, Thomas argues that it is difficult to disentangle where one form of participation begins and another ends, suggesting a continuum of observation with structured at one end and unstructured at the other end. Nonetheless, researchers are cautioned to avoid making biased claims from their interpretative illuminative within this continuum (ibid).

My epistemological position while using this method is that knowledge or evidence of the social world can be generated by observing the phenomena of research in the real-life setting. Moreover, meaningful knowledge or in-depth understanding cannot be produced without observation of the participants in their social world because not all introspective accounts of interactions can be articulated, expressed, recounted, constructed or possible to reflect on, in an interview. This position was taken with the understanding that schools have dynamics potentially revealing in multidimensional ways.

Data from interviews were interlinked with observations to produce holistic understanding which formed the findings. The method was carried out as a way of correlating what the participants said with what they did, and as a way of ‘obtaining a more valid and holistic picture of society than that which could be acquired by remaining true to only one set of methods’ (Henn et al. 2006: 19). The method enabled a ‘complete overview of the matter under investigation’ (ibid: 21) and a back-up of the data produced by individual interviews and the focus group. I wanted to contribute to a shared evolving body of understandings emanating from interviews and observations so that readers can take my perspective and find that it ‘opens them to a new understanding’ (Fischer 2009: 584) of inclusive education in Kenya.

The way social scientists react to the complexity of social research differs. Social researchers should be like natural scientists; asking precise questions, producing ideas, using their inquiries to try and explain and predict the social world (Thomas, 2013). The research could also be like a spy, infiltrating into the social world of the participants to observe and describe in rich detail what happens there, while behaving as naturally as possible. Further, they can be like historians, listening to the accounts and narratives of the people (ibid). The author proposes that social researchers should be eclectic and combine all these skills. While combining these skills, my role was to observe in an objective way as possible (Bell, 2014).

Researching people without their knowledge is considered unethical unless some good reason can be advanced for it, covertness and openness range was thus considered. Close and dynamic views of the school's observations was done with prior knowledge that people might talk about practice and do something different when not being observed (David and Sutton, 2011). However, teachers were briefed initially of the purpose of research. Burton and Bartlett (2005) identified four strengths of observation in data collection. First, it is possible to see how people behave in 'natural' situations. Next, the researcher can see whether the subjects being observed act as they say they do. Then, an observer can gather significant amounts of data in a relatively short time. Finally, observations may bring specific practices and behaviours, of which they had not been previously aware, to the attention of the practitioner-researcher. Consequently, to gather data in a short time, observation was focused on the research participants and participating mainstream schools in their natural settings such as staff rooms, playgrounds, assembly points dining areas and dormitories.

### **3.4.5 Bracketing bias in data collection**

The subjective venture of the exploratory interpretivist research influences how data is gathered, sometimes occasioning the inevitable transmission of assumptions, values, interests, emotions and biases. Bracketing is a method used in interpretivist research to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of unacknowledged biases related to the research (Newman and Tufford, 2015). However, as Crotty (2014) suggests, research is a human activity, subject to situations like other human activities. Given the close relationship that may precede before or develop during the process of data collection between the research topic and the participants, research is susceptible to error as a result of the researcher's perception and understanding (ibid). Since there is no paradigm solution to the elimination

of error and bias (Marshall and Rossman, 2014; Mehra 2002), the need to protect this study from any prejudicial influence was uppermost in my mind, knowing that bracketing should be an ongoing process starting from the initial encounter with the participants to end of the study.

Cohen and others (2013) caution that observation, like other forms of data collection in Human Sciences, is not a morally neutral initiative and positions the observer into a moral domain. The primary task of an interpretivist researcher is to maintain a neutral role as much as possible by bracketing their own assumptions, interests and reality (Thorne, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2006). For this reason, ethical considerations, such as maintaining distance from the children, were continually addressed. However, one cannot observe or record all activities going on and so it is necessary to have accurate and full field notes for an inductive theory approach where theory develops out of the conduct of empirical research (David and Sutton, 2011). Therefore as a general rule, to reduce bias and increase the rigour of the research, it was a pragmatic practice of keeping field notes (Yin 2018). Observations were recorded immediately or as soon as possible thereafter to preserve accuracy (Flick, 2014). Considering I was working alone in the field, self-reflection on my subjectivity as a researcher in relation to the subject of research, helped me to set aside individual assumptions and observe the participants' real lives in their world, to construct new knowledge (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2014).

The observation approach was found to be a useful tool for data collection. However, as suggested by Robson and McCartan (2016); Flick (2014); Bryman (2012); Cohen (2013), it can be feasible and advantageous to have less participation when making observations. Thus, I adopted the role of 'marginal participant' which specifically relates to largely being a passive observer, taking notes while observing the participants' real world (Robson and McCartan, 2016: 326). I adopted the role of an unobtrusive observer when working in the schools participating in this research. The advantage of this dimension was that I gained insight and developed an interpersonal relationship that was virtually impossible to achieve through other methods that I used. The process of gaining rapport with the participants helped to develop a better understanding of the school functions and relationships and observe some barriers to access (as discussed in Chapter 4 and 5).

### 3.4.6 Approaches to methodological triangulation

An important aspect of research that is applied in developing a research tool is making use of multiple methods to address the issue of internal validity, answer the research questions (Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2012), and increase the reliability of the research findings (Creswell and Poth, 2017; Hammersley, 2013). The work of Denzin in 1978 outlined the four different kinds of triangulation categories, namely theoretical triangulation, investigator triangulation, data triangulation and methodological triangulation (Denzin, 2001; 2009). The current study avoided excessive or exclusive reliance on any one method which could have resulted in distorting ‘the research’s picture of the particular slice of reality being investigated’ (Cohen, et al. 2013:195, and used two approaches. The first approach was data triangulation of different sources of data such as interviews with teachers and parents and places like primary and secondary schools (Burton and Bartlett, 2005).

The second approach used was methodological triangulation which was a combination of individual interviews and the focus group interview in the same study, made possible by verifying the results of one method by using another method. Moreover, triangulation process involved looking at inclusive education matters from different angles using individual interviews, focus group interviews, observation and documents. Ideas, explanations, descriptions, motives and perceptions of inclusion in mainstream schools which are not available from observations, were checked against other data sources to identify what was similar or dissimilar. Figure 6 below demonstrates this approach.

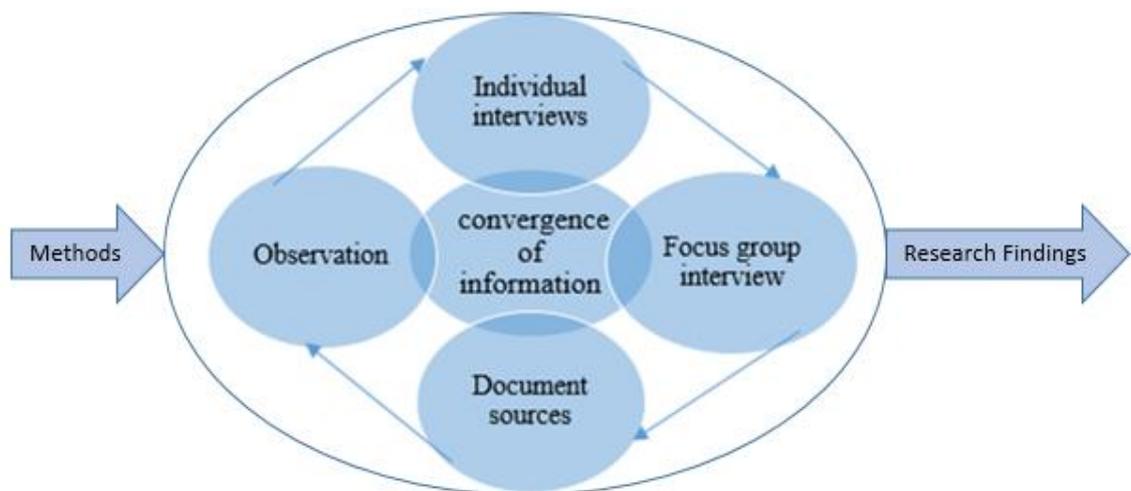


Figure 6: Methodological triangulation.

As figure 6 above highlights, data validation through cross verification of all data sources was completed. The benefits convergence of information from different sources is comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of study (Denzin, 1978 in Denzin, and Lincoln, 2008). Mertens (2014) and Thomas (2017) propose that viewing data from several points, such as critical or analytical references, enhances the confidence of the researcher that the results are valid and can provide a clearer understanding of the phenomena being study. Moreover, merging and correlating information reveals unique findings (Thomas, 2013) resulting in credibility, dependability and accuracy regarding the study (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Triangulation helped to provide a more comprehensive view of both inclusive education and the various challenges teachers and parents had encountered in an attempt to achieve inclusion.

Despite the benefits of triangulation, researchers are cautioned regarding the limitations of the technique which potentially threatens validity (Thurmond, 2001). Triangulation provides corroboration and reassurance from the interpretation of similar findings from different methods and at times provides a partial view of the whole picture (ibid). However, Thomas (2017) argues that absence of similar findings, due to parallel data sets, does not cause refutation since it is evidence of collaboration. Nevertheless, researchers are advised to give more weight to stronger data for stronger interpretive validity (Miles and Huberman, 1994). To minimise bias, distortion and other threats while this study was being shaped, data and methodological triangulation were incorporated at throughout the research process while maintaining sensitivity to ethical considerations.

### **3.5 Building concepts of data analysis**

Bryman and Bell (2015) argue that the most significant developments in qualitative research since the mid-1980s has been the emergence of computer software which removes the clerical tasks associated with the manual coding and retrieving of data. For this reason, NVivo was explored before the data analysis, but I quickly realised that it does not automatically feed in data, and mostly done manually. I learned that the researcher must still 'interpret, code and retrieve the data' (ibid: 593). I also found the software particularly challenging to manipulate and, to avoid further anxiety, I resolved to approach data analysis manually, thus allowing for a more direct and immediate interpretation (Robson, 2011).

Qualitative researchers have frequently recommended that data analysis is not a one-off or a separate phase but, rather, the process of data collection, data analysis and report writing are interrelated and often simultaneously and continuously carried out in a research project (Bazeley, 2013; Miles et al. 2013). There is a need to use a variety of different methods of data analysis and data coding to reduce preconceived notions about findings by allowing the data and its interpretation guide the analysis. Cohen and others (2013) highlight analysis at whatever stage necessary, since there is a deeper meaning hidden in raw data which has to be carefully teased out to be meaningful. The starting point for data analysis in this study was the research questions which intimated to the data to be collected for analysis. However, the actual formal analysis occurred during and after the fieldwork period when I began to make sense of my data. Since a semi-structured interview schedule was used for the interviews, most of the data appeared well ordered initially, until I started to search for themes and new insights uncovered in the literature reviewed (Arthur et al. 2014; Saunders et al. 2009).

The data analysis process was inspired by Miles and Huberman's (1994) strategies for processing and analysing data while clear demarcation of thematic analysis levels was motivated by Braun and Clarke (2006). Both Braun and Clarke propose thematic analysis as a method that can work both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of reality within a 'flexible approach' (ibid: 78). Attride-Stirling (2009) points to a need for greater disclosure in qualitative analysis to warrant a robust methodology, which is only achievable by 'recording, systematizing and disclosing' (ibid:386) methods of analysis, so that findings using the existing techniques may be shared and improved, and new and better tools may be developed. To ensure I remained close to the data, I adopted a thematic analysis technique, as shown in Figure 7 below.

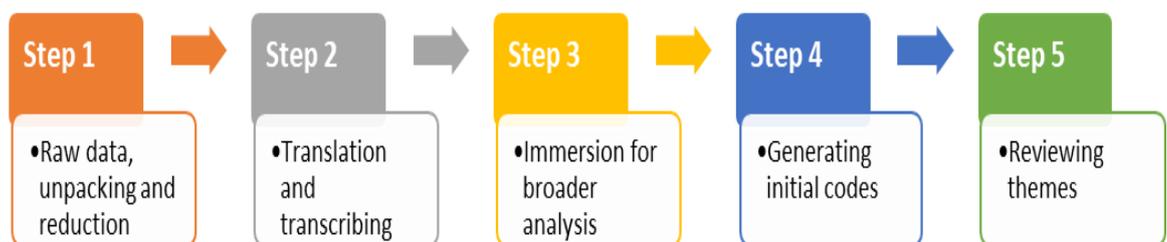


Figure 7: Steps followed to generate themes

As Figure 7 shows, thematic analysis in this study is presented via a stage-by-stage approach. The methodical systematisation of the transcribed data facilitates systematic analysis and presentation, and allows a sensitive, insightful and rich ontological exploration of the phenomenon being studied.

### **3.5.1 Translation and transcribing data**

The sequence of data translation and transcription was ongoing while I was still in the field. The process I followed was to translate and transcribe *ad verbatim*, which helped to provide data in written format, and thus a usable form. Themes and sub-themes started to emerge while initial transcribing was taking place, as outlined by Saunders and others (2009). Nonetheless, it was more challenging to produce focus group data scripts for analysis since it involved translating from the local languages Kikuyu and Swahili. Through data transcription, I was able to repeatedly ‘hear’ the participant’s responses, visualise and familiarise myself with the data process, which helped the themes emerge.

Considering this research was exploratory, some detail was left out in the transcription, such as pauses and breaks in speech, recording inflexions and tone of voice and repetitions, and not considered. The transcriptions were later changed to a literary style to highlight the meaning of the statements, thus facilitating communication of the meaning of the subject’s story to the reader (Flick, 2014). The interview data from both groups generated 56 pages of transcripts that required analysis. The recorded interviews were listened to many times and transcribed by typing out the responses which supported research data immersion. To ensure I had captured accurate information and for validity, the transcription scripts were returned to the participants for their review (unless they had asked not to be re-contacted) to clarify that what I had captured was what they had meant. A copy of both groups transcribed interviews are attached as Appendices 3 and 5

### **3.5.2 Generating initial codes**

After translation and transcription, I embarked on the procedure of verifying the transcripts to ‘sharpen’ (Bryman, 2012: 576) and make sense of the understanding the participants had shared about their experience. Although researchers who collect data through interactive means start doing so with prior knowledge of the data, immersion for depth and breadth of the content is vital (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Considering there was a time lapse following the data collection, I immersed myself in reading and re-reading before drawing out the uniqueness of various relationships and patterns through a formal coding process (Denscombe, 2014).

According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2014), engagement with content is a hallmark of qualitative research methods and the interpretive perspective on the conduct of research. It is an appropriate way to understand events, concepts and categories, in part because these are assumed to influence an individual’s behaviour (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and research participants’ views of ‘the situation being studied’ (Creswell, 2013:8). Interaction with data demands immersion of the researcher in the research contexts, to understand aspects of the reality under investigation and how things work in the real world (Thomas, 2017; Silverman, 2016; Radnor, 2001). Through immersion with the subject matter, I was able to understand how teachers and parents formed ideas about the world and how their worlds were constructed.

To make the data more manageable, each response was coloured differently as a form of identification and to maintain explicit boundaries for individual responses. Since all questions were similar, they were then grouped according to number and put in different folders ranging from numbers 1- 10 to avoid being interchanged. I searched for patterns, relationships and uniqueness. To avoid coding every sentence of the raw data, I endeavoured to sort and identify categories that captured the underlying central notion of SEN and the overall research questions. Any segments showing something important through outstanding concerns arising from the data was noted, highlighted and saved in the category folder. This superficial level of exploring data availed the opportunity to unpack and develop tacit knowledge regarding the participants, which was previously largely unarticulated and had become part of their known common experiences (Cohen, et al. 2013; Tracy, 2012).

As the immersion progressed, a long list of different meaningful segments emerged across the data set, revealing a preliminary characteristic of data. Nonetheless, at this level these segments made little sense to the whole text on their own. An example is a word such as ‘*disability*’ which generated segments such as ‘*disabled, non-disabled, disability special care/support, schools for disabled, disability is a deformity, mild disability, disability toilets* (sic) and so on. To this effect, I realised the *disability* segments had a common underlying story to tell and would fit under one category better than others when I began the process of coding. According to Bazeley (2013), coding is a fundamental qualitative skill of purposefully ‘managing, locating, identifying, sifting, sorting and querying data (ibid: 125) explicitly or implicitly. The transcribed notes were re-examined from a broader perspective, sketching reflectively to identify any salient issues relating to inclusive education outcomes, as shown in Table 9

Table 9: Sample of reflexive thinking on understanding of disability segments

<b>Words and phrases used</b>	<b>Initial understanding of disability categories</b>
Disabled, physically challenged, handicapped, cross-eyed, impaired, cripple, hard of hearing, drooling, retard, amputation, abnormal, powerless, deformed, dumb, stammered, deaf, weak eyesight, visual problem, blind, squinted, vulnerable, deformity, handicap, normal, mute, immobile, weak, helpless.	Observable disabilities - physically challenged, disabled, impaired, crippled, amputated, deformity, handicap, weak.
	Learning difficulties -retarded, abnormal, deformed, drooling, retarded.
	Visual impairment - blind, squinted, crossed eyed weak eyesight.
	Hearing impairment - hard of hearing, deaf.
	Speech and language difficulties - mute, stammered.
Others - vulnerable, weak, slow-learners, powerless, helpless.	

Table 9 highlights the process data analysis followed when coding and categorising data and leading to theme development. From the analysis new interpretations of relevant concepts develop, as in Table 10 that follows demonstrates.

Table 10: Sample of coded data from the teachers interviews

<b>Data immersion in participants' responses</b>	<b>Generated code</b>
There are no facilities in the school, and the environment is not welcoming for students with mobility issues.	Lack of resources and facilities.
Students with disabilities need special care such as physiotherapy, modified chairs or play items which this school lacks now.	Infrastructure as a barrier.
The sanitary condition of our school is not right for them. We do not even have special toilets.	Modified infrastructure appropriate for children with SEN/mobility difficulties.
They should be admitted because it is not their wish to be born disabled and it is correct, we have not done much to accommodate them. However, we do not understand disabilities, and there is no teach with special needs training.	Skills and training  Practical and psychological preparation for children with SEN
Any student with a medical condition does not belong here (mainstream school). Also, regular hospital reviews make them miss lessons and fail to cover the syllabus.	Teachers' concerns regarding inclusion.
Long absence due sickness or surgery is a disadvantage on the side of the student.	Medical model perception of disabilities.
If included, they will not receive quality learning because lack skills to teach children with SEN.	Direct and indirect exclusion.

Table 10 shows new interpretations resulting from reflexive thinking and immersion in data, which led to the identification of major ideas and meanings recurring from the participants' responses. New insights regarding data and understanding the content of recurring ideas, similar and dissimilar responses were earnestly pursued. At this level of broader analysis of categories, items which were conceptually inconsistent or had low reliability were excluded from the final version.

### 3.5.3 Identifying themes

In this phase, I refocused the analysis at a broader level, collating the categories together to identify how they may combine to form an overarching theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I observed the consistent experiences in all categories to ensure consistency with the labels and how these fitted into the complete data set. At this point, I began to have a sense of the significance of the individual themes. Meanwhile, some initial codes developed to form main themes, while some were discarded. Others were displaced and saved in a ‘miscellaneous’ folder. Table 11 below demonstrates the overarching themes considered significant.

Table 11: Generation of initial themes

<b>Thematic Area</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Focus</b>
Disabilities and SEN	Understanding of disabilities	Children considered having special needs
Inclusion	Understanding and perception of inclusion	Inclusion, view of admitting children with disabilities mainstream school
Inclusive practice	Identify assessment criteria for entry to mainstream school	Teachers identify children with SEN in their classes
Quality	School preparedness	Resources used in teaching to ensure all children participate in learning
Training	Teachers education for inclusive pedagogies and practice	Training and professional development on SEN
Access	Buildings and structures	The perceived appropriate learning environment
Perceived challenges of inclusion	Barriers for inclusion	Challenges of inclusion
Strategies for improvement	Identify perceived strategies for improvement	Suggestion on the creation of inclusive schools
Future success	Individual perception of inclusion	Success of inclusion

Table 11 shows how initial themes were discovered. The final step was defining and refining themes to determine what aspects of data each theme capture at the same time ensure themes did not overlap. Mostly, it is these themes that I used to answer the research questions. To my surprise, I found that some of the data collected were not significant to the analysis and

presentation of this study but on the other hand it was found have relevance to the discussion to follow in the next chapter. Alternatively, this data could be saved for use in another research or a publication at a later date. The steps of refining themes are revealed in Table 12.

Table 12: Final subsumed themes

<b>Thematic area</b>	<b>Reviewed Themes</b>	<b>Subsumed Themes</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Disabilities and SEN</b>	Theme revised as: 1. Perspective on impairment, disability and SEN	Disabilities and SEN	Researcher's understanding
<b>Inclusion</b>	Themes combined and re-categorised: 2. Perception and views on inclusion and inclusive practices	Inclusion and inclusive practice	Researcher's understanding, document sources
<b>Inclusive practice</b>			
<b>Quality Training</b>	3. Themes subsumed and re-categorised 4. Teacher training	Themes subsumed	Teachers' views and parents' perceptions
<b>Access</b>			
<b>Challenges and constraints</b>	Theme revised as: 5. Perception and views of conducive learning environments	Barriers of inclusion	Teachers' views and parents' perceptions Researcher's observation
	6. Challenges of inclusion		Teachers' views and parents' perceptions Researcher's observation
<b>Strategies for improvement</b>	7. Themes subsumed and re-categorised 8. Strategies for improvement	Strategies for improvement	Teachers' views and parents' perceptions
<b>Future success</b>			

Table 12 shows the generated themes. In the first column, the themes were identified and reviewed after careful consideration in order to produce the second column. A further review was undertaken, and the themes were subsumed under a single heading as shown in the third column. The source of each theme is indicated in the fourth column, as generated from the individual interviews with both groups and through observations. Satisfied with the analysis, the generated themes represented perceived views of the participants regarding inclusive education in Nyahururu Zone. I used the subsumed themes to discuss the major findings of my research (presented in the next chapter). It is worthy of note that it is equally possible to generate other concepts to present the thoughts and views developed from the views of the

participants. The researcher's role in the analysis process may be criticised as not being entirely neutral (Denscombe, 2014), but the proper procedures were followed and reasonable decisions to arrive at the themes were made, to ensure they were reliable and credible. Rigorous testing of data was conducted to reduce human error and obstacles of accurate information free from human bias (Brennen, 2017). This process of rigorous testing followed the four criteria of research namely such as credibility, dependability, validity and confirmability (Bryman 2016; Robson and McCartan 2016; Lincoln et al. 2007).

### **3.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the methodology and methods used to gather the perceptions, thoughts and ideas of parents and individual teachers involved in this study. The research questions have been linked to the broader methodological perspective to state "how and why" this research fits into the qualitative interpretivist paradigm. An exploratory case inquiry was considered the best approach to produce a richly textured, multi-layered facet of the barriers of inclusion. I have shown how I made every effort to conduct my research according to the expected ethical guidelines of research. Creswell and Poth (2017) emphasise the importance of self-disclosing for a qualitative researcher by acknowledging their values, biases values and prior experience brought to the study. I attempted to bracket all the biases but recognise this is an unachievable goal. I maintained the view the methods and techniques used are the most relevant and appropriate for this research. Relevant themes arising from the interviews were identified using a framework of thematic analysis which allowed the immersion of data. To conclude this section, it is essential to re-emphasise that the main purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding inclusive education for children with SEN in Kenya. Finally, I have ensured dignity and respect for the research participants, and trustworthiness and confirmability of research data. The next chapter is a presentation of the findings emanating from the identified key themes.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

### **4.0 Chapter overview**

This chapter presents the findings of the study from a variety of data collection strategies used to generate understanding and interpretation of how research participants understood their world. The presentation of the research findings in this chapter is based on the four key themes resulting from the data analysis as (1) Teachers knowledge of disabilities and SEN (2) Teachers understanding of inclusion and inclusive practice (3) Barriers of inclusion (4) Strategies for improvement.

These themes are discussed individually in order to provide a clear scope of the results of this study. However, the separate themes are not conceptualised as different entities but intertwined across the analysis, linked back to the overall research questions and the literature review conducted in Chapter 2. These themes provide a link between the parents' and the teachers' epistemological interpretation of inclusive education. Creswell and Poth (2017) hold that society constructs, interprets understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing events and reflecting on those experiences. The fact that inclusive education in Nyahururu Zone in Kenya is a picture of complexities and distinctions, which Osberg and Biesta refer to as a "conundrum" (2010:593), led to drawing comprehensively on the information generated through individual interviews with teachers and focus group discussions, complemented by observations made in the field. The findings are drawn from 17 teachers in primary and secondary schools and 10 parents, creating 27 rich sources of data. For the sake of clarity, each participant was given a code (see Appendix 4 and 6) to maintain confidentiality and preserve anonymity.

**(i) Demographic outline of participants**

The following section present the characteristics of the participants, both teachers and parents, involved in the study.

Table 13: Participating schools and teachers involved in the study.

School information					Teachers information							
Schools	Enrolment data				Male	Female	Total	Disabled	Participated	Level of training or others	Total trained	
Schools	Boys	Girls	Total	SEN								
<b>P1</b>	229	192	421	0	16	4	20	0	3	Diploma	2	
<b>P2</b>	550	497	1047	16	27	5	32	0	3	0	0	
<b>P3</b>	163	132	295	0	7	3	10	0	2	Degree	2	
<b>S1</b>	199	179	378	0	6	12	18	0	3	Seminar	1	
<b>S2</b>	272	240	512	2	10	15	25	0	3	0	0	
<b>S3</b>	534	462	996	1	18	29	47	0	3	0	0	
<b>6</b>	1947	1702	3649	19	78	68	146	0	17	5	5	

**P:** Primary School **.S:** Secondary School. **SEN** (special educational needs).

Table 13 above shows that some mainstream schools have included children with SEN, while others have academically and socially excluded them. The enrolment trends of non-disabled learners indicate that preferential attention is given to general education rather inclusive schools. As can be seen, P2 has an enrolment of 1047 students, with 16 children with SEN said to be included because it has a special unit. The only child with SEN in S3 had an impairment resulting from a medical condition that prompted arm amputation at elbow level. Although an in-depth understanding of mature disabled students re-engaging with education is not explored in my study, it was established that two learners in S2 were

adults above 25 years who had returned to school for personal reasons. Details from Table 13 may be linked with those of Table 14 below to reveal the state of inclusive education of children with SEN in mainstream schools in location of research.

Table 14: Combined enrolment of participating schools involved in the study

Combined Schools	Total	SEN learners
Primary	1,735	16
Secondary	1,886	3
Total	3,621	19

Combined data from Table 13 and 14 has established that the population of children with SEN is barely noticeable meaning that mainstream schools do not provide for groups with diverse needs. As it is inferred in both tables children with SEN are excluded from mainstream schools. The following section presents the characteristics of parents involved in the study.

**(ii) Parents**

The most interesting finding regarding parents is their clear understanding of disabilities, as they described children experiences in school as shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Understanding the concerns of parents

<b>CODE</b>	<b>Disability</b>	<b>Education Provision</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Participants views</b>
<b>FG1</b>	Polio	Included	Direct inclusion	Positive school experiences. Doubtful of employability chances
<b>FG2</b>	Mental and intellectual difficulties	Included	Transition from special unit	Positive with the process of inclusion
<b>FG3</b>	Spina bifida	Included	Transition from special unit	Mixed feelings regarding teachers and facilities
<b>FG4</b>	Partial blindness	Included	Direct inclusion	Reservations regarding teacher's skills. Changed to 4 different schools
<b>FG5</b>	Cerebral Palsy	Included	Transition from special unit	Questioned teacher's skills and social support. 2 school moves
<b>FG6</b>	Mental and intellectual difficulties	Integrated	Partial inclusion	Expressed concerns of bullying from non-disabled peers
<b>FG7</b>	Mental and intellectual difficulties	Integrated	Transition from segregation	Positive about assessment and support in special unit
<b>FG8</b>	Cerebral Palsy	Included	Direct inclusion	Mixed feelings with issues of safeguarding and suitability of facilities
<b>FG9</b>	Medical condition/ Hearing impairment	included	Direct inclusion	Positive with school efforts but not with government support
<b>FG10</b>	Down's Syndrome	Included	Segregation- integration- inclusion	Uncertain about interactions with teachers and non-disabled peers.

Although this study did not concentrate on placement in special schools, the evidence presented by the participants suggests that it is an approach adopted in Kenya as FG10 indicated that their child started in special school before being integrated into mainstream school.

## **4.1 Teacher knowledge of disability and special educational needs**

The first theme of the Findings from the study revealed that teachers have the overall responsibility of welcoming children with SEN in inclusive classrooms. Therefore, it is essential to establish teachers' understanding of disability and SEN in order to interpret their ability and readiness to support children with SEN in inclusive classrooms. Knowledge and understanding of disabilities was found influenced by three factors, namely: characteristics of the learners, types of disability and stereotypes and labels given by society. A more detailed account of this finding is discussed in the next section.

### **4.1.1 Understanding based on physical characteristics**

The findings of the current study illustrate that teachers understand some physical characteristics that indicate disability, rather than the umbrella understanding that covers impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. Although the idea of inclusive classrooms was launched over 20 years ago as a new agenda for educating children with SEN (Reindal, 2016), understanding of disability based on observable physical characteristics and limitations has meant that teachers have not been able to develop more inclusive strategies for responding to children's special learning needs in mainstream schools, as ST16:17 explanation show:

Children with problems in their body, e.g. using hands, limbs, learners with a mental problem or low reasoning ability. They go to a special school because of these challenges like mental and physical challenges.

This statement above indicates the primary functions, visible differences and potential capabilities. Disability was explained as adverse effects, functional limitations and the disadvantages experienced as a result of a medical condition, thus revealing: "Children who are different and suffer from a condition" (PT4:5). Other effects mentioned were missing on activities such as participation in games, as noted by ST9:64 or carrying out experiments in the laboratory, as suggested by ST17:90.

In addition, research participant ST12:49 identified observable physical differences by explaining "we realise they are different when they are already admitted in the school" Such a view by teachers justifies a traditional approach to disabilities that creates attitudinal barriers against the meaningful participation of children with SEN in inclusive schools (see

3.4.1). Indeed, such variation of children with SEN as “different” concerning their experiential, functional and bodily states raises the question of whether mainstream schools can deny enrolment if they have prior knowledge of learners academic and social needs. The Basic Education Act underscores the position of the government on accessibility against the backdrop of rapid changes in education:

protection of every child against discrimination and right of every child in a public school to equal standards of education including the medium of instructions used in schools for all children of the same educational level (RoK, 2013:11 ).

Nonetheless, use of the terms “different” or “normal” is liable to a variety of interpretations, leading to deficit thinking and discrimination and one that undermines presence in mainstream schools (Norwich, 2008). For example, PT4:5 pointed out that those who “suffer from a condition that prevents them from doing normal things like normal children”. The danger of assuming deficit thinking is the focus on learners’ ‘weakness rather than their strengths’ (Gorski, 2011:2). Participants’ responses appeared concentrated on what was negatively different rather than abilities or strengths the learners could bring to mainstream education. For example, as PT4: 5 observed:

Children who are not able-bodied [sic], who cannot do things that are done by the able-bodied. You can observe them and see they have SEN or mental problems.

An outstanding issue emerging from this finding relates specifically to participants comparing children with SEN with non-disabled peers, in an attempt to show difference (see section 3.4.1). The next Table 16 demonstrates how participants expressed this idea:

Table 16: The notion of normalcy

Code	Comment
PT2:3	...who cannot do some of the things that are done by the normal [sic].
PT4:5	...prevents them from doing <i>normal</i> things like <i>normal</i> children [sic].
PT6:7	...children who cannot perform duties/roles that are performed by <i>normal</i> children. [sic].
ST16:17	...they cannot perform their academic work like normal students [sic].

Table 16 demonstrates the teachers’ notion of normalcy, with most participants using the word “normal” “us” several times in reference to children with SEN or, in comparison to non-disabled peers, referred to children with SEN as “others”. By defining some learners as “normal”, it can be interpreted that teachers understood disability as “not normal”, probably viewing children with SEN unequal to non-disabled peers. In other words, children with SEN are considered as incorrectly placed in the mainstream school, as ST13:68 articulated: “I don’t think they can fit here”. The suggestion that children with SEN cannot do things like non-disabled children is a construction commonly found in teachers in schools and brings to the forefront the deep structure of inequalities and disabling features in and within society in which children with SEN have to surmount to access inclusive education (Oliver, 1996; 2017).

The teachers’ understanding of disability highlights the importance of recognising how the lives of children with SEN may increasingly be disabled by insufficient knowledge or school limitations as an excuse to deny education. Perception arising from disability as a problem was noted with some participants such as PT7:8, ST12:13 who said disability is a problem, ST16:17 referred to disability as mental problems, while PT5:42 described behaviour problems. Apart from observable differences, the idea of disability as a problem could also be influenced by the societal perception of disability. The teacher’s comments raise a difficult threshold question about the extent to which the “problem of disability” is constructed in mainstream schools and how opportunities of interaction between the learner and the environment are denied because of this problem.

Data analysis revealed participants trying to group children with SEN into different categories, some of which were seen as having attributes teachers were not willing to accommodate. For example, PT6:7 associated severe needs in schools with those children who require high need teacher support in the classroom. Patnaik and others (2011) explain that a relationship exists between severe and mild disabilities, which is associated with dependency on others for support and physical restrictions that call for special services. ST9:154 proposed a category of children with complex chronic conditions that require constant school absence and regular hospital appointments. The understanding of categories was further exemplified by ST15:160 who said that:

They need physiotherapy and regular check-ups. These students need special care which can only be given in a special school.

As can be seen, teachers categorised children as having individual attributes of incapacity and dependence. However, all children, with or without disabilities, learn through their interactions with other people and gain experiences in various environments such as in schools. As observed from the findings, being *different* which was coupled with disability *problem*, affected participation in different environments such as mainstream classes. Subsequently, due to these perceived problems, teachers suggested alternative education placement in special schools, rather than broad and balanced educational provision in mainstream classes. ST13:50 succinctly illustrated that “Teachers cannot cope”. Moreover, most teachers were found to mention difficulties with teaching children defined as having a disability, as evident from ST17:162’s comment that it was difficult for the teacher, an opinion also supported by PT6:151 who said lack of facilities made it difficult to teach them.

Moreover, it appeared participants predicted challenges for teaching children with SEN before enrolment in their classrooms, as explained by ST13:194 who said that inclusion could give the teacher some difficulties due to the learner’s disability. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) states that fear of inclusion results from lack of knowledge and experience of diversity in mainstream classes which could affect teachers’ commitment and acceptance of the policy of inclusion. As opposed to the expectations of this study, participants recommended special schools as the best option for access to education. By suggesting special education participants were speculative that the place of education for those in receipt of additional academic support is in special schools.

Views that special school placement is meant explicitly for control of challenges was widely shared by a majority of teachers an opinion strengthened by PT7:44 who stated that:

...teachers find it hard to control them in class especially if they have special needs, that's why they should be admitted to special school.

The above interpretation is contrary to that of Mittler (2013) who cautioned against perpetuating the view that some students need to be segregated because of their difficulties, since segregation exerts a disproportionate negative influence on education systems, to the detriment of all children. Reindal (2016) shares a similar view on understanding special needs not as something dependent on a lack of abilities and personal challenges, but as result of context.

#### **4.1.2 Models of Disability**

The medical model is recognizable in this study from the focus given to the child's special needs rather than a focus on society and how it has failed the child. Additionally, the different understandings of disability are seen through difference, limitations and recommendations for placement in special schools, within or outside the mainstream school for children with SEN (see section 2.3). As observed, most teachers' conceptualisation of disability as a personal problem was dominant, while differences were seen to result in social consequences, such as access to education in mainstream schools or low interactions with peers. Data analysis highlights that teachers used the models interchangeably and unconsciously in their responses. However, consideration of participants e.g. teachers (see Table 16) reveals the dominance of the medical model which underlies the philosophy of segregation as seen in special schools (Avramidis and Norwich 2016; Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009).

Teachers were found to understand disability from an individual limitation perspective and from conditions intrinsic to the individual, which may reduce chances of inclusion. Parents were found to be more emphatic about the right of access to appropriate learning opportunities and belonging to a friendly school community guided by the principle of equality, which is evidence of the social model view of disability. Regarding specific disabilities such as social and emotional behaviour difficulties (SEBD), participants stated their understanding of the disorder not as a disability but rather a disruptive behaviour. Findings presented suggest teachers working with children who have SEBD is challenging, as PT5:42 had to say: "difficult to handle"; PT7:44 stated; "hard to control"; PT2 explained

teachers “have no control”. Furthermore, data analysis highlighted justification of exclusion solely based on learners’ impairments, which sometimes led to bullying in school as FG5:6 narrated in her experience with the teacher:

My daughter who is partially blind and has cerebral palsy is now in her first year at the university. She was a bright but very reticent child. She was severely traumatised by a teacher who used to punish her for being slow in writing and being left-handed. The teacher used to say “wewe ni kujifanya unajifanya”<sup>11</sup> so the other children nicknamed her “kujifanya.”<sup>12</sup>

The narration above reveals a teacher perception of disability as a personal problem, looking at what is wrong with a learner and trying to fix the learner to change the assumed impairment. Eventually the child becomes labelled and open to bullying from both teacher and peers. According to Avoke (2002), labelling children reflects an orientation towards the medical model of disabilities, deeply ingrained in some teachers. Considering the expected positive influence teachers have on student learning, the teacher above misguided understanding of left-handedness, which is not a disability and not a barrier to education. This finding is supported by Yoshikawa and others (2013) that teachers should work to foster academic and social-emotional readiness skills instead of trying to change learners.

Teachers have an obligation to work within a problem solving approach (Richards, 2016b), understanding each child's strengths and weaknesses as well as being approachable to help children with SEN (Armstrong, 2016b). This finding is in agreement with Oliver (2017) who also confirmed outcome of adverse effects from teachers’ attitudes culminates in learners being afraid to articulate their issues freely, without any fear or embarrassment. As this study found, the adverse effects are children being fearful of attending mainstream schools. Taken together, these findings highlight school experiences for children with SEN based on the medical model approach, where some teachers view disability as a “problem” that belongs to a disabled individual. Although the findings produced a negative attitude overall regarding teachers, some teachers were found to work positively and supportively with learners, based on a social model approach. This was evidenced by some participants, such as PT1:56 who considered the benefits, such as interaction skills, that all learners stand to gain by being in

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<sup>11</sup> Wewe ni kujifanya unajifanya is Swahili language for saying “stop pretending” or English equivalent of “stop acting up”.

<sup>12</sup> Kujifanya is a Swahili word meaning play-acting, but in this context, it is used to mean “actress”, the nickname used by non-disabled peers for the left-handed learner.

inclusive environments. Furthermore, most teachers suggested that education could be a powerful tool to unify the disabled and non-disabled learners through the possibility of learning from each other.

#### **4.1.3 The social construction of disability**

This study found ability was used in a normative and mostly undifferentiated sense to describe the capacity or ‘competence’ of children with SEN to perform a task, such as the “ability” to walk, talk, read and write within the social context, as exemplified by ST13:14. The findings of the study produced varying results as to how society and institutions create a relationship between disability and ability. Most participants commented in a way suggesting that, despite the positive values demanded in communities, social structures such as schools have created ‘handicaps’ out of children with SEN, based on their physical and biological characteristics. The outcome is the unspoken social construction of ability in education that has pushed children with SEN to the margins of education and created clear distinctions between disability and ability, success and failure, performers and slow learners.

##### **(i) Social construction based on ability and disability**

Exploring education and disability, this study found shared attitudes, values and societal beliefs about disability as a socially constructed phenomenon. Teachers demonstrated a common formulation of two polarities of children: those with abilities and those without. Mainstream classes were found to be constructed specifically for learners with abilities who could perform tasks independently without any adult support, while special education was meant specifically for learners missing such abilities and needing adult support and specialised services to carry out some classroom tasks. As PT1:56 said, “help to do things” or ST13: 68 talking of “extra support”. The socially constructed notion of ability is reflected through separation in schooling and economic ability, as said in the observation made by ST17:180:

Schools in Kenya should be structured in such a way that they cater to all children without such discrimination as rich or poor, disabled or not disabled

As the remark suggests, there appears to be a noticeable disparity between wealth and status and ability and disability existent in Kenya, which is likely to cause discrimination for some

children within communities. Children from privileged backgrounds are probably advantaged with quality education, unlike those from deprived backgrounds, vulnerable, underprivileged or disabled. This finding is of interest to this study in terms of the conceptualisation of the duality of education and culture and the impact this has on educational provision for children with SEN. Labelling results from the conceptualisation that special schools do not conform to the standard of mainstream schools is strengthened by the practice of separating disabled children from mainstream classes/schools. Therefore, the category of school that a child attends defines the label. ST10:65 confirmed the difference between mainstream schools and special schools by suggesting that mainstream schools are “performing schools”. From this remark, it can be posited that special schools are labelled as “non-performing” schools, with minimal teaching or learning and whereby the only conceptualisation of performance that was valued was the attainment of academic qualifications.

These findings seem to be consistent with the research of Muuya (2002), who found the traditional aims of special education such as containment and care, prominent over those of a broad and balanced educational provision. Exploration of data highlights mainstream teachers social construction of special schools as a wide-ranging reception class aiming to develop skills such as ADLs, understanding and attitudes in preparation for inclusion. Consequently, the systemic approach in school categorisation appears to strengthen societal comprehension of disability and emphasise individual differences. These findings corroborate the ideas of ST17:180 and PT1:38 regarding emphasis of individual variations and the extent of teachers’ construct of disability, as ST9:64 illustrated:

We prefer disabled students with mild disabilities being admitted to a regular school because this gives them an opportunity to compete with the non-disabled students.

As described in this quote, the spectrum of participation ranges within a continuum of observable limitations said to be mild to more complex needs.

## **(ii) Success and failure**

The idea of competitiveness in the learning process is meant to enhance the level of achievement but impacts on the learning of children with SEN. The competitive factor has implications for developing an inclusive school since, based on such a practice, students who

cannot match the competition are seen as failures rather than having their diversity of needs recognised. Based on this finding, it appears that children with SEN not only have shortage of equal opportunities in society, but the individual difference is judged from a diagnostic perception, as evidenced by ST12:13 who stated that children with SEN have low mental capacity and are slow in learning. Similarly, ST12:67 emphasised that since “they are slow learners there is no point in being in a mainstream school”. These findings are more intertwined with teachers labelling all children with SEN as below average capacity, lacking comprehension and having learning difficulties. Ainscow and Messiou (2018) suggest that such terms are conclusive, yet there are several causes of intellectual difficulties. Environmental factors also need consideration, since they are contributory factors with effects on learner performance (Kauffman, 2007). The observations made by the participants above (ST12:13 and ST12:67) support the hypothesis that social construction of disability has impacted on teachers construct of human differences, a tool they have used to exclude children with SEN from mainstream schools.

**(iii) Influence of traditional beliefs and religion to construct disability**

As this study has established, the influence of some traditional Kenyan beliefs, speculative ideologies accentuate teachers and communities perspective of looking at the causes of disability from a cultural and biblical point of view regarding the status of learners with SEN. These labels prevail in almost all spheres of life. For example, FG3:38 mentioned the puzzling question his son was asked by other children when first enrolled in mainstream school, as exemplified below:

- Were you bewitched that you are like this?
- Are you cursed?
- What happened to you?
- Have you ever tried being prayed for?
- Have all treatments failed?

Exploration of the above questions revealed a great interpersonal social construction resulting in a mostly deterministic approach to disability. The physical attributes and imperfections of the body stand out in the questions posed to the learner. However, unlike teachers, children appear curious but not cynical, exploring why one amongst them was different from the rest and suggesting that something must have happened to cause disability. In other words, suggesting that an external force must be involved. The finding is consistent

with results found previously by KISE (2002) which found the idea of being prayed for prevalent in communities, and in tandem with the religious portrayal of disabled people as deficient or incomplete. Moreover, the population of Kenya is 80% Christian. Hence it seems possible that the idea of healing is influenced by the Levitical biblical code in the Old Testament, in Leviticus 11 – 15 relating to Laws of Purity. The code advances that priests with blemishes and other impairments cannot make sacrifices at temple altars, suggesting that disability is a curse from God (see sub-section 5.2.4).

Nevertheless, churches that teach this doctrine have been criticised by some researchers such as Masakhwe (1999 in Otieno, 2009). In my previous masters study research (2008) I also found that religion could be a significant reinforcing factor of contradictory, social construction as it suggests it is possible to heal disabilities and having disability intrinsically means one lacks individual worth. My research showed that such a construction of disability works negatively on efforts to educate communities on causes and prevention of disabilities. Although the Bible portrays disability negatively, inclusive education demands people view every individual, with or without a disability, as complete (Kauffman et al. 2018; Shakespeare and Watson, 2002), and as God's creation of diversity (KISE, 2002). Participant FG6:61 confirmed the association between religion and disability by saying that:

I think churches should stop confusing people that disabilities can be healed. People should be told that some limitation cannot be cured, but there are alternative ways to make it easy for everyone involved.

This study has been unable to demonstrate the outcome of healing and prayer mentioned by both participants. However, it can be explained that people probably look for healing to fill the gap of completeness as defined by society. It is common place in Kenya to hear concerted announcements in the media asking people to take their family members for prayers and healing in large religious meetings, with a promise that the blind will receive sight, the lame walk and the deaf hear (Matthew 11: 4)<sup>13</sup>. Although there is the potential for bias, these statements combined give the understanding that communities believe in treatment and healing of disabilities and are a product of individual or ancestral wrong doing. Another possibility is that religion and media influence understanding of disability and the relationships non-disabled people build with those disabled including everyday interactions.

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<sup>13</sup> New international version bible

FG4:51 explains this understanding by suggesting that barriers to understanding SEN are caused by the media's social constructions of disability in the following illustration:

...books, TV and newspapers create social exclusion by depicting beauty as when one is not disabled. I have never seen adverts showing a disabled person except when they are advertising polio vaccine.

This comment highlights the barriers created implicitly or explicitly by the press by replicating existing inequality and prejudice, marginalising disabled people and increasing disregard. Although the Catholic Church in Kenya is at the forefront of creating social awareness and supporting disability initiatives such as education and healthcare, findings revealed other Christian churches such as Evangelical Pentecostal do not offer the same support. Many of these churches work alongside the media and have played a role in promoting inconsistencies that depict disability as undesirable. The Pentecostal churches interpretation of difference, both from the Bible and the social construction of causes of disabilities and their meaning, is a bias that is unfortunate (Schuelka, 2013). In this case, religion seems to work against the fulfilment of education for children with SEN and affects positive collaboration between churches and schools on education provision. The roles of religion and media are discussed in more in-depth in section 5.2.4 This combination of findings provides support for the conceptual premise that although social constructionism can be mostly deterministic on approaches to inclusive education in some Kenyan communities, it can also be adapted to broaden policy deliberations and to give further support to changing negative attitudes, including discrimination.

#### **4.1.4 Discrimination and stereotypes of disability**

An interesting finding is that teachers who participated in this study were unaware of their inductive approach to SEN, a factor observable from the language they used in presenting their perspective of disability. Attitude and stereotypes were established as particularly influential in the initial decision of inclusion for children with physical impairments in a school owing to the visible nature of a disability. Analysis of data revealed unhelpful construction identities of disability and SEN individualities. Also, data revealed some disabling stereotypes within the teachers' lexis that commonly recurred, as summarised in Table 17 that follows.

Table 17: Socially constructed stereotypes

<b>Terminology</b>	<b>Teachers stereotypes</b>	<b>Parents Language</b>	<b>The terminology used in SEN Draft Policy (RoK, 2009)</b>
Normal	11; 17; 20; 26; 27; 31; 39; 40; 41; 46; 58; 63; 65; 66; 86; 92; 96; 100; 106;132; 173; 195; 209; 201 (used 24 times)	Used normal or different: 40; 42; 51	Either: Disabled/not Disabled (appears on pages 6; 13; 21) or non-disabled (appears on pages 34; 53)
Abnormality:	27; 103.	Not used	Not mentioned
Living with disabilities or living with a disability	23; 80; 108; 142; 156. (used 4 times)	Used with disabilities or disability  22; 34; 36; 46; 51; 56; 57; 58; 59; 60 (used 10 times)	persons/learners/children with disabilities/without disabilities  (appears on pages 5; 13; 17; 21; 37)
Disability problems	13;14; 16;17; 44;50;86;89;107; 139;151;164 ;196 (used 13 times)	Not used	Not used
Handicapped or disabled	53; 94; 102; 147; 164 (used 4 times)	Not used	Disabled (learner/pupil/student/child)
Retarded/low reasoning/ mental handicap/low mental capacity:	164; 13; 15; 17 (used 4 times)	Not mentioned	Mental handicap/s (appears on pages 17;18; 39)
Mental problem/s:	16; 5	Not used	Mental challenges  Learning disabilities (LD)
The blind, inability to see	53; 201	Used the blind or partially blind: 6	Blind learner, visually impaired learner, partially sighted people, Low vision
Crippled or physical disabilities or	7, 3; 15; 49	Crippled: Used disabled: 37; 60	Physical impairments
Disability problems	5; 9, 12, 13,14; 16; 17; 50; 86;89,107; 139, 151, 164, 196, (used 15 times)	Cited ability challenges: 46	Challenges, difficulties, barriers
Extreme behaviour	6	Challenging behaviour: 39	Emotional and behavioural disorders (appears on page 18, maladjusted children: page 14)
Behaviour problem	42,		
Difficult behaviour	44		
Good behaviour/manners	59		
Poor hearing inability to talk/hear:	9; 14	Poor hearing, inability to talk hear: Not used	Deaf or learner with hearing impairment, hard of hearing
Confined to a wheelchair/bound	89 189	Wheelchair user: 38; 54	Mobility aid or wheelchair user.

As Table 17 indicates, the term “normal” was extensively used to distinguish between learners with or without disabilities. Furthermore, this study found negative stereotypes were seen to determine how learners are treated and made to feel in mainstream schools. It was found that learners were divided into two groups; one group of non-disabled learners (all deemed suitable for mainstream school since these learners were perceived as having no problems) and other disabled group (being less accepted in school due to being different). These findings may help to understand the narrowed view that there is a single standard expected for all children in mainstream education. Perhaps PT8:27 was more explicit than other participants, describing inclusion as: “children who are normal learning together with those children with abnormality”. This comment highlights that teachers used labels and negative constructions to talk about learners who find it difficult to cope with the curriculum or do tasks that are expected of all learners, as exemplified by PT1:164 who emphasised:

Disabled learners should be given special exams because some of them are somehow retarded.

An interesting finding is teachers using descriptors that are devaluing and discriminative against children with SEN, as highlighted in Table 17 the Kenya SEN policy (MoE, 2009) avoids such stereotypes by attempting to use acceptable disability friendly language. For this reason, some of the issues emerging from the analysis are the plausible link between teachers stereotyping, prejudice and stigma being caused, to an extent, by SEN draft policy failure to suggest that the correct terminology is adopted in all areas of educational institutions. The variety of terminology as used in Table 17 indicates a gap of standard terms. Although disability friendly, it is probable that adoption of a range of terminology is likely to cause stigma and discrimination (e.g. 'with', 'or without', 'not-disabled'). It is also probable that if the policy documents used clear language such as disabled or non-disabled, it would help to reduce confusion amongst teachers.

Adoption of a variety of terminology was observed with teachers when highlighting the unique requirements of children with SEN that impact on how these children access school facilities. A standard reference amongst most participants was “toilets” creating the inability to differentiate between the regular toilets and the accessible ones meant to enable children with SEN gain prompt access to facilities. PT3:58 illustrates this point clearly by describing “disabled toilets”, while it was evident with PT5:78’s suggestion of “disability toilet”. In reality, the participants meant “accessible toilets” which might be different from regular

toilets in terms of available space, layout, equipment, flooring, lighting and location. Findings from this study show that SEN draft policy did not consider accessible toilet provision despite being aware of their fundamental requirement for some children with SEN in schools. Results obtained by Suharto et al. (2016) confirm the association between language, discrimination and stereotypes and reinforces that language plays a fundamental role in reflecting how a community perceives their disabled people, creating both vicious and virtuous circles in dynamics of interactions with disabled people (see section 4.1.3).

Regarding stereotypes, this study has established that teachers considered themselves to be outside the disabled group, as projected by PT58 “it’s not a bad idea to have them in normal schools” a projection of children with SEN as helpless, limited to receiving favour to be in education. Nonetheless, labels resulting from such constructions prevailed in almost all interactions in schools and communities as established by PT6:25 “they can be enrolled in this school if they have a mild disability. Otherwise, they should go to a separate classroom with a special teacher”. A similar attitude was identified with other teachers, as exemplified by ST12:49 who said, “we realised *they* are different when *they* were already admitted to the school”. Moreover, talking about how they include children with SEN, ST13:50 noted:

...more problems to be with them; that is having them included in normal schools

Solvang (2000) informs the findings of this study regarding the use of *us/them*, which appears regularly in teacher responses. Solvang establishes this as a discourse used to represent a difference between identity and equality/inequality. Moreover, it demonstrates power relations that evoke marginalisation and discrimination based on ideals of the ‘normate’ and ‘normality’ (ibid: 17). This discourse gives rise to ableism and disablism (Goodley, 2016). The group seen as *them* is relegated to a disadvantaged position, stereotyped and homogenised as a group of people with the same attributes (Lid and Solvang, 2016; Solvang, 2000). Regarding children with SEN, it appears that teachers considered they were subordinate due to their differing from expected normality and used the various stereotyping labels, resulting in discrimination.

## **Stigma and prejudice**

Data analysis revealed that statements made by teachers resulted in prejudice and negative attitudes, specifically by using disabling stereotypes for learners. Data highlighted teachers' comments about unhappy learners in mainstream school. As ST12:67 said, some children with SEN ended up dropping out of school due to frustration. Exploration revealed children with SEN were indeed unhappy due to bullying, stigma and stereotypes used by teachers in inclusive schools, as suggested by parent FG4:36. This suggestion leads to wondering if discrimination and stigma are intentional or unintended. As observed, teachers made these discriminatory remarks while believing themselves to be supportive of all learners. The above finding is collaborated by a similar observation made by Fiske and others (2018) of the disability stereotypes model. Fiske and others also found that prejudice may carry overtones of compassion, sympathy, and even tenderness in some circumstances. Similarly, people may show a high level of warmth, suggesting a liking for individuals with a disability, but the language used does not necessarily show respect for disabled people. The authors suggest that sometimes discrimination is identified when teachers suggest lack of competence to justify detachment from children with SEN.

These findings identified that teachers were adopting the language and stereotypes when talking about SEN with a meaning of "us and them", which is exclusionary and patronising, exemplified by ST16:53 saying "schools do not have criteria of admitting them". The language used by teachers was found to be prejudicial and a likely cause of stigma and discrimination which is a significant barrier to academic and social inclusion. The stereotypes teachers adopted signal how they responded to children with SEN and constantly reminded of their difference. This finding has significant implications for improving teachers understanding that, although children may have things in common, no two learners are alike. Therefore teachers need to develop more positive language and perspectives of inclusivity of children with SEN.

## 4.2 Teacher understanding of inclusion and inclusive practices

The second theme sought to examine the participants' conceptualisation, perception and views on inclusion and inclusive practices in mainstream classrooms. The specific aim was to identify teachers' understanding of inclusive education, in order to interpret their ability and readiness to support children with SEN in inclusive classrooms using a range of skills and learning styles. Five teachers revealed knowledge of inclusion education for all children in mainstream schools but did not specify whether all children were learning together in the same inclusive classes. Interestingly, the teachers were found to describe inclusive practice using the language of integration, accompanied by educational decisions based on the more traditional idea of special education. In places where the inclusive trend is long overdue, proponents of inclusion (such as Ferguson, 2008) have suggested that knowing the differences between the two terms is important because it can help advocating for fundamental systemic and school efforts to create inclusive schools for all children. Table 18 captures, in summary, the responses of the actual participating teachers on the understanding of inclusion.

Table 18: Teacher understanding of inclusion

<b>Participating Teachers</b>	<b>Finding</b>	<b>Participant belief of best location for children with SEN</b>
Five	Considered inclusion as the process of children with disabilities and without disabilities learning together in the same school, same classroom.	Mainstream
Nine	Respondents considered inclusion as children with disabilities and those without learning together in the same school, but in different classrooms.	Special Unit
Two	Held the notion that inclusion is supposed to take place in regular schools but aware that for now it only happens in special schools.	No suggestion
One	Suggested never having heard of inclusion in education	No suggestion

Table 18 highlights the differing views of teachers regarding inclusive education. These views are representative of contradictions since Salamanca Statement signified by lack of shared understanding of what inclusion requires (Slee, 2011). A gap in mutual understanding has led to divergent views and tensions (see sub-section 3.3.1) globally nations including Kenya but also globally (Stubbs, 2007). The current study found differences in teachers' understanding of inclusive education with accompanied divergent views reflected by polarities that focused on:

- Location of the learner
- Integrated approach
- Level of functional skills and adaptive behaviour
- The process of inclusion

Despite the widespread advocacy of inclusive education (Banks et al. 2016), teachers were found to view inclusive classrooms with some apprehension, as seen in their interpretation of inclusion. It appears that teachers considered how inclusive classrooms influence the academic and social growth of a child with SEN, but were also found to create barriers, as explained in the following section.

#### **4.2.1 Location of the learner**

An in-depth analysis of data reveals that most participants understood inclusion mainly as 'the location of the learners' mainly whether educational provision and services were to be provided in mainstream school or in special education. Participants were more concerned with location of the learner, as opposed to enabling learners to participate academically and socially within inclusive schools. The mainstream school level is where children with SEN will gain academic experiences and social interactions with non-disabled peers, but teachers felt the children with SEN were different and needed a different location.

A contradiction of location was also observed between the mainstream classroom, the integrated approach and segregated special school, showing that teachers were uncertain of the appropriate location outside the mainstream school where they could get "specialist teaching" as commented by PT7:8. Other findings highlight observable contradictions between inclusive schools and special schools, with both being considered as appropriate locations when inclusion was clearly the subject of discussion. This contradiction could arise

from the presence of special units in mainstream schools. The proposition of ST14:69 suggested a combination of provision for children with SEN by saying that:

They can start at the special unit annexed to the mainstream school then move to regular classroom, you know, some sort of combination.

From the above, it appears that traditional education prevailed with suggestions of children being taught in two groups within the same location: one for disabled learners and the other for non-disabled learners. Furthermore, some teachers appeared to perceive the location of inclusive education by distinguishing different levels of disability and acknowledging levels of limitation with mild disability lesser than for those with moderate or severe disability. An interesting emergent finding is that despite the location debate, participant did not mention how to respond to individual learner needs once the location was identified or methods established to ensure learners with SEN achieve their best in education. It reveals sufficient attention is paid to the context of location the children's needs should be met often failing to discuss how the school itself might have exacerbated, or even created, those same needs (Galloway, 2018).

In addition, the location issue suggests selective inclusion, which can be termed as a negative attitude towards inclusive schools and teaching. It appears mainstream school teachers in the current study, insufficient awareness of their role in teaching children with SEN in order to be effective citizens, as seen in the hesitancy to include these children in mainstream class learning environments. However, when teachers were explicitly asked about their willingness to include children with SEN within their classrooms, participants acknowledged entry to school of children with SEN depended on the category of disability, as PT6: 25 said: “unless they have mild disability”. This comment underscores participants’ reluctance to include learners with severe SEN (see section 5.2). Additionally, capability in inclusive classrooms, as ST12:67 drew attention to:

They should be admitted in mainstream schools with lower marks because of the challenges they undergo and if they are slow learners.

This finding raises intriguing questions of children with SEN being perceived as incapable of learning or depicted as less capable. It appears that inclusive education has been approached with attitudes that stifle creation of positive learning environments for children with SEN.

## 4.2.2 Integrated approach

Some participants were found to use inclusion interchangeably with the integrated approach, meaning that the two approaches were used synonymously. However, when the integrated approach was differentiated from inclusive education using the terms regular/mainstream or special units', participants reasonably understood the two approaches (see section 3). It is interesting to note that an integrated system of schooling was found to be an approach favoured by most participants in this study. For example, ST11:30 indicated:

...learners can use the same gate but go to different classes.

Therefore, participants understood inclusion as a special school annexed within the mainstream school to cater for the education and individual needs of children with SEN. More in-depth analysis revealed the positive endorsement was a result of the common belief of an integrated approach efficiently responding to the diverse needs of most children with SEN as contrasted to studying in mainstream schools. For this reason, most teachers and some parents, had positive attitudes to this approach, as demonstrated by ST13:32:

We have a few of them included, but I prefers integration rather than inclusion for effective learning in special classrooms.

However not all participants who endorsed an integrated approach were clear, as an apparent mix-up of the two notions was evident with some teachers, as denoted by ST9:28:

Inclusion refers to having students with special needs who do not want to go to a special school, so they can learn together with able-bodied in the same school although different classrooms.

Participants went further to highlight the benefits of integration, for example FG6:2:

My child studies in a local integrated unit. Appears to learn much as compared to the previous experience of learning in the regular schools.

A similar idea was resonated by most teachers who supported the process of children with SEN learning in different classrooms. Ainscow (2006) made similar findings of integrated approach to education being seen to enable children with SEN access mainstream schools but learn in separate classrooms while socially interacting with non-disabled peers on a daily basis. However, as study revealed limited socialisation opportunities that only happened

during out-of-class hours or in PE lessons. In this case, inclusion as referred by the participants highlights children with SEN only get intermittent social experiences but denied academic opportunities with peers. Further teachers' understanding was explained by ST15:70 as:

Inclusion is a welcome idea but most schools are not well prepared for children with SEN in terms of infrastructure and trained teachers to handle such cases. We can accommodate some of them if at all they are not severe cases [sic] but most of them are better off in special schools or units.

This comment highlights most teachers' emphasis on the notion of separateness but within special classes in regular schools rather than establishing inclusive classrooms for all children. Teachers should be instruments for enhancing the core values of inclusive education by providing access to education for all children. As established in this study, children with SEN were expected to show educational or social readiness for transfer from special unit to mainstream school, a principle that comes under the normalisation concept of education (Mittler, 2012; 2000). Exploration of this phenomenon revealed that all students with or without SEN are expected to pass an enrolment exam before admission to mainstream primary schools, not only in Nyahururu Educational Zone but everywhere in Kenya, as demonstrated by FG1:44 who said that: "interviews to join regular primary schools should be abolished, it's not fair".

Other teachers supported with the notion of competitive enrolment to schools, PT1:56 was more categorical of the educational practice, provision and inclusion of children with SEN to mainstream school saying that: "most of them start from the special unit then, when there is improvement, they are assessed and are allowed to join the main school". The combinations of comments highlighting understanding of inclusion as a favour, integration pointed to segregation that is prevalent in Kenya. The idea of joining mainstream school on the basis of academic improvement led PT2:21 to comment:

...there are about three special units in this zone those children can transfer to any of the neighbouring schools such as A, B or C or any other when they improve.

The participant in this comment reveals the rigidity of the current approach adopted by mainstream schools that peg transition on performance similar to ST14:69 suggestion on entry level for mainstream schools. The suggestion children with SEN should be enrolled in

school through a process starting from special units could probably be attributed to reluctance to enrol children with SEN until the suitability of the learner and readiness to be in mainstream school is assessed. Such comments from the participants suggest rigidity and inductive reasoning that mainstream primary schools are not ready to enrol learners directly from home to school. Although children with SEN are entitled to access secondary education same as non-disabled peers (RoK, 2009), this study entry criterion was based on the results of primary school national exam rather than entry assessment such as individual interview, as in the case of primary schools. However, retention in secondary education was found determined by performance in progressive exams, making it unattainable for most children with SEN. ST10:65 acknowledged this situation in the following statement:

To begin with to be admitted to this secondary school is not easy, they must have passed their national primary exam exceptionally well to join a performing school like this one.

This view was also articulated by PT6:61, who maintained:

The truth is, mainstreams classrooms are very competitive and will always remain like that as long as children continue doing exams.

These comments help to illustrate how demanding it is for children with SEN to access education, retention and smooth transition within levels due to the competitive nature of education in Kenya. This study found secondary school inaccessible most children with SEN since most were said to perform poorly in the qualifying national exam. Conversely, even if they had the opportunity to enrol it was believed, they are unlikely to be happy in the secondary school environment, as suggested by ST10:65 who said: “they will be unhappy here”. Notwithstanding, some teachers cited external factors such as resources as a contribution to the exclusion witnessed in this study. Although primary schools were most affected by shortage of resources, they were found to be more disability friendly than secondary schools. ST13: 86 justified the current situation citing “lack materials and resources to teach them”. Nonetheless, children with SEN were more deprived of other services and facilities that led to inclusion and not just school learning resources.

Findings further revealed that children with SEN were missing in secondary schools because of internal factors. For example, teachers were said to be too busy to cater for individual needs, as articulated by ST13:211 in the following excerpt:

...teachers do not have time to attend to students as individuals

Equally, work load was used to justify exclusion with teachers suggesting they could not conduct supplementary teaching outside school hours due to leadership involvements and lack of extra classrooms. As ST15:70 suggested that teachers have leadership roles such as heading departments, games/music/drama coaching and preparing exams. Subsequently, secondary school education was underscored as a challenge for most children with SEN. Teachers being involved in a variety of activities outside actual teaching in the classroom highlights the need for support in school if they were to enrol and teach children with SEN. They also added that teachers require teaching assistants, support that is currently not available. ST13:68 added that secondary education, particularly science, may be too complicated to help manage students with SEN.

The introduction of special units using an integrated approach in response to the Salamanca Framework is consistent with the medical model of disability (see section 2.5.1). While most teachers were positive about inclusion, this study found most teachers in favour of an integrated approach pathway, as ST11:210 expressed in the following comment:

If they are included in regular schools the better so that they can learn and imitate the other *normal* students. They will learn good manners and participate in children's games

The above comment demonstrates teachers' attitudes, implying that children with SEN have some behaviour that is uncontrollable such as "bad manners". Analysis of data revealed a dynamic interplay between the practice of mainstream education and special education in the mainstream schools between 1994 when Kenya endorsed the Salamanca Statement and now. Not only was paucity of progress toward inclusive classrooms acknowledged by the participants of this study, but underrepresentation of children with SEN was also observed in mainstream school classrooms. This study found that teachers probably understand integration as inclusion because the government has established the integrated approach to education to give children with SEN greater educational opportunity to access education. This finding is supported by PT2:201's statement that the government should advocate for more special units to be established in all schools. However, most parents participating in this study also considered this approach as inclusion and went on to highlight its benefits, as Table 19 demonstrates.

Table 19: Parental views on the benefits of an integrated approach

Benefits		Statement	Participant	Outcome
Academic skills	Drawing	...support from teachers who are trained in special needs	FG2:22	-differentiated instruction
	Abstract concepts	...draw and build blocks ...	FG6:	-follow rules -supportive
		learn at their own pace in a special classroom	FG5:24	-teaching strategies
Adaptive behaviour skills <i>or</i>	Practical Skills	...now capable of doing quite a number of chores	FG6:2	-work -feel good -safety
		...can now talk, run and eat without assistance	FG7:3	-understand routines
Adaptive skill <i>or</i>	Social skills:	...socialize with able bodied children in the play-ground	FG5:24	-solve problems -understand others
		...getting used to seeing and being seen by other children	FG6:26	-reduced stigma
Adaptive and functioning skills	Conceptual skills:	...understanding of instructions in school and at home	FG6:2	-make decisions
		...learn to model expected social behaviour	FG7:27	-reduced stigma
Financial		...bursary and donations available	FG2:22	-better facilities

Table 19 above demonstrates that most parents have a positive regard for inclusion, as demonstrated by the benefits mentioned in the table that children with SEN have gained from sharing a school with non-disabled peers, namely social inclusion in the school and reduced stigma. However, as discussed in literature review (see section 2.1), the inclusive approach adopted in the schools is not really inclusion but integration. This confusion of the two approaches is explained by Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006; UNESCO, 2005 and Thompkins and Deloney (1995) who purport that the two approaches have given rise to a variety of contrasting understandings.

### 4.2.3 Level of functional and adaptive behaviour

The findings show that most teachers invariably correlated inclusion to limitations in the intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour often experienced by individuals with children with SEN. Adaptive behaviour, constructed broadly, includes skills that an

individual requires to meet personal needs and to be able to cope with the social and natural demands in ones' environment. Emphasis is on assessing how well an individual can function independently and the amount of additional support that is needed (Batshaw et al. 2007 in Westwood, 2010). As noted in the current study, inclusive practice was dependent on learner ability to function independently, without the requirement of any additional support, as ST15:70 said:

We can accommodate some of them if at all they are not severe cases, but most of them are better off in special schools.

This participant's comment demonstrates an assumption that inclusion was only suitable for learners with developed cognitive functioning and adaptive behaviour. Larrivee (2009) observes that teachers in primary and secondary schools consider a learner's ability to meet personal needs, control own behaviour and work cooperatively with others crucial. The findings emphasise that the possibility of inclusion or exclusion was dependent on practical skills needed to function and meet the demands of mainstream school environment, including the essential skills to manage self efficiently and independently. Similarly, this comment could explain the government of Kenya's bleak report that over one million students with disabilities are excluded from equitable educational opportunities with only 9% of students with disabilities attending a mainstream secondary school (MoE, 2008; 2018). Other participants' suggestions relating to inclusion were found to consider socialisation with non-disabled peers, as PT6:61 explained that "mainstream schools are very competitive"

This emphasises on schools' competitive nature highlights that teachers were unwilling to accommodate perceived deficits such poor performance and low ranking. Equally them to shaped assumptions about children with SEN can and cannot do. This finding may aid understanding that some children in Kenya are likely to be rejected from education due to the requirements of additional support. Additionally, the aforementioned competitive classrooms could result in biased assessment or indirect denial of access to mainstreams education. Moreover, there is a likelihood of teachers focusing their energy, time and resources on learners deemed to improve their standing, as was mentioned in ST14:105's response:

...we have no time for extra teaching or resources for them

In reference to inclusive classrooms, the teacher suggested being left with less time for individualised teaching for children who require extra support. This idea was also supported by PT6:61, who further advanced that children with SEN require an environment where they can “learn slowly without the normal rush in mainstream classroom”.

#### **4.2.4 The process to be used for inclusion**

Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners (UNESCO, 2009). Evidence from the current study shows participants lacked understanding of disabilities and the inclusive process. Participants’ were quick to identify the barriers that make the journey of inclusion long and challenging. From the various comments, attention was drawn to the progression children with SEN must follow to access mainstream education. Policy expositions and literature reviewed revealed no reference on the process to be used to guide access to mainstream education, including mechanisms for promoting diversity of all learners in the draft policy on SEN (RoK, 2009). For this reason, teachers were found to describe the process regarding progression from special school to placement in mainstream schools, rather than the process of making fundamental changes to create supportive mainstream schools that could address diversity of need. As such, teachers’ paucity in suggesting effective process could both enable children with SEN access to mainstream school and benefit school communities. Teachers placed importance on creating opportunities for children with SEN in accessing mainstream education through rigid pathways, an idea succinctly expressed by ST16: 179 who suggested:

...build special units within main school so that learners can start from there before moving to mainstream school. Transition to the main school can be done later after teachers establish their performance is improving

In clarifying the idea of inclusion, ST12: 49 cited the process of inclusion as a barrier to inclusive school and commented that “There is no standard used to admit them”. This observation is supported by findings made by Ainscow and others (2006) and Ainscow (2005) that lack of suitable inclusion process is intertwined with outcomes of exclusionary practice in mainstream schools. However, findings showed that teachers were confused regarding the process of transformation of schools and maintaining centres of learning that cater for all children (UNESCO, 2009), as PT3:22 specified:

...we do not know how to go about that process of suddenly having many disabled children in our classrooms.

This observation shows the participants are aware of needed practical guidance material for inclusion to make the smooth transition from special units to mainstream. However, more in-depth analysis shows none of the teachers established how inclusion could be introduced directly into mainstream schools without learners having to go through the commonly used progression from special unit to mainstream school. For this reason, PT3:22 was prompted to add that “we need help”, a comment that demonstrates participants’ awareness of the need for collaboration in creating successful schools where all children feel that they are truly a part of the school community (Ekemezie and Ezeh, 2015; UNICEF, 2010). However, according to PT3:22, “only the government of Kenya can help on inclusion matters by telling us the ideas to follow to be inclusive”. Without guidance, it appears that teachers had a plausible explanation justification for exclusion and hesitancy in making decisions for the education of children with SEN, challenges noted by Booth and Ainscow (2011), resulting from insufficient prior knowledge and planning at the enrolment stage. ST16: 53 confirmed this finding by suggesting that:

Schools do not have criteria for identifying children with SEN or admit them to schools... the MoE has no idea of who is disabled or not in mainstream school except maybe for blind learners in schools for the blind

As maintained above, schools appeared short of prior arrangements that ensure children with SEN can access and enjoy similar opportunities to other learners at school once admitted to a mainstream school, is of concern. Additionally, a notable ambivalence of the MoE is that it has not taken the initiative to offer an adaptable and flexible structure for developing and evaluating inclusive schools (Gachago, 2008). This leaves participants to conclude that progress towards inclusive schools will be slow, as PT4:149 maintained when saying the government is slow in supporting the creation of inclusive schools (there is no real support).

In this study, participants support the MoE view that it is difficult to plan for inclusive schools (MoE, 2009). This finding differs from the neighbouring country of Uganda, which has shown commitment by planning for inclusion and decentralizing SEN Programmes (Emong and Eron, 2016; Kristensen et al. 2006). To ensure contact with all children with SEN, schools in the country were decentralized and grouped into clusters of 15-20 schools. Each of the clusters has a Special Needs Education Co-ordinator (SENCO) and every school

has a coordinating teacher assigned with the responsibility of linking teachers, students and communities. A similar outcome in Kenya needs to be seen in the context of Uganda's progressive legal and non-legal frameworks on education aimed at mainstreaming disability (Emong and Eron, 2016). The development in Uganda highlights the need for substantial change in thinking while planning for inclusive schools. Supporting this finding, ST11:156 stated:

... 'There is much more to be done, the government will need to change its focus'...

The comment above suggests that despite slow progress, effective outcomes can be actualised by progressive rights-based legislation in education if planning for the inclusion process is undertaken.

#### **4.2.5 Parental understanding of inclusion**

In comparison, parents in the focus group were found to support inclusion, although data suggests they were more inclined towards integrated education in special units for children with learning difficulties. Of the ten parents involved, only one parent favoured separate special school by identifying special schools as providing all-round support based on social, academic and funding factors, as opposed to mainstream schools as was suggested by FG2:22, who commented that:

I would prefer inclusive schooling but in special school, the child will be more comfortable with other children with disabilities and will get a lot of support from teachers who are trained in special needs. Also, there are more bursary and donations available.

This evidence presented by the parents indicates they did not earnestly pursue mainstream classrooms due some conditions they felt would make their children uncomfortable. FG2:37' comment:

I pick a negative attitude from teachers when my son misses school to attend hospital appointments. The teachers instead of being empathetic of my son missing classes' school due to illness start the conversation by reminding me what my son misses while away. They say my child has to work double hard probably to cover for being slow in class or his disability.

This comment helps to illustrate the uncertainty teachers can create from insufficient understanding of disability and inclusion. Probably the inductive reasoning parents encountered with teachers was also a contributory factor to lukewarm consideration for mainstream schools. As the above quote exemplifies, instances of illness-related absence reflected teachers as lacking empathy and appearing not to understand that, same as other pupils, children with SEN will occasionally be absent from school. However, teachers have a duty to encourage on punctuality and school attendance since student absences from school is associated with low learner engagement, academic failure, and dropout (Quin, 2017). Parents placed more emphasis on participation in society, not just the academic benefits that education offers. Thus, there was strong apprehension regarding special residential schools as encouraged by teachers in this study, since they pose the risk of disconnection and detachment between families and within communities (Kiarie, 2014). Parents' views of inclusive schools shifted attention away from the functional limitations and problems stressed by the teachers based on the medical approach of disability, to positive constructions of social inclusion and participation in mainstream society (Oliver, 2017; Barnes and Mercer, 2005). Some parents understanding of inclusion is shown in Table 20 below:

Table 20: Perspectives of parents on inclusion.

<b>People</b>	<b>STATEMENT</b>
FG5:8	Inclusive mainstream schools are easily accessible since every village has a school/s It is easy to respond to child-related emergencies when a child is included in the neighbouring school
FG10:10	Gives the child independence to walk to school, among other benefits such as walking with friends.
FG3:16	Interaction and support from non-disabled peers.
FG7:18	Provides opportunities for children to socialise and learn from each other, thus shared benefit from diversity.
FG10:23	It is easier to get admission in mainstream school because one does not need assessment, unlike special school which has a complicated process of enrolment.
FG1:31	Gives reality of life, which special schools lack due to overprotection.
FG5:5	Inclusive schools enable role-modelling

From the above observations, it is demonstrated that parents' understanding of inclusion was not necessarily academic access to learning, but rather the role of the school and the environment regarding their well-being and their independent living.

### **4.3 Perceived barriers to inclusion**

Data analysis produced the third theme which helped identify minor barriers such as outreach for hard-to-reach children who live in situations difficult to engage or access such as street children, rigid curriculum, quality assurance and monitoring, social and economic factors and level of decentralisation. These factors were found to be external or internal to the school (see section 2.6). However, data analysis showed they overlap and thread into each other across this thesis and which I have summarised into four key barriers, namely:

1. Perceived teacher related factors
2. Views on school related factors
3. Understanding of learner related factors
4. Views on systemic and organisational factors

It is these four barriers that are discussed in the following section.

#### **4.3.1 Perceived teacher related factors**

Inclusive education introduces the approach of teachers educating all children together rather than the practice of segregating children with SEN from mainstream schools. The central role of the teacher is to promote inclusion, reduce underachievement and encourage participation for children with SEN any of whom have difficulties in learning (Rouse, 2008). This meant teachers were not equipped to differentiate instruction or guarantee an appropriate inclusive process. This study identified three significant interacting factors that may hinder teachers educating all children more effectively together. These are:

- i. Teacher training
- ii. Teacher attitudes and influences
- iii. Diversity of needs of the child
- iv. Workload and lack of extra time

The explicit and implicit role of the teacher in creating barriers that limit opportunities to attend mainstream schools for disabled children is reported in this section.

### **i. Teacher training**

This study found vastly divergent perspectives on teacher training and capacity to cater for a population of learners with diverse needs, both academically and socially within mainstream schools. Diverse views showed that teachers are not trained in understanding inclusion and professional development for full-time teachers to upgrade teaching skills for inclusive classrooms is not a priority. Sometimes even general education was found to suffer the same disregard, as ST13:50 suggested that “somehow, nobody gets training here, if we do it is sporadic. From this finding, teacher training and professional development in SEN have both been an ongoing substantial challenge for inclusiveness, as indicated by most teachers.

However, this finding seems to contradict The Report of the Taskforce on the Special Needs Education Appraisal which validates “increased support to teacher training for SEN at KISE” (RoK, 2009: 9) in addition, that all of primary school teachers have received some forms of teacher training (Orodho, 2014). It is not clear at what level training has been conducted since no policy has indicated this. However, in his address at the 1<sup>st</sup> National Conference on SEN and Disability Mainstreaming, the first Cabinet Secretary of Education<sup>14</sup> Professor Kaimenyi revisited the issue of teacher education in SEN (RoK, 2014). Being a SEN conference, confusion arose when the minister identified training as one of the barriers to inclusion without necessarily addressing emerging issues of inclusive teaching, new ways of dealing with the challenge and *when, how, or where* extensive training would commence.

For the participants, the inclusive process was projected to be a slow and uncertain journey, due to teachers’ gap in training to specifically support children with SEN. Talking about inclusion and transitioning participant ST10:29 stated:

I think we cannot be inclusive here because we have no training

As established in the findings, of the 17 teachers involved in this study, only three were seen to have had some form of training on special needs, namely PT4, PT5 and PT7. However, PT7 is self-sponsored on an on-going part-time course in SEN and is yet to complete the course. Another participant, ST13, has elementary skills gained from a workshop on first aid for epilepsy in classroom situations, which can be considered as a basic sign of training.

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<sup>14</sup> Previous title used was Minister of Education until 2013 when devolution was introduced.

Hence, only two participants PT4 and PT5 can be said to have SEN training. An important finding on SEN training was explained by PT5:132, who narrated that:

I hold a Bachelor's Degree in special education from a local university. I found it costly because it was self-sponsorship. I would have opted for a Master's Degree in SEN but I cannot afford it, and the government does not support us with sponsorship, so I have decided on a diploma in another field of study

As demonstrated by this participant, discrepancy of sponsorship by government that requires teachers self-sponsor for professional development was a major barrier. Teachers were found not willing to invest in training. However, looking at the issue of sponsorship globally, most countries do not sponsor citizens for masters degrees. PT5:132 discussed the shortcomings of the matter as follows:

Most teachers prefer to study courses that have sponsorship, but if they fund themselves, they go for courses that promise upward mobility or change of jobs.

This finding reveals that barriers to inclusion stem from funding and sponsorship for training. The cost of training individual teachers discouraged them from developments towards an inclusive pedagogy. Gap of training is further explained by ST11:138, who had the following explanation:

I have never attended any training for special needs since I left college 15 years ago, but I have been in a two-year government-funded programme on teaching maths to regular learners.

The above comment aids understanding that professional aims for inclusive teaching and teacher knowledge may not be effective, since the government has not focussed on active involvement of teachers in extensive developments and collaborative opportunities. Nevertheless, professional development is evident in science-based subjects (Kiige and Atina, 2016). However, even in professional science development courses, teaching children with SEN teaching was an area not covered, as ST11:138 commented:

...the facilitators did not mention special needs. The training was explicitly focussed on regular learners, but I supposed that was the intention since if it were encompassing special students, we would get much more training,

e.g. something like how to make the lessons easy and how to work with various categories of disability

The participant indicates education training and professional development courses mostly focus on non-disabled learners. Although inclusive education is a substantial issue, it appears that teachers are left to determine for themselves the strategies for inclusive teaching and understanding of disabilities. In addition, this comment supports the view that some teachers have failed to develop skills, knowledge and ability to teach children with SEN due to shortage of specialised educational training and practice. A prevailing view amongst the participants concerning teacher preparation was articulated by PT1:128, who said:

There is no professional development we get from the government on special needs. This year is my 26th year in teaching, I have gone through many trainings, internal sessions, workshops and seminars for regular instruction and leadership including non-academic ones such as first aid but no single training ever mentions disabled learners.

This quotation indicates teachers' awareness of specific competencies gained through training that enable teachers to create stimulating learning environments. As this study has identified, concerns regarding professional capacity are supported by the teaching experiences, ranging from 5-31 years, described by participants. Most teachers had training experience in general subjects but none regarding children with SEN. Such an inconsistency suggests disregard by policy and curriculum formulators for the education of children with SEN in mainstream schools. This finding is in agreement with that obtained by Lambe and Bones (2006) which points out that failure to give solutions to training, affects both pedagogy and teacher ability to effectively adapt the curriculum for inclusive classrooms. An observation made by PT5:6 supports this issue: "we are trained general teachers not special teachers". This finding has major implications for teacher failure to understand diversity in the classroom, which results from initial teacher training programmes where special education practice is not covered.

As this study has established shortfall of skill to teach children with SEN is a prominent barrier of inclusive teaching. This could be attributed unwillingness to teach in inclusive classrooms and consequently should not be reasonably expected to support children with SEN. This finding is rather disappointing considering the global response and enthusiasm for social and academic inclusion in education.

## **ii. Teacher attitudes and influences**

The exploration of the themes on barriers to inclusion revealed that the most significant barrier associated with inclusion in education is negative teacher attitudes. As with communities in general, these attitudes and stereotypes were found to be more personalised or caused by insufficient knowledge and understanding of disability and inclusive education, (see section 4.1). The opinions and abilities of mainstream school teachers, especially in secondary schools, can be relevant in limiting inclusive education, since children with SEN require transition from a primary to a secondary level of education. Although there are many factors that may contribute to negative attitudes, this study found a contributing factor to teachers' approach towards inclusion may result from decreased ability and confidence to successfully teach children with SEN.

A familiar narration from most teachers suggests negativity towards inclusive practices, as seen with ST10:137 saying "No training has ever been done here" and, when asked if he/she could train if there was the opportunity went on to say: "No, am not interested in training, not on special needs. It is not easy to teach disabled children". Training may not be useful if teachers have negative attitudes toward students with special needs or have low expectations of them. These findings suggest that children with SEN may not receive a satisfactory inclusive education. The above participant had been in service in mainstream school for 14 years, yet mentioned having no idea about inclusion, suggesting a worrying trend for inclusive education. As data revealed, teachers felt less confident of working in inclusive environments, as indicated by ST17: 90 who made the following comment:

For now, we do not know how to keep them happy and comfortable (children with SEN), it is not easy.

This comment suggests teachers justifying a negative attitude, which is likely to exclude children with SEN from education simply because teachers cannot keep them comfortable in mainstream.

## **iii. Diversity of needs**

It was interesting to note that teachers, who may be considered the potential agent in the implementation of inclusion, considered on diversity of needs as a barrier to inclusion and a means of excluding children with SEN from mainstream schools. ST12:49 indicated teachers

were left confused when children with SEN and mobility difficulties were enrolled in mainstream schools suggesting teachers were unaware of how to deal with such placement. ST17: 140 indicated:

I do not think I can help learners to use adaptive aids since I have no idea how they work.

This quote denotes that deficiency on skill to promote functional independence of disabled learners and promoting accessibility with considerable ease. Yet, this study found that not every learner required help with adaptive aids since some are independent and competent with ADLs. Consequently, training on using adaptive aids may not be a priority for teachers in comparison to curriculum adaptation for individual needs. In reviewing the literature, data was found in debates relating to whether teachers needed teaching skills for teaching children with SEN in mainstream (Fox, 2013). This study found teachers believed that they did not have the appropriate skills. However, educators argue effective teachers do not require specialist skills to teach children with SEN (Centre et al. 1991). The issue of confidence to teach all learners together without necessarily having any specialised training is summarised by ST13:140 who said:

I have some basic skills gained from some workshops I attended with an NGO on teaching special learners but it was not comprehensive, it was like very basic mostly dealing with learners with epilepsy in class, also my partner has a bachelor's in special needs so at least I get to hear a lot about disabilities.

The description by ST13 appears to suggest that that the skills required to teach children with SEN are similar to those required for non-disabled learners. Notwithstanding the compelling nature of this evidence, most teachers showed a cautious disposition to engage children with SEN and a fear that they may have a learner whose SEN they cannot meet in inclusive classroom as suggested by ST14:69 that:

If we do not adopt partial inclusion, general classes will end up with learners we cannot teach or others with complicated support aids.

From this evidence comes the realisation that participating teachers supported a partial inclusion model where children with SEN would attend mainstream classroom for some portion of their day, while spending the other part of the day receiving instruction in a special

education classroom or resource room. Another diversity considered by the participants was learners with a medical condition, as ST15:160 suggested:

...any learner with a medical condition does not belong here. They need physiotherapy and regular check-ups...special care which can only be given in a special school.

The description by ST15 illustrates a common view towards children with SEN having a medical condition that requires treatment disrupting classroom routine in mainstream schools. Narrow measures that make many teachers and to see it as acceptable to say, “you do not belong here.” Jordan (2018:10) has led to a perception that more “specialist” schools are needed and not beneficial view when adapted by teachers in supporting children with SEN. The problem being that it results in creating a disabling barrier in access to education by trying to “explain, diagnose, treat, and identify pathology” (Gabel and Peters, 2004 :587). Thus teachers using a medical model of disability tend to label learners as having multiple needs. Discussing academic inclusion, PT8:45 informs this study that enrolment in mainstream schools was largely based on learner performance. ST10:29 highlighted the mitigating factors when comparing the performance of peers with and without disabilities including teacher’s expectations that only learners, “who can understand teacher’s instructions” were welcome in mainstream schools.

The diversity of enrolment observed in this finding is an indicator of conditions that make it difficult for some learners to access education. Ferguson (2008) argues enrolment that disadvantages some learners is against the core agenda of broad-based educational innovation which the Salamanca Statement agreed on the inclusion of all learners. Findings highlighted parents’ understanding of a correlation between poverty and access to educational opportunities. The participant underscored the importance of safeguarding children with SEN from the profoundly adverse effect of missing education owing to vital medical or non-medical resources. Other participants argued for large print textbooks (FG3:45), wheelchairs and prosthetics (FG7:49) and reading glasses (FG4:58). In particular, FG10:57 revealed that lack of hearing aid batteries quite often resulted in dropping out school, isolation and exclusion from peers. As FG10:57 succinctly summarised children with SEN cannot access education if they drop out of school. All parents indicated affordable education was essential, but added that acceptance and recognition in a child-friendly

environment was the first basic need which a school should provide, as FG2:4 commented on their child's new school:

She is well understood by the teachers and her fellow students. She fits well in the school.

Participants, such as FG3:56, FG4:36 and FG6:2 were found to explicitly support education as a basic human right and that all children irrespective of ability or disability had a right to attend school. For this reason, schools should take reasonable steps to ensure learners with SEN are not placed at substantial disadvantage to those who are non-disabled because of their individual needs diversity.

#### **iv. Workload and lack of extra time**

Data analysis identified participant who speculated on whether inclusion may ever be realised due to teachers' lack of training for supporting children with SEN. Drawing from the experiences of Africa, Mariga (2014) posed the same question on the possibility of major changes in the education system even with limited resources. As established most secondary school teachers were uncertain they had sufficient expertise to support learners with disabilities as ST9:46 said:

As far as they are not so badly off, children with SEN who can be able to move about, do class work and all other school activities, I have no problem with their admission.

In reference to the children with SEN in the above quote, ST9:46 identified the barrier to inclusion in this case to be the teacher's personal influences. Apart from training, some participants perceived schools being inclusive would bring many challenges for the teachers in terms of workload; such as heading departments; being class teachers or school managers and in actual teaching. Teachers believed training would add the necessary skills and knowledge to include children with SEN but, at the same time, would feel greater workload as well as added responsibility as a result of training, voiced by PT2: 129 as follows:

I would not mind the training, but that would mean more work and responsibility when my hands are already full.

This finding is similar to the finding made by Singal (2005) analysis of inclusive education in India which identified similar teachers' attitudes and the suggestions that inclusive education adds to teacher's workload. Similarly, due to additional attention to diversity of needs, asking for additional remuneration. Other teachers indicated it was practically impossible to accommodate individual special educational needs due to time factor "we have no time for extra teaching or resources for them" (ST14:105). The concern of non-disabled peers being slowed down by children with SEN was also mentioned. Teachers observed a correlation between attention given to children with SEN in a mainstream classroom and behaviour of non-disabled peers when the teacher's attention was not focussed on them as explained in this way by ST17:162 that:

The teacher has to consider them always when planning any work for the class. Also, it calls for moving at their pace since they take time to write. The other students are made to wait for the slow students, and they get bored and start some behaviour while the teacher is busy with the slow student. Then it becomes difficult for the teacher.

This narration points towards issues of working within individualised tailored approaches to education in order to meet diverse needs presented in classrooms. A similar finding was made by Macbeath and others (2006) in the UK by teachers questioning the appropriateness of mainstream schools for learners with specific SEN, suggesting alternative special provisions might serve these learners better than inclusive settings.

#### **4.3.2 Views on school-related barriers**

Peters (2004) school related barriers contribute to exclusion of children with SEN and so the development projects of any country should focus on removal of barriers that hinder access to education. Analysis of data revealed children with SEN face numerous physical barriers that hinder access to mainstream education and supportive environments. In the context of this study, access was used in the sense of how convenient or difficult it was for children with SEN to enter classrooms, schools or school buildings, enrol, consult members of the school community or use the resources in a particular school. Teachers in this study understood that accessibility to facilities does not happen by chance but by availability of resources, as ST11:66 said "even though we need trained teacher, there are no suitable facilities [in schools], that is the most urgent need"

This finding supports the ideas of Vaz and others (2015), who suggest that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion are often based on the practical implementation of inclusive education rather than a specific ideology or understanding of inclusiveness. For this reason, teachers mentioned that schools should be welcoming environments for teachers and students alike, to interact, enable school routines to be met. The role of child-friendly schools was considered positive and essential by ST17:72, who commented that:

It is good and healthy for all children to come to regular school to get same school experiences and interactions.

This comment specifically relates to physical access to schools for children with SEN, not only to ensure their presence in school but also to share positive experiences and interactions with non-disabled peers. As observed, a welcoming learning environment according to most teachers in this study, was conceptualised as a school devoid of both physical barriers and emotional frustration regarding the convenience of mobility (ST17:90) and allows for free exchange of ideas (ST11:66). However, this was not the experience of many participants in my study. Most schools reported shortage of resources and facilities and school setting being not conducive (ST10:65). Data highlights that interactions between children with SEN school alongside non-disabled peers are minimal. Consequently, the results of this study indicate that presence and accessibility is a considerable barrier to the creation of inclusive classrooms. Most participants confirmed their teaching experience as one of exclusion for children with SEN as ST14:195 indicated:

I have never seen a disabled child in my class for the 22 years I have been in the service.

The above comment suggests that children with SEN are missing in mainstream schools. Despite Kenya indicating that EFA is “a key milestone” for sustainable development in line with national and global commitment (RoK, 2009:17), lack of access presented a considerable barrier to achieving objectives of EFA by 2015. Resulting from school-based observation, some schools are inaccessible to learners using mobility aids due to lack of ramps, paved pathways and lifts to get in and around buildings, as PT7:80 established:

We have not done much to accommodate children living with disabilities because of lacking facilities, inaccessible classrooms, muddy school paths and bad attitude from teachers. Adjustment should be made to the

classrooms doors, windows, and chalk board since some of them are neglected and not good enough to accommodate disabled children.

This comment may aid understanding that accessibility can go beyond passageways, stairs, and ramps to recreational areas, footpaths and doors. As ST12:85 mentioned: "...some offices upstairs cannot be accessed due to lack of a lift". This comment can be interpreted to mean that some learners with mobility difficulties cannot access rooms above the ground floor of school buildings throughout their education career due to lack of lifts. Moreover, talking about class sizes, ST12: 85 added that:

Also, class sizes, for now, are too large to accommodate learners using wheelchairs or walking aids would be impossible.

ST12: 85 appears to suggest the classroom size, space and physical arrangement may impact the inclusion of learners with mobility difficulties, thus indicating a need to regulate classroom sizes to accommodate learners who require extra room or leg space due to disability. This finding is corroborated by Hastings and Wood (2002) as regards spatial arrangement of classrooms in the achievement of the goals of accessibility, audibility and visibility. Additionally, regarding large class sizes, access to spaces that can accommodate a student's assistive technology devices, as well as other furniture to meet individual needs require consideration. These findings are important since they reveal the appropriateness of school environments and for this study to determine whether schools are accessible or not. PT3:58 had this to say:

It is a good idea to have them included in ordinary schools, but the environment is unwelcoming due to toilets, buildings and the compound that has tall grass and shrubs that hinder mobility and learning activities. The school has to be improved with an addition of more facilitative resources and equipment before we can admit them.

The above comment informs this study that some mainstream schools are unwelcoming, unprepared and unfriendly environments that pose access difficulties for children with SEN. These findings may also aid understanding of the substantial impact facilities have on freedom of movement in inclusive classrooms, including the possible exclusion of learners using wheelchairs or adaptive aids. The combination of findings on school environment could be a contributing factor to the conceptual premise made by most participants on

teachers' perceptions of special school placement being a better option, as PT5: 60 suggested:

...but on the other hand, special school are better for those with severe disabilities, mainstream schools cannot help children with SEN a lot.

School infrastructure was found to require improvement to guarantee freedom of access to all parts of the school for learners with mobility difficulties, if teachers were to create a positive difference in the learning of children with SEN. Regarding secondary school access, some teachers viewed inclusion as not achievable due to the complexity and nature of science subjects, some of which are compulsory for all learners. Hence, a major issue emerging from this finding relates specifically to secondary curriculum as a barrier, as elaborated by ST13: 68:

They can be admitted in mainstream secondary, but because of the complexity of science subjects taught in this school, I do not think they can fit here unless they have full mental capacity or we get extra support in the laboratories.

This comment indicates that the secondary school curriculum is not accessible to learners with SEN due to their disabilities. Additionally, the participant also said:

Other subjects such as home science have practical lessons that entail dealing with finances, cleaning, cooking and sewing skills, activities that are task-centred and more abstract. All related activities to these subjects could pose a challenge to the enrolment of children with SEN unless the child has "a full mental capacity."

In support of this idea, ST17:72 said this:

I am concerned about science subjects such as chemistry, physics and biology which are compulsory in schools. These subjects in secondary schools involve working with hazardous chemicals, fire and electricity, activities that are performed in a controlled laboratory environment.

From the above comments, it appears that inclusion, including integration, would introduce a new challenge for science teachers in secondary schools although science is taught successfully in special schools. This emergent finding contradicts the Salamanca Statement that recommends mainstream teachers to work in collaboration those in special schools for

professional support in meeting SEN, ‘matching of curricular content and methods to the individual needs of learners’ (UNESCO, 1994: 12-13). The finding further reveals the need for safety and risk assessment in mainstream schools to ensure the safeguarding of all learners. Safety risks assessment was explicitly discussed by FG8:13, who said:

I think a good learning environment should be safe and secure, meaning that there are no potential threats to children. This is not the case with our schools.

Such safety risks should be carried out on school playground, an essential area for enhancing interactions and stimulation children’s cognitive, physical and social development. However, concerns on the school playgrounds as less welcoming owing to many physical barriers were noted. There is a concern of children with SEN being left out of inclusion in friendship groups, social and sporting activities and everyday lives due to disability (Stalker et al. 2012). Therefore, playgrounds should provide rich opportunities for children to interact. However, FG7:40 established:

There is the issue of safety in the school and play equipment, someone should look at it regularly to avoid accidents in school.

This comment suggests the need for regular risk assessment and maintenance to ensure children get stimulating prospects of play devoid of hazards. However, following the school observations, a need for improvement of the existing old buildings is an overriding issue. Some buildings were reported as not safe and could not meet the requirements of all users. As suggested, schools do not invest much on safety, especially the safety of children with SEN, which is more likely to be compromised. FG6:33 probably had safety in mind when commenting about a child in their school with SEN that:

...he has stopped running away from school because the regular learners look after him and inform the teacher when he starts walking towards the school gate.

In support of this comment is the school-based observation of the school gates remained open, possibly to foster an open-access philosophy and a welcoming atmosphere for communities but which was found likely to compromise the safety of learners. FG6:33 further added that:

The school fence needs to be rebuilt again since it is falling off. I fear one day he will sneak out without notice.

This comment highlights the importance of school fences, indicating the role they play in school safety to keep children safe in school. These findings confirm the importance of the dangers regarding school safety that emanate from inappropriate school facilities. As mentioned by the participants, facilities such as broken-down toilets, rundown buildings, unmaintained playfields and offices based on the first floor of buildings without available lifts for children with SEN. Participants felt such situations indirectly discriminate against children with SEN, since it has been established that they are unable to access facilities or take more time than should be necessary to access available facilities

### **Accessible toilets**

Accessibility to toilets was mentioned as a prominent barrier by all teachers and the parents participating and was seen to negatively impact efforts towards inclusive schools as PT8: 81 highlighted:

The school environment is not friendly to students with physical disabilities due to lack of easily accessed toilets.

This response showed that lack of accessible toilets was keeping children with SEN away from mainstream schools. For this reason, most participants felt mainstream schools were not a good learning environment for some children with SEN who could not use the regular toilets. The same idea was shared by parents such as FG2:15, who wondered:

...how are our children expected to go to a school when there are no toilets for them?

Some participants had suggestions for accessible facilities, such ST10: 83 who proposed on “those that cater for their needs, easy to use and comfortable” (sic). From this quote appears to suggest participants had school facilities in mind, such as enough toilets for the school community that could accommodate the sanitation requirements of learners as PT5: 78 further argued:

...toilets should be modified for learners to be comfortable in schools and if not so build new disability toilets. Normally what we experience are inadequate toilets that are dirty and poorly maintained.

The adverse effects resulting from lack of such facilities is demonstrated by PT6:151, who commented as follows:

Lack of facilities makes it difficult to teach children with SEN, especially when schools lack appropriate toilets for those with mobility problems.

Another participant, PT7: 152, added the following comments:

The structures in this school are poor. All these factors combined not only make them uncomfortable but they also keep them away from regular schools.

The above acknowledgment points to the concept of human dignity to address the degradations and violations that are a fundamental threat to human dignity (Bunch, 2018). Inadequate provision (of accessible toilets) or poor maintenance indicates need for transforming facilities to offer greater comfort. Lack of these facilities suggests that some learners have stayed away from education due to lack of confidence to attend mainstream schools (Kauffman et al. 2018) and in this case of Kenya, due to lack of clean, comfortable and appropriately maintained facilities. Regarding this matter ST14:87 said:

Considering that the school population keeps increasing, schools should build correct and appropriate facilities for all children. The issue of toilets is even a more pressing matter. Without prejudice, disabled children should have provisions for hygienic toilets, are big enough, have water and wash basins.(sic)

The quote above confirms awareness that facility provision should match the population. The participant's comment underscores the importance of school facilities that meet the needs of an ever-increasing population. The participant's suggestions show that toilets can affect not only inclusiveness in education, but also raises issues of human dignity if learners cannot access appropriate toilets. On the same issue FG2:15 indicated that:

Schools should treat all children the same by sharing resources equally. Disabled children should have accessible toilets with all facilities such as water, soap and lighting.

These comments show the parents' opinions that schools failed to accommodate a person-centred approach on essential aspects such as accessible toilets. Moreover, this concurred with school-based observations made while conducting this study, that children were seen

making long queues to use the available toilets during break and lunch hours, thus supporting the above finding of the need for the extra toilets, running water and hand wash facilities. Parents were also found to be emphatic about the availability of toilets in mainstream schools, as FG5:3 narrated:

When my brother was in this regular school near my house, he had to refrain from using the toilet while in school from 10 am to 4 pm. Whenever he messed himself during the day, another child had to run home to fetch me to assist him with personal care. The teachers said that if we suspected stomach problems, we should not bother to send him to school.

This verification from FG5:3 indicates the issue of accessible facilities affects everyone, including teachers, learners, parents and the entire school community. The reality presented in this quote is that due to lack of available and accessible toilets in schools, some learners have to go home to access the bathroom. This demonstrates that time is wasted in schools as a result of lack of necessary facilities that could be easily managed by school communities. The learner is also found exposed to the risk of missing out on quality education or not developing healthy relationships with other children due to constant interruptions. As highlighted, children with SEN having to hold bodily functions simply because school lacks toilets often leave children vulnerable and embarrassed. The existing barriers to inclusive schools were summarised in the comment by FG9:14 who said this: “how can our children go to a school with no toilets for them?” and called for accessible facilities, such as toilets, be part of the government effort to address the needs of children with SEN.

### **4.3.3 Views on systemic and organisational factors**

Systemic and organisational barriers are discussed in this section, as the factors mentioned by the research participants focusing on the measures the GoK has influenced, either directly or indirectly, to create barriers to inclusion. Data analysis revealed many barriers that teachers and parents named, such as the architectural and structural design of schools, poor accessibility to facilities and resources, staffing, uninformed management, poor leadership and governance, lack of advocacy, collaboration, training and development of teachers, safeguarding issues and inadequate policies. In-depth analysis and exploration of this study suggests some of these factors overlap. Therefore, only the factors not discussed elsewhere

in this thesis will be presented in this section. These are: class sizes, funding, policy inadequacy, and school management and leadership.

**i. Class sizes**

Inclusive classes are those that enrol children with SEN, and which most participants highlighted as experiencing systemic failure in making improvements. Most participants in this study expressed concern that large class sizes of 50/1 teacher student ratio are a barrier to inclusive education. In explaining this development, P8:153 had the following to say:

...there are too many children in this school already, and so we have large class sizes, congestion in buildings and school paths.

Some participant suggested there was no space left for children with SEN suggesting an apparent lack of favourable participation. Frederickson and Cline (2009) noted on the importance of space to enable all children optimal participation in classroom events. Systemic factors appear to have contributed to these negative attitudes towards inclusion due to lack of planning for smooth and appropriate inclusion and improvement of structures. Systemic failure to guide inclusion appeared to have left teachers feeling helpless and in turn, making parents and children with SEN feel as though education was a favour and not an entitlement. Further explanation was made by ST13:176 by saying

We should have special classes and extra rooms where we can support extra teaching, counselling to boost self-esteem, coaching indoor games and various social activities like creative arts. The problem here is that we do not have spacious classes and we cannot afford to build new ones unless the government steps in and funds us generously.

This participant acknowledged that approaches for increasing accessibility and inclusion for children with SEN were insufficient due to lack of space for carrying out activities. In support of this suggestion PT4:185 said the following:

Inclusion is good because the child can learn from others. However, due to large class sizes in this school special schools are better because usually the classes there are smaller and better resourced. I believe in such circumstances, children can learn more since teachers can even control the timetable to suit them, something that cannot be done here.

This comment denotes class sizes were a barrier to placement and educational achievements for children with SEN. Moreover, teachers were found to suggest that children with SEN in smaller classes would achieve better than students with SEN integrated into larger classes. For this reason, most participants were found to suggest special school as a better option due to the barrier of large classes. The government of Kenya corroborates this finding by acknowledging the existence of organisational challenges in streamlining education, controlling class sizes and providing educational services for persons with SEN (RoK, 2009). To develop a full picture of how large classes could be, ST12:85 explained that:

...class sizes, for now, are too large with about 50-60 students each against one teacher.

The above quote aids understanding of classes in Kenya being overcrowded and a large number of students being supported by one teacher suggests an acute shortage of staffing in general education. Schools appear to have failed to provide an experience that could meaningfully be called inclusive education, which might then correspond to a child's entitlement to education (see section 2.3 on entitlement approach). Although policy formulators have not considered this study, these findings offer clear dependable indicators that children with SEN are explicitly and implicitly deprived the right to pursue an education in mainstream classrooms. In the following section, the contribution of the Kenyan government to this phenomenon is demonstrated.

## **ii. Funding**

Data analysis focused on the measures taken to develop inclusive schools through the allocation of funding by government. Findings from the research participants showed intentional promotion of child-friendly environment to be lacking, as mentioned by ST11:156:

...the government will need to change, put in a lot of funding into improving schools.

Another participant, ST17:215, added that:

I think funds should be set aside specifically for the education of children with SEN

The government seems to agree with both ST11 and ST17 on insufficient funding a major constraint that makes it challenging to address the needs of children with SEN (MoE, 2014). The participant above seemed to highlight that funding could enable the school to become inclusive while at the same time observing that inclusive financing ought to be part of the general funding allocated to schools. Most participants addressed the issue of extra fiscal resources and materials targeting children with SEN, mostly those in need of additional support such as professional consultations, as maintained by ST12:175. Following funding process and mechanisms, most participants explicitly mentioned that barriers existed, but due to lack of funding various challenges have been identified such as those discussed by PT6:61, “inadequate facilities”, by ST14: 87 “correct and appropriate facilities”, and by ST15: 88, “adapted facilities”.

These findings support the idea that lack of adequate funding denies children with SEN access to inclusive education and has a long-lasting effect on quality of education, as exemplified by overcrowded classrooms, which ST13:86 drew attention to as being large and uncomfortable. Additionally, the findings are consistent with those of UNESCO (2017), indicating that inclusive practice is influenced by how government resourcing supports access to mainstream education. This finding may aid understanding that schools face challenges of inclusion when the government fails to allocate resources while children with SEN experience significantly more discrimination in terms of access. Conversely, it can be said that funding has significant implications such for complementing learning opportunities and achievement for children with SEN in the same classroom as their non-disabled peers. Some participants such as ST13:176 was categorical that school capabilities and general organisation was impeded by funding approaches, which made it difficult to individualise teaching and support learners.

Another significant finding is that teachers appear to lack trust in government efforts to create inclusive schools by funding the construction of extra rooms for tutorials and indoor activities, as ST13:176 added: “Personally, I think that cannot happen soon, it will be too costly”. From this comment, the challenges that result from funding are apparent; extra

funding for development purpose is considered as additional, expensive and a discretionary measure in support of learners with SEN, who are mostly a minority in mainstream schools. Another participant, ST16:7, went on to say the following about school design:

The problem is that most primary schools are very old and have not been modified since they were started before independence.

This was also supported by PT5:150, who said:

There are no facilities and also the environment is not favourable to them, and we have no funds to renovate especially the classrooms and the compound.

These two narrations denote that school structures have not changed much nor been renovated to make it easy for everyone to access. Findings from Sifuna (2016) and Somerset (2009) are in agreement with this finding, emphasising that most government aid to schools, especially primary schools, was given when education was first introduced; as early as the 50s during the colonial period. In the section that follows, the barriers found stemming from lack of effective planning are presented.

### **iii. Policy inadequacy and leadership**

Before drawing policy conclusions and recommendations, the process of formulation and implementation goes through a sequence of stages starting from agenda setting to decision making to implementation (Bryson, 2018). Teachers are some of the agents involved in the practical process of implementation of policy. However, this study found paucity of clear understanding and engagement with policy demands as demonstrated in the following comment, when PT5:204 said that:

Having all disabled children in mainstream schools is no joke...it calls for planning; we have not done that.

The above comment is contrary to expectation since the SEN Policy Framework of 2009 has been in place for a long time, although some teachers appeared not to have heard of inclusive education. The two comments are finely intertwined as most teachers involved in this study had a general picture of segregated schools policy. However, a few heard of inclusive education policy probably following this study as PT3:22's statement reveals "I do not know anything about inclusion". Nonetheless, teachers were not expected to have an in-depth

understanding of policy which is deemed complex and probably lacking in the teacher domain as PT7: 206 explained in the following comment:

...but no one is calling for inclusion in Kenya.... My school and many others have not done it. The government should spearhead inclusion talk on a serious note.

This quote denotes that SEN policy has not filtered to the grassroots level in mainstream schools. The quotation also establishes teacher uncertainty and confusion due to lack of clear policy guidelines on increasing teacher capabilities and skills for inclusive practice. Moreover, this quotation further signifies teacher's lack of involvement in a range of inclusive activities to reinforce government policies on education in schools. The narration by ST11: 48 indicated schools do not have disabled children. It implies that following various narrations of policy failure, exclusion is controlled within school at all levels resulting to children being denied access to quality education in mainstreams school. In all probability, most of these children lack numeracy, literacy skills or work-skill taught in special schools in colonial times (see section 1.3). Talking about policy requirement, PT1: 56 proposed that:

... it is a good idea to start from the special unit then when there is an improvement, they are assessed and are allowed to join the main school.

This comment raises important issues of the inability of policy and legislation to create clear pathways to education access for children with SEN. As regards pathways to education, this study established teachers have much control over the ones children with SEN can choose to follow to access mainstream classes. Importantly, resulting from this control, learners with SEN are denied a voice; the choice to access the mainstream school they want; the opportunity to engage actively with non-disabled peers for social development. A further inadequacy of policy was cited by FG3:20 who said:

...the problem is being made to repeat classes when they do not perform well in exams. I know of a neighbour's son who has been made to repeat classes so many times that he is now a young adult but still in primary school.

The above comment highlights the need to safeguard children with SEN from being made to repeat classes due to poor performance. In addition, this finding reinforces the importance of policy formulators developing clear policy regarding pathways of access to mainstream

school, including transition from one level to another, instead of leaving teachers the collective responsibility of decision-making, some of which is found to be prejudiced and discriminatory. Moreover, teachers need support with transition from inclusive policy to inclusive practice in schools and a clear understanding of the central role they play in the promotion and support of inclusive schools. When discussing transitioning from inclusive policy to inclusive practice in schools ST17: 60 commented that they wished the government would provide clear directions.

Furthermore, lack of clarity on strategies to link policy and practice for effective outcomes, results in teachers being concerned for active organisational support to enhance inclusion accomplishment. Resulting from lack of policy was barriers of poor leadership, uninformed teachers and general lethargy on matters of inclusion and practice. The outcome of failed leadership was discussed by PT5:42, who said the following:

...before they join primary school class we conduct interviews so normally we pick the best. Those who fail the interview look for spaces in private schools or those with SEN look for a special school.

The above comment illustrates the significant challenges children have to undergo for enrolment in mainstream primary school. In support of assessment for enrolment, PT8:45 highlighted that direct admission is judged according to performance. Additionally, for those who are enrolled, assessment for transition was explained by PT4:41 through the following remarks:

...assessment of learners with special educational needs “is done by comparing their performance in class to that of others”.

This finding suggest that mainstream schools have adapted inclusive against policy in way that is unconventional which appears to give schools compelling reasons for denying the enrolment of children with SEN (UNESCO, 1994). The finding also suggests that school managers, staff and governors face multiple challenges in creating inclusive schools. The role of leadership was best captured by ST15:196, who comprehensively illustrated the position of leadership regarding inclusive schools:

The solution is the principals<sup>15</sup> who have the greatest role to play in solving these problems. If they object, nothing can take place on improving the school, building ramps, good toilets and admitting disabled learners. If I wake up one day and find disabled learners in this school, well, as a teacher there is nothing I can do but teach them [sic].

There are several possible explanations from this suggestion, such as the school manager's goodwill to choose between being inclusive or not. A scenario that indicates being inclusive very much depends on the school manager's position to determine substantive school improvement, including a focus on elements of inclusive education. Literature is in agreement with this finding, namely that the school manager's role does not necessarily entail pay and status in the management structure, but is also associated with personal and professional credibility, knowledge, skills and responsibilities (Rouse, 2008). Most participants in this study seemed to agree on the position of headteachers creating inclusive schools. However, ST9:46, who is a school leader, had this to say:

As school leaders we have not been enlightened on children with special needs, no one talks about it even in training or heads meetings. The assumption is that only non-disabled students come to such schools [mainstream].

This finding denotes that school managers cannot be wholly blamed for exclusion since they also face the same challenge as teachers, especially lack of awareness about inclusive education. This school manager appears to suggest that the policy of inclusion is difficult to implement because leaders are not supported to work in inclusive ways. This combination of findings on policy inadequacy provides some support for the conceptual premise on existing barriers to inclusion, owing to policy inefficiency to provide for successful implementation of inclusion, including support for the proactive development of pedagogy, in mainstream schools.

#### **4.3.4 Understanding of learner related factors**

The analysis of data highlighted teachers' implicit perceptions of learners with SEN as a problem for inclusion. Further exploration of data demonstrated the factors mentioned relate to a range of environmental needs, rather than to specific learning needs. Findings showed

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<sup>15</sup> Secondary school headteachers are referred to as principals in Kenya

teachers were resistant to inclusive classrooms, with most participants not ardently supporting the idea of admitting children with SEN in their classrooms, as PT6:187 said:

At the moment inclusion is not good in Kenya only children with mild disabilities who do not need any special resource or teaching can be in inclusive schools but not any other problem.

This comment highlights teachers setting the condition for a broader range of SEN not likely to be accommodated currently without improved policies and sufficient funding from the government. The inadequacy of appropriate structures in schools contributes to the challenges relating directly to the learners, not vice versa. Furthermore, as observed, learners with physical impairments mainly faced difficulties caused by inaccessible buildings and lack of safely accessible footpaths once in school. Most were unable to participate in outdoor activities; a problem not of their own making. Therefore, lateness to class, lack of participation in games and sports were some factors identified as resulting from the learner. Instead of pressing on mainstream schools to change, adjust and adapt facilities to be appropriate for all learners, some participant (ST12:157), implied mainstream school unlike special schools were not built with disabled people in mind.

Most comments, such as that by PT3:58 on children with SEN, were seen to suggest that these learners were a significant liability for mainstream schools and that schools had to be improved before such students could be admitted. Another participant, ST9:64 added that teachers prefer disabled students with mild disabilities. ST12:67 outlined that the nature of mainstream schools is frustrating for children with SEN leading to drop out of school. The participants did not identify the SEN support they would give learners in inclusive classrooms in instances of frustration and dropping out, since they claimed to lack the skills and training. Neither did they suggest how to eliminate barriers to learning such as particular differentiation of lesson content. Booth and others (2002) caution that inclusion is not another name for SEN, rather a practice that involves identifying and minimising barriers to learning and participation, including maximising resources to support learning and engagement.

#### **4.4 Participant views of strategies and approaches for improving inclusion**

The fourth theme to emerge helped answer the fourth research question of this study by explicitly and implicitly describing the general strategies that can benefit the creation of

inclusive environments to accommodate children with SEN in mainstream classes. Most importantly was an all round inclusive education as discussed by PT2:165 in the following extract:

The education system should change completely, and schools improved so that such children with disabilities can have an education. The government should stop working silently but should create awareness of inclusion

This suggestion was considered to be the best approach for improving education for children with SEN; namely to improve the education system and schools themselves. This finding concurs with recent studies by Ainscow and Messiou (2018), indicating that change is significant at every level of an education system starting from teachers in classrooms, through to school leaders, education administrators and those responsible for national policy. Significant issues that specifically addressed strategies for improvement are explored in this section. These are: teacher training and support, infrastructure, collaboration, creation of awareness and motivation and legislation.

#### **4.4.1 Teacher training and support**

The exploration of data revealed that teachers might not know the specific process that can guide intentional, adequate and increased inclusion. Nevertheless, participants were found to be confident that improved attainments of a learner with SEN would only be gained through training and professional development. Data analysis and findings of this study has established that most teachers in Kenya are trained to work in the education system under the general curriculum thus probably only a negligible number are trained in special needs, as confirmed by PT5:6 who said that:

Special needs call for specialised training, but we are trained general teachers, not special teachers.

The above quote symbolises teacher awareness of the impact of teacher training on the quality of supporting children with SEN. Most participants appeared to be aware that teacher education not only adds specialised skills but also ensures continuing competence and therefore suggested mandatory SEN training for teachers, as PT1: 164 said:

All teachers should be trained in special needs and if they do not go back to college then have in-service courses so that they can work with these children without problems.

Participant PT1: 164's proposal denotes a proactive strategy of improvement grounded in providing teachers with extra training, contending that teacher training is important because of the complex nature of working with children with SEN. As observed, awareness of supporting children with SEN is a task that cannot be accomplished without sufficient teacher preparation. For this reason, PT1: 164 proposed development of strategies to train teachers that are already in service, including support courses such as counselling, psychology and creative arts which were seen as essential specialist skills for individualised teaching. It was suggested that these strategies approaches be geared towards improving pedagogic practice to meet the diversity of needs in inclusive classrooms. Moreover, a strategy that would be beneficial in the creation of inclusive schools for all was suggested by ST12:175b by saying:

Teachers need training to change negative attitudes.

In support of training, another participant PT6:169 said as follows:

Although teachers are not against inclusion, staff shortage is the major problem in making teachers unwilling to be inclusive.

The comments from both participants signify that teacher education has significant impact on teacher actions and teaching skills, including learner outcomes. It was found that the most effective way to raise educational quality is to improve initial teacher education (Ojiambo, 2018; Armstrong, 2016a; Booth, 2011; Florian and Rouse, 2009), motivate more teachers and support staff through more recruitment (Katitia, 2015; Pratheepkanth, 2011). Appropriate teacher training guidelines are a practical means of supporting teachers to gain confidence in assisting learners with special needs. Lack of teacher education could be a major cause of teacher negativity including feeling unprepared to work with children with SEN as indicated by PT3:166 who said:

Every teacher should have training on how to cater for students with special needs. I think special education should be made compulsory for anyone who aims to get a teaching certificate.

This quote denotes the source of uncertainty as being a lack of training in disabilities and special education at the initial teacher-training programme stage. Therefore, this participant suggests such training schedules should be mandatory so that teachers understand disability, identify barriers to learning and acquire the skills for better teaching skills that focus on children with SEN. The study finding has established that teachers would be interested in professional development and developing knowledge if opportunities were available to facilitate their learning to support participation of all learners in inclusive classrooms as highlighted by PT7:170, who suggested in-service opportunities for teachers already in service. Such training opportunities would enable teachers to upgrade their professional knowledge, skills, and competence in SEN.

#### **4.4.2 Access and facilities**

Although Kenya has outlined future strategies for schools in an ambitious plan known as Vision 2030, both teachers and parents viewed environmental obstacles as a compelling challenge that cannot wait longer, as PT8:189 declared:

Facilities should be improved as a matter of urgency.

A suggestion for the improvement of facilities was also made by ST17:215, who said:

Although Vision 2030 is in the pipeline, some changes to the infrastructure cannot wait; granting they are expensive.

The comment by this participant showed that school infrastructure could only be improved through funding and the strategy of acquiring such funds was considered to be through government funding. Facilities for improvement, such as replacing steps with ramps to accommodate those with mobility difficulties, were mentioned by ST15:8 and ST16:89 noted developing accessible pavements for wheelchair users. In support of this idea ST9:172 drew attention to the school environment and the idea of modifying infrastructure to favour children with SEN based on the principle of meeting individual pupil needs, rather than excluding some learners. In addition, some activities and facilities were found inaccessible and not meeting individual needs, promoting most participants such as ST15:178 to propose reasonable adjustments to remove barriers as well as other disadvantages so that mainstream schools are made child-friendly. Other participants, such as ST13:176 suggested the idea of

increasing resources and facilities such as, for example, extra rooms for consultation, additional support and pastoral activities.

Most participants, such as ST17:180 proposed the structuring of schools in a way that considered the diverse needs of all learners as a way of reducing discrimination existent in the current inclusion provision. In this way, according to ST14:177, appropriate infrastructure would increase the involvement of children with SEN in mainstream education and hence improve inclusion. PT5:78 emphasised better facilities to create friendly environments while reducing barriers to access. This participant suggested an adjustment of physical features, providing accessible toilets and ensuring playgrounds that are user-friendly as a way of inspiring inclusive schools. PT7: 80 went further and underscored the idea of making reasonable adjustment of some facilities, for example widening doors, lowering windows and the height of chalkboards, desks and tables. Another important strategy was put forward by PT3:22, who made the following comment:

Only the government can help on inclusion matters by showing us the steps to follow to be inclusive

This participant's comment on "ideas" to follow to be inclusive seemed to suggest the development of a tool to guide the process of inclusion, perhaps, for example, teacher education design packages which would help teachers to understand and engage critically with the challenges of inclusion and individual needs and, in addition, enable a smooth service provision for children with SEN in mainstream schools. This participant's call for "steps" would not be limited to tools but could also include changes in school personnel and policies that would guide teachers on what constitutes inclusive pedagogy in Kenya.

#### **4.4.3 Collaboration**

Findings from this study show that teachers acknowledged lack of practical skills for creating inclusive schools. Fuelled by both increasing international pressure for inclusive teaching and ethical considerations for all children, teachers identified collaboration with education stakeholders as an essential strategy for inclusion. ST15:178 called for a collaborative approach and closer links with all stakeholders in mainstreams schools such as the school's Board of Governors, teachers, parents and the communities. Similarly, they underlined the important role of collaborating with professionals who understand both the process and pathways to inclusion. Regarding collaboration, Valli et al. (2016) and Bray (2001) support

this view that school-community partnership be used as a tool to improve the education system. Moreover, collaboration with multiagencies reflects a school's responsibility "to provide transformation into a child-centred learning environment" (Nyatuka and Nyatuka, 2017: 229). Another notable finding was from a parent's point of view, FG1:31, who stated that:

If regular school and parents form a good relationship, they can improve schools so that all children learn together.

This observation above highlights the benefits of parents and teachers when they work together to create a positive learning environment for the good of all learners. A prevailing view amongst the participants was that a collaborative approach between school and communities marks the first step towards ensuring schools are appropriate for children with SEN, since the decision to remove barriers created by physical facilities can be made jointly by people who have the best interests of the school. In another finding, PT1:182 commented that:

It is important for teachers and parents to form strong links to support the education of disabled children.

This comment highlights the need for family and community involvement in making education better for the benefit of all.

#### **4.4.4 Creating awareness and advocacy for inclusive education**

The strategies for improving inclusion in Kenya suggest the creation of knowledge for teachers, parents and communities to facilitate awareness. Most participants underscored that teachers and communities lacked awareness of inclusive education and disability issues. This knowledge prompted PT2:165 to point out how to approach this issue by saying that:

The government should stop working silently but should create awareness on inclusion.

This comment highlights the importance of creating awareness in communities so that they understand that children with SEN can be educated in mainstream schools together with their non-disabled peers. This strategy may be representative in helping to change the attitudes of some communities who still consider children with disabilities should not have educational provision in their neighbourhoods. Moreover, this strategy may influence teachers to develop

positive attitudes in some way with the ultimate aim of making inclusion achievable as FG8:44 put it:

...there is no future for inclusive education if teachers do not like it.

Some teachers went further to emphasise on the creation of knowledge and awareness to change attitudes towards disabled people as ST16:24 said:

...some parents are ashamed to let people see their disabled child.

This statement confirms the negative attitudes towards disabled learners, the participant indicated negative conceptualisation are formed due to society's attitude towards disabled that make parents ashamed of their children. Therefore, suggesting sensitisation regarding matters of impairment, disability difficulties and inclusive education. For direct participation for children with SEN to occur, and for inclusion to be made possible in Kenya, participants suggested teacher understanding of individual differences can be gained by association and interaction with children with SEN. It was proposed that this interaction happen at mainstream at school level through the introduction of special units annexed to mainstream school, as established by ST16:179, who said that:

I think we can create awareness of disabilities by building special units for children with special needs in every primary school... This awareness will give a chance to disabled and non-disabled children including teachers to interact healthily.

This narration denotes compensatory approaches of providing education for all children in the same school environment with limited consequences of discrimination, while working towards appropriate inclusive classes. At the same time, it appears to be a government strategy towards gaining time to train teachers, changing schools and in all likelihood improving the 2009 SEN policy, which is still in draft format. PT3:202 aids better understanding of this strategy by saying that:

It is important to make social awareness and advocacy for more special units.

Another participant, PT2:201, proposed the same strategy by saying that:

The government should advocate for more special units to be established in all schools in Nyahururu Zone in Kenya, especially those handling children with SEN since, for now, no one is doing advocacy.

Most participants understood the provision of access for all learners for the same educational opportunity, governed by the same rules and school norms in the same school but in different classrooms, as genuine inclusion. Some other participants, such as PT8:207, had the following to say:

I think we should create awareness for genuine inclusion where children with severe disabilities should go to special units while those with mild disabilities can start at regular school. Meanwhile, emphasise teacher training so that teachers can understand the inclusive practice.

These comments signify that participants advocated for special units as inclusion pathways for access to mainstream education. In this regard, research participants used this strategy for both social and educational inclusion in the form of special units annexed to mainstream schools.

#### **4.4.5 Legislation and policies**

As this study has established, strategies for improving legislation and policies were not directly addressed by the participants in this research. Although participants did not call directly for human rights legislation, including policies on inclusive education, it was interesting to observe research participants indirectly suggesting legislation and policy related strategies for improvement, such as PT2:183's suggestion that:

Inclusion is possible, but the government should come out aggressively and develop clear strategies in support of these children with special needs.

This finding has crucial implications for changing the laws and policies that recognise the rights of children with SEN to be included in mainstream education. Additionally, it suggests policies and legislation that promote the education of children with SEN who remain excluded from mainstream culture. In support of this strategy, another participant, ST11:192, added that "only the government can make it possible". This shows that a priority for policy formulation is to move educational policy and practice in a more inclusive direction by giving practical solutions to the difficulties of inclusion challenging teachers and schools. Armstrong (2016a) illuminates that often policies in place in support of inclusive education

are side-lined or obscured by those that have greater currency in education. Some participants did seem to be aware that there is policy and legislation, such as PT4:203 who suggested a legislation strategy based on children who are missing education altogether by suggesting that:

There are more children at home who don't attend school; they should all be brought to school...No child should be stopped from being with other children.

This account captures the entitlement approach to education and the importance of access.

The participants maintain that the right to education and interaction with other children should be legally guaranteed for all, without discrimination. This strategy seems to place the onus of inclusion on the government, thus suggesting government responsibility to safeguard, respect and accomplish the right to education for every child. This study has established, from the accounts of these two participants, that there is a need for a realisation of sound legislation, which is covered by legal frameworks, which will guarantee access to quality education within communities for learners with SEN.

#### **4.5 Chapter summary**

Despite the numerous challenges highlighted by the research participants in this chapter, a clear strategy for creating inclusive schools remains elusive. Most participants advocated a broader approach of introducing special units within their schools, but without a clear view of what inclusive education practice entails. Teachers said they found it confusing to create inclusive schools and did not understand the process. The findings of this research reveal some engaging outcomes based on the research participants points of view, with a resounding perspective on the current problem as not just enrolment of children with SEN, but also strategies as to how mainstream schools might change into being inclusive so that they can accommodate all learners without discrimination. Teachers said they were willing to support inclusive learning and participation of children with SEN if resources were made available and if they were involved in policy-making. It was found that teachers suggested involvement in decision making as regards education matters as suggested by PT2: 183 that:

The government should come out aggressively and develop clear strategies in support of these children with special needs. Meanwhile involve teachers in decision making

A final point is the study's findings align with a shared global understanding of inclusive education as a principled approach to teaching and learning for children with SEN and removing barriers of access through planned strategies to improve schools. Further discussion on the specific strategies for improvement is provided in Chapter 6 as Recommendations.

## CHAPTER FIVE: INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

‘Every learner matters  
and matters equally’  
(UNESCO, 2017: 12)

### 5.0 Chapter overview

The findings of this research identified that most schools in the study area not inclusive, although some were in the early stages of trying to eradicate the barriers which have partially hindered access to education. Most schools were faced with significant challenges regarding implementation due to limited skills and resources. The school environment was characterised by problems related to structures, policies and funding, which implies a need for strategic improvements if schools are to make education for children with SEN possible. A positive outcome of the findings is the participants’ suggestion of realistic ways of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving Education for All in line with the Salamanca Statement on equal opportunities (UNESCO, 1994).

### Data organisation

The purpose of the previous Chapter 4 was to discuss the views of the participants. In this study, I maintained a neutral role in order to identify new insights and perspectives and interpret nuanced statements to get an in-depth understanding of the participants’ realities. However, this chapter draws together the interpretations from the findings and presents a detailed discussion of the findings and explicitly answers the four research questions that guide this study and which will be explored further in Chapter 6. The research questions are explored as:

1. Impact of inclusion after the Salamanca Statement
2. Teachers’ understanding of disability, inclusion practices and procedures
3. The barriers to inclusion
4. Strategies for improvement

An interplay of the theories within the related literature conducted in Chapter 2- Literature review which evaluated views on inclusive education globally and locally in Kenya are also linked together in this chapter.

## 5.1 Impact of inclusion after the Salamanca Statement

The demographic profile of the sampled participants and schools that informed this study showed an unexpected outcome of the direction inclusive education had taken after the important Salamanca meeting were found to have impacted both generally and specifically. The majority of mainstream schools showed lack of accessibility or inclusiveness. Therefore, most mainstream schools have not responded to the Salamanca call nor appeared guided to “celebrate differences, support learning, or respond to individual needs” (UNESCO, 1994: iii).

Furthermore, the provision of education in Kenya highlights a gap in the population of children with SEN already included in mainstream school. As the data revealed, mainstream schools, participating in this research had an enrolment of 3,621 learners, with only 19 children with SEN. Thus, the concept of inclusivity in education is yet to be embraced. Current data is not available but the last census of 2009 pointed at 330,312 million children was reported disabled (3.5 per cent of the Kenyan population which was 38m in 2009). Therefore, it could be said the inclusion of children with SEN is negligible considering the natural increase of population at 4,773 live births average per day since 2009 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Also, according to the 2009 Census, the most prevalent form of disability is physical disabilities which stood at 413,698 children. Going by 2009 data and the demographic profile of this study (see section 5.1), it could be said that access for children with SEN in inclusive mainstream schools remains extremely low. Hungi and Thuku, (2010) affirm that only a few accesses to secondary schools.

This evidence reveals some schools in Kenya could be exclusionary morally, academically and socially. A similar reported by Ainscow shows that children with SEN internationally were “at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement” (2005:10) due to lacking “presence, participation and achievement” in mainstream schools.

According to Kindiki (2011), the government of Kenya recognises the intrinsic human value of education underpinned by strong moral and legal foundations. However, this study established this suggestion as a source of uncertainty, since teachers did not express shared values of responsibility with the government, including the obligation of creating inclusive schools. Conversely, the moral and legal obligation referred to by Kindiki (ibid) was not being advanced in mainstream schools. Teacher focus was found not intentionally aimed for

genuine access to educational and social learning experiences for children with SEN. Identified outcomes being some children missing true education and mainstream experiences. This study found four different education pathways that children with SEN followed to be in or out of education as presented in Figure 8 below:

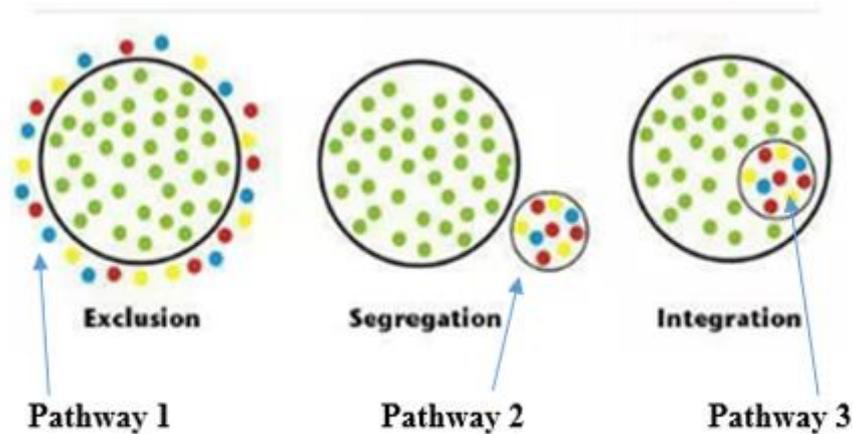


Figure 8: Current educational pathways for children with SEN in Kenya  
Source: Adapted from (Think inclusive; data analysis).

The pathways of educational provision for children with SEN are highlighted in Figure 8 above as the research participants discussed them are discussed separately in the next section although they are all linked within the process of inclusion.

### 5.1.1 Exclusion

The term exclusion used to describe what occurs when students are formally removed from school for reasons of inappropriate behaviour and discipline (Kearney, 2011). However, in literature, exclusion is used to describe the process of denying some learners access or participation in education (Slee, 2011). The process of exclusion involves factors such as denial of access to the curriculum, friendship groups with disabled or non-disabled peers including teacher interactions (Booth, 1996 in Booth, 2011). Additionally, Slee (2013) informs this study that both subtle and blatant forms of exclusion are exercised in schools on a daily basis. As shown in the demographic profile of the participating teachers in this study, exclusion is present in schools since some lacked the presence of children with SEN, a position supported by ST17 and ST14:195 (see section 5.3.4). Although teachers indicated an understanding of being bound by law to open mainstream school gates to all children and not deny participation, this study revealed that mainstream schools exercise exclusion directly and indirectly, as will be explained in the next section.

**(i) Direct exclusion**

In-depth understanding of data showed most teachers in this study used the notion of exclusion to mean being absent from education for various reasons. As ST16:214 (see section 5.3.4) confirmed, direct exclusion was present in schools when factors such as policy, family issues, poverty, proximity to school denied or made it difficult for children to access mainstream schools. In explaining exclusion, Singal, Lynch and Johansson (2019) and Peters (2003) confirmed the bidirectional link between poverty and disability. Most importantly the undeniable contribution of a substantial numbers of children with SEN in the developing world missing out on educational opportunities. Direct exclusion was identified through systemic and schools actions resulting in unfavourable outcomes for the child such as lack of education and opportunities. The scenario is further complicated by exclusion through performance indexing with most children losing on secondary education Muriuki (2015). The children found to be most affected by direct exclusion from schools are those with mobility difficulties coupled with mental and intellectual difficulties or communication needs.

Kiarie (2014) confirms in her study undertaken in Kenya, some parent's refuse their children access to education due to being ashamed of their child's disability. Possi (2018) informs this study that the position is the same in Tanzania where disabled children are also denied education. Some parents feel embarrassed about their child's condition and keep it a secret. This finding implies that twenty years after the Salamanca call, stigma as well as denial of full and fair access to school experience is still prevalent in communities (Abosi and Koay, 2008). Ingstad and Grut (2007) inform this research of families excluding their disabled children from education to protect them from negative comments, bullying and discrimination. The onus is upon the education provider to create environments that all children have equal access to education, reasonable adjustments and the provision of individualised services in schools.

**(ii) Indirect exclusion**

In an attempt to understand the results of the characteristics of mainstream schools, this study identified indirect exclusion of children with SEN resulting from mainstream schools failure to make reasonable adjustments. Pertinent issues, such as significant barriers relating to teacher training, pedagogy, assessment and transition of children with SEN were identified.

Less apparent factors of subtle exclusion are the teachers' lip service of being unprepared for children with SEN in their classrooms yet claim to understand the moral obligation of inclusive education. This aspect suggests a conflict of interest since Kenya is seen to have initiated many other projects after the Salamanca agreement, most of which appear to favour non-disabled children. One such example is the Digital Literacy Programme (DLP) a project launched in 2013 with a Ksh<sup>16</sup>30 billion budget. This quintessential project targets every child joining standard one in a government-funded school in order to receive a laptop computer. Interestingly, a conflict of interest is observed in government policy of embedding ICT in lower primary classes as a marker of development (Omanga, 2018).

Other subtle exclusion was in sorting, filtering and selection done through enrolment interviews, transition exams from one level to another and the national exams to ensure only the best performers transit or access secondary schools (Sifuna, 2008; 2016). Mwiria, 1990 states that education is a promoter of equality and meritocracy while ensuring opportunities are provided for the full development of the talents and personality of the individual child. My study however, identified a gap in transition from primary to secondary schools for children with SEN, a phenomenon that indicates that secondary schools could be increasingly unwelcoming of individual needs.

Not that the children are not aware of this exclusion, McArthur and others (2007) state that children with SEN are cognisant of being treated differently by their peers and teachers. The Kenyan government's perspective of the latent role of education as that of imparting knowledge for individual benefit, promoting equality and meritocracy for all children (KIE, 2002), was far from being functional in schools.

As observed a reverse implication of meritocracy reflected children with SEN being slow learners, pathetic and having weakness of character, perhaps most evident within the intense prejudice expressed. Exclusion in secondary schools was found strongly associated with incentive-oriented tests, school inspections that lacked professional guidance and publication of school performance including national ranking. Perhaps another exclusion is increasing volumes of private schools and private supplementary tutoring which has produced a phenomenon known as shadow education (Bray and Kwo, 2013). This is a scenario where teachers did actual teaching as timetabled but also did paid after hours or

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<sup>16</sup>£1=Ksh 130 (Central Bank of Kenya exchange rate 14-06-2018)

school holiday teaching financed by parents. The spread of shadow education has become a hidden form of privatisation and exclusion in many education systems, including in Kenya. Undoubtedly, investment in the *private* mode of education provision alongside the fee-free delivery of public education, has become a standard pattern and a burden to parents with limited finances. Further examples of indirect inclusion are summarised in Table 21 below

Table 21: Summary of indirect exclusion in mainstream schools

<b>Indirect exclusion</b>	
Reducing the core values of inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children with SEN do not belong in mainstream schools</li> <li>• Some subjects are too difficult for children with SEN</li> <li>• Suggesting mainstream as no place for children with SEN, due to their competitive nature</li> </ul>
Rationalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers as too busy to attend to individual needs</li> <li>• Trained to train groups, not individuals</li> <li>• Mainstream schools not ready to enrol all children with SEN</li> </ul>
Double standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The traditional approach to education</li> <li>• Claiming concern for children with SEN yet doing nothing</li> <li>• Having different classes for different groups</li> <li>• Low transition rate to secondary</li> <li>• Advocating for technical colleges (village polytechnics)</li> <li>• Feelings of sympathy and pity rather than support</li> <li>• Claiming lack of involvement in policy decision making</li> <li>• Claiming lack of knowledge of academic inclusion but strongly encouraging participation</li> </ul>
Biased assessment of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparing learners, “one size fits all.”</li> <li>• Identifying non-disabled learners as easier to teach</li> <li>• Implying non-disabled learners lack significant academic challenges</li> </ul>
Degradation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patronising language</li> <li>• Denying eligibility to mainstream education</li> <li>• Trivialising access barriers</li> <li>• Trivialising benefits gained through the inclusion</li> </ul>
Blame shifting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying others as responsible for IE “<i>them Vs us</i>”</li> <li>• Excluding themselves from advocacy and awareness creation and suggesting others should do it.</li> <li>• Lack of understanding of SEN blamed on systemic failure</li> <li>• Identifying funding as the cause of barriers</li> </ul>

Table 21 is a summary of indirect exclusion, which teachers may not be aware of, but was found to be a growing inclusive problem in mainstream schools. Children with SEN are absent in mainstream secondary schools because the curriculum does not correspond to their needs.

### **(iii) The problem of exclusion**

Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis showed outstanding increase in access and participation to education by 2013 (KIPPRA, 2013). Primary education was said to record the highest participation rate. However, demographic characteristics reflect that there is a problem in the enrolment of children with SEN that needs to be addressed (see section 6.1). According to the Salamanca Statement the problem of exclusion is children with SEN are denied children the following:

- A fundamental right to education, opportunity to achieve and maintain acceptable levels of learning.
- Education systems, schools and teachers fail to accommodate a wide diversity of unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs.
- A child-centred pedagogy capable of Children with SEN needs in mainstreams schools is overlooked.
- Mainstream schools therefore will only provide education for a majority of children without SEN. Hence such an education cannot be said to be effective.

The exclusion factors identified in this study highlights the need to create opportunities for enrolment so that children with SEN can participate in school and learn while in school.

#### **5.1.2 Segregation**

The second pathway (see Figure 8) represents the segregated provision of education in Kenya. A prevailing view amongst participating teachers was that education provision in segregated schools was more appropriate and practical for children with SEN due to in-depth teacher training in special needs. Segregation occurs when the education of children with SEN is provided in separate environments designed or used to respond to particular or several difficulties, in isolation from students without disabilities. Some participants in this study viewed segregated special schools as the best option for some children with SEN based on severity of impairment. A few parents held the same view but based it on financial implications rather than educational ones since, as they mentioned, segregated schools get extra funding from charities, donors and NGOs. On the other hand, some scholars advance inclusive education not primarily on the position of particular groups of categories of children with SEN, but rather on the well-being of all learners and their effective and sustained participation.

Thus, the question of inclusion is fundamentally about issues of human rights, equity, social justice and the struggle for a non-discriminatory society. These principles are at the heart of inclusive education policy and practice (Armstrong and Barton (2008).

The above quote shows that inclusive education is about contribution to the realisation of an inclusive society and central component of policy making. This is not an end in itself, but a means to an end for achieving a non-discriminatory society. Based on the findings, some segregated special units were located within mainstream schools, with fences around their premises and separate management. Teachers from both schools had no professional contact so the two schools worked as different entities running parallel programmes. As observed, the only thing these two schools shared was the same school gate. This study is in agreement with Robinson and Goodey (2018) who highlight a group of learners can be segregated on agreed goal-oriented grounds.

According to Harris (2018), each child is the bearer of the family hope and fears for the future, more so if they are starting school. The fear mentioned by Harris was reflected in the process of enrolment in mainstream schools, whereby parents and children experienced biased physical characteristics assessment and controlled enrolment through interviews. The transformation from traditional practices of assessment which resulted in exclusion is addressed by Ballard (2016), who explains that including all children in effective teaching and learning requires a change in present educational practice, strategies and organisational arrangements. However, a transformation from traditional assessment and practice is imperative for the benefit of children with SEN. Additionally, this transformation should lead to inclusivity and cannot and should not be based on the special education approach or policies used within the confines of mainstream schools.

Regarding teachers' suggestions for placement for children with SEN in segregated schools, parents have raised concerns about the desirability of the traditional self-contained classroom within mainstream schools. What is evident is that the teachers were using the special education practice to transform mainstream schools. Slee (1996) suggests that the policies and practice of special schools are "fixated on determining scales of deficiencies" (ibid: 112) and thus result in limited opportunities for those children assessed as disabled. Over time, things have not changed in Kenya (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015) so the suggestion of separate

provision by teachers has an academic and social impact (Crockett et al. 2007; Hegarty and Alur, 2002), including long-term impact of the placement decision (Kurth, 2015).

Due to lack of practice change after the Salamanca agreement, some children receive instruction in separate schools, had separate teachers and separate activities and were excluded from non-disabled peers. Teachers in segregated schools worked in isolation with no contact with the teachers in integrated units or mainstream school. The eligibility criteria for the segregated special school such as that of special units annexed to mainstream schools was according to the child's level of disability. This study is informed by Mukuria and Korir (2006) that the requirements, procedures and policies controlling special school placement in Kenya is in the form of an assessment carried out in assessment centres currently located in every county of the nation.

It is interesting to note that this criterion assessment applies elsewhere and not just in Kenya. Howe and Miramontes (2015) inform this study that referral criteria for special placement apply in America. Although the situation in England and Scotland is different now, previously some children up to the age of 19 went through a formal process known "statement of special needs" (Warnock and Norwich, 2010) to identify the additional support and suitable provision including placement to enable them to participate in education. However, from September 2014, Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans replaced statements of Special Educational Need (SEN). Current literature suggests that the 2014 code has since been revised and new guidance issued in January 2015 and further shows the practicality of the EHC which covers a child from birth to 25years. Since the inception of special education (see section 1.3), assessment in Kenya has dual functions of determining additional support, placement into a special school and preventing unlimited access that can deplete available resources since funding is meant explicitly for those children most in need of specialised facilities.

### **5.1.3 Integration**

This study demonstrates that the words ‘special’, ‘integration’ and ‘inclusion’ were used inter-changeably to talk about integration. Previous scholars such as (Byrne, 2013; Polat, 2011; Paliokosta and Blandford, 2010; Huston, 2010) established the same exchange of terms. Mostly, the last two terms were not distinct and appeared to confuse most participants, as seen with ST13:32, who preferred integration to inclusion, or PT 1:20 who understood integration as the placement of disabled children in mainstream classrooms. Nonetheless, although the use of these terms was not distinct, most participants were without a viable alternative to the creation of inclusive schools, via a quick idea of integration. It appeared integration was the most feasible option and did not require much effort to create and maintain, thus participants were more predisposed towards this approach.

The strategy was established prevalent, resulting in views that mainstream classrooms may not be suitable for children with diverse needs. The current study has significant implications for developing inclusive schools as a result of these statements emphasising a default thinking that children with SEN require special education by special teachers in special schools with special facilities, all provided within the confines of the mainstream school. This perspective is contrary to the Salamanca framework for action which called for all children to be educated in the same classroom irrespective of disability (UNESCO, 1994). Lack of reflexive thinking regarding inclusive options is a finding also made by (Wanjiru, 2018; Obiakor, 2012; Ahmmed et al. 2012; Forlin and Chambers, 2011; Miles and Singal, 2010). Although these authors did not use the explicit words used in this study by the participants, they validate participant’s suggestions that successful integration depended on the school, the teacher, the child, the parent and the community.

Granting integration is different from inclusion, it is still worthwhile comparing the number of children accessing mainstream schools, as it can be said that Kenya is making the right step towards bridging the gap between mainstream and special school seen through children learning together in the same school, as called by Salamanca 1994. This outcome demonstrates social constructionist whereby socialisation of all children occurs in the same school, which participants in this study framed as a broader form of inclusion in Kenya.

#### 5.1.4 The reality of inclusion in Kenya

The fourth pathway identified the reality of inclusion in Kenya. A finding from many years ago but proved relevant to this enquiry is that of Clark and others (1999) who differed from the conclusions presented by the teachers. The scholars established that inclusion is not a single unidimensional factor to examine, since some schools can be inclusive in many respects but still have some elements of exclusionary practice. Therefore, the writers suggested that rather than carry out an analysis of schools, to identify reasons why they cannot be inclusive, teachers should focus on understanding the processes of inclusion and exclusion which operate in all schools, and how they can alleviate the challenge. These findings raised questions of exclusion that were identified in schools said to be inclusive, as some children with SEN were excluded from most school activities due to their disability.

As a result of my understanding of the findings that are linked to literature some interesting features were identified in the current inclusion in Kenya as reflected in Figure 9 below:

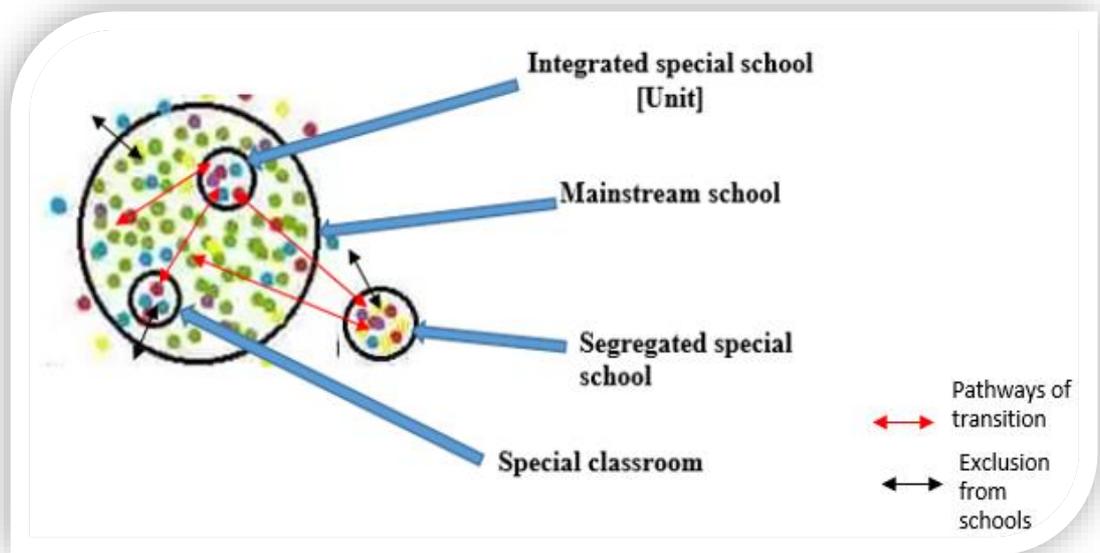


Figure 9: The reality of inclusion in Kenya

The varied environments that education for children with SEN takes place is shown on Figure 9 above and which reveals the reality of inclusive education, the transitions and engagements in the current education system. As the Figure 9 shows sometimes children with SEN are excluded from school but mostly it is concerning behaviours teachers cannot

contain in school (PT5:42; FG5:3) or levels of functional and adaptive abilities (see section 5.3.3). Table 22 below clarifies these pathways.

Table 22: The reality of inclusion explained

Pathway	Implication
Special classroom	Same school but in separate classrooms while being socially included in all school activities.
Segregated special school	Completely excluded from the mainstream, two distinct schools sometimes could be miles apart
Mainstream school	To learn together, share resources and engage socially
Integrated special school [Unit]	Most prevalent in communities. Integrated into a school annexed next to the mainstream schools, academically excluded but socially included in some mainstream school activities.

Difficulties in transitions from special school, integrated unit to mainstream classrooms were identified. It is not adequate for teachers to make an arbitrary decision without updated plans, integration records and individual needs assessment. Therefore, assessment is significant in all points of transition planning with suitable methods of assessment determined at various transition stages by the student, family and individual needs. According to Sitlington and Clark (2007), successful transition wholly depended on the child to improve academically and ability to adjust to the standardised requirements of mainstream school protocol.

As established in this study the responsibility for ensuring a smooth transition and progress in mainstream schools seemed to fall on individual special unit teachers. This finding raises the question of fairness in evaluating the individual needs of the child. Although Ainscow (2015) and Banks and others (2016) did not specifically refer to Kenya, they inform the findings of this research that inclusive education is a matter of fairness to all children for schools that have committed to working inclusively.

## **5.2 Teacher knowledge of disability and special educational needs**

Research undertaken by scholars elsewhere has reinforced the idea that disability has been understood in a variety of ways (Fitzgerald, 2018). Teachers produced a multifaceted range of understanding of disability, mostly reflecting their attitude towards children with SEN. In the sub-sections that follows, these different understandings are explored in greater detail.

### **5.2.1 Understanding based on physical characteristics**

Under this sub-theme, gaining knowledge on how teachers understand disabilities and SEN was helpful, since it enables understanding of various methods, such as physical characteristics, used to filter individual children eligible for special education. As established in this study, there was a lack of consensus on what constitutes disability or SEN. However, most participants delineated the problems being presented, learners with physical and medical impairments, as seen through ST16: 17 and ST12:13, and learners who are slow in class due to their disability. In a study conducted in Ghana in 2007, Obeng made the same interpretations and established that teachers used the children's observable physical characteristics and displayed behaviours to determine whether they had one category of disability or another:

You do not need a professional to determine that a child has a problem. If a smart child is copying everything from the chalkboard wrongly, then you definitely know there is something that is not working well (Obeng, 2007).

The research by Obeng in Ghana is interesting due to its similarities with the current study, teachers lacking clarity on disability and SEN. Most teachers were seen to suggest that some identifications of children with SEN did not require professionals to determine disability. From the participants' suggestions, some children may be sent to segregated schools, special units or denied the opportunity to attend mainstream classes/school owing to teachers' lack of knowledge about disabilities. This study found that some children live with hidden disabilities which could be physical, mental, sensory or neurological conditions and which do not have physical signs that teachers can recognise. Thus disabilities, such as some categories of epilepsy, visual, auditory or sitting impairments caused by chronic back pain cause limitations that can only be identified by professionals. Other students, whose disabilities are not always apparent and may be overlooked, simultaneously struggle with academic tasks (Ruban, 2005). Equally, some gifted children have specific learning

disabilities (G/LD), and cognitive and non-cognitive characteristics are likely to be overlooked (Beckmann and Minnaert, 2018). These findings suggest that practical and strategic pedagogical decisions which underpin provision may not be well coordinated for all children

Disabilities can challenge teachers to think about diversity and pedagogy (Goodley, 2016). Children with hidden disabilities, medical conditions or conditions that were not clear to teachers, were accused of feigning their disability (FG4:6; FG2:37). For teachers to make informed and morally defensible decisions, they need to understand specific issues of SEN (Kauffman et al. 2017). According to Avramidis and Norwich (2016), the success of inclusion is mainstream teachers being committed and receptive to the principles and requirements of inclusion.

Although inclusive education is part of a broad human rights agenda, most teachers understand disability from a position where all children with SEN needed a range of support such as full-time support in the classroom. Thus, some teachers were cautious with the human support as well as apprehensive of some disability categories such as children who required extra time in carrying out school activities (ST17:167). The hesitancy to work with children with SEN could be attributed to teachers' experiences and perceptions of the world. Florian (2008) points out that additional support and services in classrooms, such as support for students' basic needs, assistance with feeding, personal care or escorting to the school bus would not be considered part of education services and should not obstruct the concept of inclusive education. Clarity that inclusive education places demands on teachers may help with commitment and the demands of inclusion (Avramidis and Norwich, 2016).

### **5.2.2 Teachers construction of disability**

Exploration of the data raises interesting issues regarding the construction of disability. ST9:100 best highlighted the notion based on the normative approach by suggesting the need to access facilities and resources same as "normal children". Murugami (2009) made the same findings on social barriers, namely the disregarding of the experience of disabled people and interactions with their environments. A suggestion by FG2:60 corroborates the idea of societal double standards, including selective construction of disability commenting as follows:

When disabled people are in a position of authority in the community such as a government officer, employer or politician, people automatically acknowledge them without any prompting. In such instances, people who despised them suddenly forget the disability and start respecting them [sic].

This explanation highlights different societal perceptions that are selective and discriminatory, suggesting society will choose to overlook disability and be inclusive of disabled persons in political power or in positions of authority, a situation replicated in education. If children with SEN are educated from this approach, then they risk being blamed for their lack of success when society at large presents the actual obstacles faced rather than the person's own disabilities. This finding is consistent with data obtained regarding focus on personal incapacities or failings that create "obstacles to participation in society on equal terms since an individual who seems to lack certain capacities may not be able to attain autonomy" (Michailakis, 2003:210 in Murugami, 2009). These results may suggest that improving learning outcomes for students regarding academic achievement, social skills and personal development, redefines attitudes, lessens discrimination and improves the societal construction of disability, whether an individual is in a position of influence or not.

Teachers construction of disability was externally determined but fundamentally linked to society's treatment of its disabled people, including within education provision. Although the current section focuses only on children in mainstream schools, discrimination and stigmatisation appertain to the various challenges disabled people encounter in social circles, such as wellbeing, socio-economic status and self-esteem (Earle, 2003). Nonetheless, the two theories, medical and social, impact differently on the education of children with SEN in mainstream schools as discussed in this section.

The medical model concept of disability in the context of this enquiry was seen to be condition that requires medical attention such as, treatment or rehabilitation (Mitra, 2018). The medical model of disability is not a beneficial view when adopted by teachers expected to support all learners equally, since it results in labelling children with SEN while trying to "explain, diagnose, treat, and identify pathology" (Gabel and Peters, 2004:587). Teachers with a medical model of disability tend to enhance academic exclusion while the child with SEN was seen to have a condition that was unwanted and needed specialised facilities such hydrotherapy. Other needs are, physiotherapy and adapted resources, regular hospital check-ups and specialised care (ST9:154; ST15:160).

Although teachers emphasised a lack of training, their views of disability revealed the power and position they assume in deciding who is to be enrolled in mainstream classes and who is denied access. The charity model is seen in the benevolent gesture of selecting a few children with mild disabilities out of pity and compassion to attend mainstream classrooms. The view of learners who require sympathy and care to deal with the resulting problems was highlighted in “not their wish to be born disabled” (PT5:60). According to Withers (2012), the charity model approach is well meaning and in the “best interests” of disabled people but considered critically it does not consider disabled people’s experiences and knowledge as necessarily valuable or essential. Instead, disabled people are subjected to a multiplicity of oppressive social attitudes such as fear, anxiety, hostility, distrust, pity, over-protection and patronizing behaviour (Lang, 2007).

Overall both models, were used in the current study to demonstrate aspects of disability and special schools which pinpoints a child with SEN as an unfortunate individual (Earle, 2003) or a problem individual (Mitra, 2018), whose difficulty is unwanted and thus segregation or placement in a special school was the best option. Other scholars have criticised the medical model on different grounds due to its normative strength (Kelly and Byrne, 2018; Marks, 1999 in Haegele and Hodge, 2016), focus on personal tragedy (Oliver, 1996; 2017) and the idea of impairment and remediation (Knight, 2013). Despite the limitations of the medical model, its operation seems necessary, especially in the allocation of resources for children with SEN in inclusive settings (Corbett and Norwich, see Hodkinson and Vickerman 2009). In the current study, the medical model is necessary for the control of unlimited access to special school to prevent depletion of available resources for children who need them most.

The recommendations made by the teachers on placement in the special school, highlights an underlying philosophy of segregation within the medical model rather than the philosophy of inclusion based on the social model (Kauffman et al. 2017; Avramidis and Norwich, 2016; Hodkinson and Vickerman 2009). A shift from perceiving learners’ difficulties from the view of their impairment to the role society and education system can play, assists teachers to explore barriers to learning and other exclusionary factors beyond the learner. Dudley-Marling (2004:488) established that the construction of identity, such as the identity of disability, depends on the complex interaction of teachers, learners, schools and activities. With such construction exclusion and isolation is the outcome accompanied by barriers created by society (Rieser, 2012; Terzi, 2010). UNESCO (2017).

The social model of disability becomes essential to this study to provide the intellectual, methodological tools to correct the risk of exclusion from mainstream schools, prejudices towards disabilities (Mung'ala-Odera et al. 2006), adjustment of the external environment (Loreman and Forlin, 2014 Rieser, 2012). Indeed, according to the social model approach, disability is something a person experiences not something a person has (ALLFIE, online). In this study, the social model of disability can be used to change of attitudes that children with SEN do not have to be viewed negatively, as failures, slow learners or difficult to control. Training colleges could give teachers “special skills” to support all children but teachers too have the responsibility to enhance those skills in the best manner possible to remove educational related barriers (PT5:6).

### **5.2.3 Parents’ construction of disability**

Some essential differences between teachers and parents on social construction of disability and SEN were identified. Parents appeared to understand inclusive education, reflections of prejudice and discrimination in communities especially towards their children (see section 6.3.6). Notably, some parents were found attempting to challenge the barriers that the wider society has erected by sending their children to mainstream school. A possible explanation is most likely related to awareness created from contact with professionals in the area of disability issues. As could be understood, parents began parenting within parallels of medical model approach common in communities such as disabled and non-disabled, acceptance and discriminatory practices, normalcy and deficit, all of which are in their experience. Initial observations during data collection highlighted that over time most parents had gained ample knowledge and understanding of disability being a lifelong occurrence. A social model approach was seen in building relationships with others by participating in community-based peer support networks. As noted in my personal research journal:

Today most study participants mentioned getting support from a local NGO. They said it supports people within the community that are overlooked by other people or organisations due to their vulnerability (December 12, 2015).

An enriching coping strategy for parents was confirmed as involvement with support groups and partnership within the local NGOs. These groups addressed priorities of development by notably working with vulnerable groups of people in the community to improve their

lives within rational use of scarce funds (St Martins Social Apostolate, 2015<sup>17</sup>; L'Arche Kenya<sup>18</sup>). Also recorded in my personal research journal is the following:

“...the group involvement with communities is prominent especially engagement with vulnerable groups such as disabled children and their parents. The motto “Only through community” demonstrates the project focus on community participation (December 12, 2015).

It could be said that parents working with professionals had high levels of cohesion and attachments, which are also essential coping mechanisms (Gona et al. 2011). One parent, FG9:41, best exemplifies the social approach by disregarding disability identity, cultural assumptions and meanings connected to physical differences that had the potential for bias and stigma as observed in the following comments:

My son has a great sense of humour; he can be an outstanding actor.

Or FG7:40's comment from a social model perspective:

My child is vulnerable and different from the other children in her school but can be a very good artist.

Taken together these findings demonstrate that parents were conscious of the environment as a source of disability for their children. The same emphasis is made by Hodkinson and Vickerman (2010) that the environment restricts disabled people's ability to function effectively. Additionally, social model proponents attribute inclusive education and disability in general to environmental factors that can cause obstacles to access and participation in education (Trussler and Robinson, 2015). For this reason, all parents in this study emphasised that children of all ages have the potential of achievement, the schools' role being to accommodate their needs and support individual students to identify and understand their own best abilities (Avramidis and Norwich 2016). Regarding the language that parents used, it is difficult to explain whether disability is understood according to the manner in which the community is structured, or whether parents were avoiding identifying their children as disabled. However, I did establish that their primary focus was on barriers to access, equality and social justice rather than focussing on individual limitations.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.saintmartin-kenya.org>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.larchekenya.org/index.php/outreach>

#### **5.2.4 Influence of traditional beliefs and religion in disability construction**

As established in the previous section, conceptualisation of disability in this study was influenced by the models of disability some of which were rejected due to prejudiced perceptions and negative connotation in matters of inclusiveness (Donoghue, 2003). This study made similar findings to Harknett 1996 (see Stone-MacDonald and Butera, 2014) on understanding and causes of disability as influenced by three kinds of thinking, namely:

- i. Traditional beliefs affecting understanding of disabilities.
- ii. Influence of Christian beliefs that the state of being disabled can be changed.
- iii. The importance of modern medicine to illuminate the cause of disabilities.

The three categories were authenticated as interlinked in discussing the perception of disability in African communities, since the construction of disability is influenced by culture (Munyi, 2012). As this study identified, individuals used one or multiple categories of beliefs about disabilities, most probably to counteract deleterious beliefs about disability (Ingstad and Grut, 2007).

##### **i. Traditional beliefs influencing understanding of disabilities**

Most scholars in Kenya and Africa investigating disabilities, causes and prevention in general, have identified the influence of traditional beliefs and customs (Kiarie, 2014; Stone-MacDonald and Butera, 2014; Munyi, 2012; Muuya, 2002; Kisanji, 1998b; Ndurumo, 1993; Franzen, 1990). However, this study did not find indisputable evidence to show a strong influence of traditional beliefs in the understanding of disability and SEN within the research community.

The data from twenty participants showed that only one implicitly alluded to the concept of disability in relation to external forces such as religion, witchcraft or curses. FG3:38 exemplified the most dominant influence of traditional beliefs and customs on the construction of disability and SEN, by describing his son's experience upon enrolment in mainstream secondary school. As FG3:38 explained, the questions his son was asked by his peers was "what happened to you?" This question could be attributed to children innate curiosity about their environment and lack of awareness of disabilities. A deeper understanding of the logic behind children's behaviour (Bryant, 2017), shows the physical

attributes and implicitly understood imperfections of the body being pointed out. The non-disabled peers suggested an external force must have caused the disability of the new learner: he was bewitched, was cursed or had sinned. This definitely was a mostly deterministic approach that something causes all events in life.

Recent publications on disability show that a paradigm shift has taken place globally in defining the status and treatment of disabled people (Mason, 2018; Seligman and Darling, 2017). Research has also identified that fragments of tradition and past beliefs still influence present-day practices in some African communities, thus affecting some vulnerable groups of people (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015; Stone-MacDonald and Butera, 2014, Ogechi and Ruto, 2002). Most research has yielded more or less the same results as the current study in other African countries such as, for example, Ghana (Mantey, 2017); Nigeria (Okoye, 2017); Malawi (Paget et al. 2016); Tanzania (Stone-MacDonald and Butera, 2014); Namibia (Haihambo and Lightfoot, 2010). To this effect, the current study established that in communities, disability is still considered shameful (ST16:214). Children with SEN are jeered at and mocked (FG7:40), bullied (FG6:41), disregarded (FG4:48) and derided (FG4:51). As identified by Okoye's 2017 study conducted in Nigeria, most African communities have not considerably transformed their attitudes in matters regarding disability and disabled people.

## **ii. Influence of Christian beliefs**

Religious ideas have a crucial role in determining what is considered socially acceptable, particularly in non-western cultures (Barnes and Mercer, 2005). Although the religious view was not explicitly mentioned in the current study, most likely due to the nature of questions used to guide the study. The influence of religion shows that the state of being disabled can be changed. Other quite prevalent view is the conception of disability as a sign of "divine displeasure" (Okoye, 2017:69).

The Religious perception of disability is situated within the history of the Judeo-Christian tradition that conceptualises disability as an act of a higher being, as was seen in the action of Jesus passing by a man who was blind from birth and then his disciples questioning the cause of the man's disability, "Rabbi<sup>19</sup>, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born

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<sup>19</sup> Hebrew for teacher

blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. (John 9:1-3 NIV<sup>20</sup>). The answer Jesus gave contributed to a common belief in the Judeo-Christian society that disability presented itself as an opportunity for miracles to occur. Since this miracle happened more than a century ago, and in a different setting, it was surprising that the same belief of miracle healing is still prioritised in modern times.

Overall, the influence of religion on disability matters in this study was seen as a social issue present in the community, leading to misconceptions and confusion about the causes and prevention of disabilities. The above finding is in tandem with Gachago (2008) that religion has played a role in reinforcing a negative conceptualisation of disability. The Bible teaches that disability is a symptom of original sin (Romans 5:12). At the same time, God glorifies himself through disability (John 9:3). Another biblical reason being that God allows disability so that people may learn trust in Him rather than in themselves (Exodus 4:10). In modern times these biblical ideas are exploited by the church and hinder efforts to educate communities about the causes and prevention of disabilities difficult (Gachago, 2008). Caramazza (2006), in a study, carried out in Nyahururu (the location of the current research) ascertained the priority in the area is reduction of disabilities prevalence. This means setting goal towards the creation of awareness and education in order to change community perception and attitudes including.

Nevertheless, current literature has focused on reinforcing a paradigm shift from miracles to technological solutions to disability challenges (Okoye, 2017). Okoye calls on empowered new generations of technologists, not only in Nigeria but across Africa, to change the differing disability construction and “bring about social change; increased connectivity and e-learning; and radically improve access to areas of public life” (Okoye, 2017:64). The writer concludes these factors can enhance concrete social constructions and disabled people empowerment.

### **5.2.5 Discrimination and stereotypes of disability**

More recent attention has focused on the provision of EFA with a commitment towards combating discrimination against children with SEN through accommodation of their

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<sup>20</sup> The New International Version (NIV) <http://biblehub.com/john/9-3.htm>

education needs, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions (UNESCO, 1994: ix). According to Florian and others (2016), discrimination is often subtle and complex, sometimes unintended, and rarely straightforward. However, the devaluation of any member of a school, for whatever reason, forms a barrier of participation while the principle of inclusion focuses on the elimination of discrimination. Thus, the principle of inclusion on treating children “as they would if they did not have a disability” applies to all mainstream school’s (UNESCO, 1994: 17).

As demonstrated in this study, discrimination and stereotyping in the physical assessment of disabilities, resulted in prejudice and stigma. Children’s physical conditions were a point of reference, demonstrating that despite other achievements in school, impairment is the first phenomenon that other people see. An example is a learner with dwarfism used as a label, despite other secondary conditions such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, which the learner also had. Teachers also appeared to suggest disability caused slow learning, illegible handwriting, lateness, attention deficit and hyperactivity for children with SEN, all of which is an uninformed hypothesis. Bryant (2017) argues that teachers should expect that some children, even non-disabled children, will be slow and respond differently to instructions. As revealed by Earle (2003), in research carried out with disabled women, practitioners often wrongly attributed health problems to the individual’s impairment. Accordingly, assumptions by teachers can cause academic and social exclusion of children with SEN.

The government of Kenya has continually developed various legislations for the empowerment of children with SEN, as seen through legislation such as the Sessional Paper No. 1, 2005 on Education Training and Research, or the introduction of the Persons with Disabilities Act (2003), which prohibits all forms of discrimination of persons with disabilities (RoK, 2003). Evidence of legislation, discrimination, stereotyping and stigma was proved active in access and training. As was established of the six schools involved in this study none had a disabled teacher (see Table 13). However, the barriers identified in this research highlight the subtle and more open disability discrimination children with SEN encounter, especially when it comes to enrolment in mainstream classrooms and school adjustments, including accessible toilets. This finding cannot necessarily be applied to all schools in Kenya. Nonetheless, Ki-moon (2013) indicated that attention should be focused on disparities that make vulnerable groups remain at an unfair disadvantage. Such is the case

of children with SEN explicitly excluded since schools have failed to make significant adjustments.

Various scholars emphasise significant contributing factors to the success of inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools is the understanding and attitudes teachers hold on SEN (Avramidis, 2002; Sharma and others. 2008; De Boer, and Minnaert, 2011). Teachers with positive attitude are important because they are fundamental in fulfilling family and societal expectations that each child becomes a member of a community, society or institution (Harris, 2018). There is consensus in the inclusion agenda that such practice is not only likely to result in exclusion for most children with SEN but is especially true for children with behavioural difficulties (Kiarago, 2016). It is possible that social function of education has been replaced by values that are directly connected with producing knowledge .Vlachou and Papananou (2018) revealed discrimination can be enhanced by a co modified education sector, as reflected in broader demands for transforming societies into learning societies and knowledge economies.

The Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) used in developing countries that were experiencing economic crises (as specified by the IMF), proposed less economic involvement with states and saw the development of market-oriented education policies (Oketch and Rolleston, 2007). A large number of research findings have identified that education and knowledge have been influenced by marketisation implemented in education programmes and policy, including profit-making in education (Bessant 2012; Tomlinson 2013; Vlachou and Papananou, 2018). This change has led to the cost-sharing policy whereby individual families have had to meet part of the educational costs, placing a huge burden on families that cannot or could not afford the school fees<sup>21</sup>, limiting access to education for many students (Oketch and Rolleston, 2007). Accordingly, within the pursuit for education some children with SEN or low-income families face discrimination in schools because in their pedagogy teachers' pay little attention to individual differences and see [almost] all students being capable of succeeding in school (Croft, 2010).For this reason, the achievement of inclusive education becomes even more challenging (Vlachou and Papananou, 2018).

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<sup>21</sup> School payment was first abolished in Kenya in 1974 but was reintroduced in Kenya in 1988 (Bogonko, 1992: 113); then abolished again in 2003.

This research suggests that negative teacher views and attitudes of disability can indicate discrimination in mainstream schools. Also, as revealed, bias stemming from education affects. This finding is supported by Barnes and Sheldon (2010) findings that children who experience discrimination in education, are likely to encounter considerable inequality in other domains of a child's social life. These areas could be education, healthcare, employment, housing, transport or gainful employment (Earle, 2003).

Other research show discrimination and disproportionately high levels of exclusion from mainstream education (Florian et al. 2016; Adoyo and Odeny, 2015; Oliver and Barnes, 2012; Mittler, 2012; Miles and Singal, 2010; Ainscow and César, 2006). According to UNICEF (2007), academic and social exclusion in education is a form of discrimination that touches all aspects of a child's life and can have varying implications at different stages in a child's life cycle. Although children with SEN are very often more vulnerable to abuse and violence, the daily reality for the small number of children with SEN in mainstream schools is one of being disadvantaged by lack of opportunities to progress to their full potential.

### **The position of the parents on discrimination and stigma**

As mentioned previously, there is a plausible link between discrimination, stigma and exclusion in mainstream schools. It could be argued that the parents involved in this enquiry were more focused on challenging the system regarding the discrimination their children face in education provision. FG8:13 contends that the Cabinet Secretary of Education seems to lack awareness of the state of their school, as understood through lack of engagement with the issues that affect the school. Other parents appeared to vent frustration at the systemic discrimination and neglect, as demonstrated by FG9:57:

Since they know all the number of children with disabilities in Kenya, why can't they give us a card which I can present at the chemist/pharmacy to get a discount on medication? If not so, I can cost share by paying 30% for medicine and leave the government to pay 70%. After all, I am only taking care of this child for the government. This child makes the population of Kenya and its citizenry, why does the government leave me to suffer alone?

In the above quote, the participant implied that the government should safeguard its citizens from poverty and all forms of discrimination for their children. An interesting finding is, that although literature highlights disabled people as a stigmatised group in the workplace and in education in Kenya (Opini, 2010), most parents in this study used friendly language devoid

of stigma, labels and stereotypes. Most likely to avoid the harsh social reality of stigmatisation and stereotyping common in society. In general, parents in this study remained in favour of inclusive schools, not only from a social model of disability but also from a better understanding of the individual needs. A probable explanation for the parents' positivity could be the process of acceptance which has contributed to coping with the new living situation and focus on how to provide the best possible start in life. Certainly, due to the discrimination experienced in society, some parents in this study, for example, FG2:60 have turned from parent to advocate to give their children chances to thrive with disability in an environment that is not welcoming. For this reason, most indicated having joined disability activism group that emphasises the importance of societal and educational inclusion.

Parents in this study experience could be likened with that of Kingsley in her short poem "Welcome to Holland" (see Appendix 10) of parents claiming their children's rightful place in society (Kingsley, n.d; Owens, 2015). Although language associated with positive values may be related to an improved position in society (Haller et al. 2006), a study by Stone-MacDonald and Butera (2014) in East African countries (of which Kenya is one) shows that claiming a rightful place is not an easy task. As identified, derogatory language was used against disabled persons in education and employment settings. For example, in Rwanda the deaf were called *ibiragi*<sup>22</sup>, in Uganda people used the word *kasiru*<sup>23</sup>, while in the current study, teachers used stigmatising words such as crippled, abnormal and drooling to refer to children with SEN. According to theory and empirical research, the words or phrases people voice or write may have many implications for attitudes and action toward, and the identity of, people with disabilities Back et al. (2016). Thus, language can be another opportunity to advance advocacy for equality, justice or improved experiences of disabled people in society

### **5.3 Teacher understanding of inclusive practices**

A considerable amount of literature has defined inclusive education in terms of overcoming barriers to learning and participation for all children (Lloyd, 2008; Stubbs, 2008; Polat, 2011 Mittler, 2012; Rieser, 2012; Ainscow and Messiou, 2018). In the context of developing

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<sup>22</sup> Equivalent to being foolish

<sup>23</sup> Equivalent to demonstrating stupidity

countries, it tends to fill the gap left by EFA and thus focuses almost exclusively on disabled children (Peters, 2003). Therefore, a common belief amongst teachers participating in this study was that inclusion was a form of education specifically meant for children with SEN. As discussed in section 6.2.1 (see sub-section integration), children with SEN were either in special schools or integrated into special units. According to data available, those children who had a physical difficulty but had learning abilities such as numeracy and literacy skills were enrolled in mainstream school and considered included since they did not require support. Teachers appeared to demonstrate a set of norms and uniformity that should apply in mainstream schools, corresponding to what/how learners ought to be as opposed to the reality which focuses on “this is how they are what should we do?” Vehmas and Watson (2016) seem to support the understanding that such an approach is redundant, incorrect and may serve to prevent productive evaluative discussion on important ethical, educational and political issues that relate to disabled people’s lives.

### **5.3.1 Location of the learner**

As mentioned in the previous section, the normative approach to disability was most pertinent in causing the dilemma existent with teachers in mainstream schools. Teachers introduced a possible concern about the extent to which children with SEN should be included in mainstream schools. In a different study, Norwich (2008) made a similar observation of the dilemma of inclusion. Noting the compelling nature of the normative approach, the predicament was whether to recognise or overlook disability when enrolling children with SEN. However, given the current level of global advocacy of inclusive schools, taking either choice creates the risk of being seen as negative, stigmatising, devaluing, rejecting or denying children with SEN their relevant opportunities. When discussing location, Terzi (2005) argues that identifying children’s differences in order to provide for them differently or provide collective services for all children, runs the risk of discrimination and not meeting individual needs.

Accordingly, the contradictions and rigidity observed in the understanding of disabilities and SEN in this study (see section 6.3) are similar to what Warnock and Norwich (2010) describes as the dilemma of difference. Teachers in mainstream schools indicated they were faced with the requirement of treating all children the same, providing education in the same classroom with the same curriculum and resources. However, from the teachers perspective, it can be said that equality does not mean treating everyone the same, but rather some

children might need things done differently to achieve an equal opportunity to access a similar education.

Emanating from the inclusion dilemma, most teachers demonstrated disparities in decision-making regarding the *location* for the provision of education for children with SEN. Some of these were identified as mainstream classrooms, integrated units and segregated residential schools. According to WHO (2012), separation of children due to their disability may impact a child's normal development, resulting in more severe consequences than the disability itself. As applicable to this study, education is ideally placed to equalise life chances and, at minimum, reduce prejudicial practices “so that all learners have the best possible chances of positive life outcomes” (Sood et al. 2018:39). From another premise, it could be argued that the key problem with the location dilemma is the structures and organisations that formulate policies centred on raising educational standards for non-disabled children rather than prioritising education for all children, with none being segregated from their appropriate provision.

### **5.3.2 Integrated approach**

Resulting from the accompanying demands of practice that all children be taught in a child-friendly environment with appropriate teacher pedagogy (UNESCO, 1994), the dynamics of inclusion were considered complicated by most teachers involved in this study. Most teachers in the current study were not keen to take responsibility for making reasonable adjustments for inclusion or individually push for inclusive classrooms. Instead, teachers made excuses for mainstream school failure with integration seen as an easy alternative of teaching a smaller group by specially trained teacher. Although implicitly understood, special unit teachers were treated as superior since they had smaller classes, received an extra allowance from the government and schools received extra funding. Charity model of disability can be over-sympathetic (see section 3.4). This view can lead to ‘interventions that centre on providing help’ (Florian et al. 2002: 212). Special units received contributions in form of donations from guests towards their welfare and out of sympathy for the children seen as victims of their impairment (see section 6.4.1: i). Loreman (2007) highlights the concerns of the Salamanca framework on integrated schools being used to divert the objectives of inclusion.

This study supports both views and adds that creating an extra school within a mainstream school unnecessarily adds to the national budget. The Salamanca framework provides an economic justification for inclusion as the most effective means of “improving the efficiency and eventually the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system” (UNESCO, 1994:9). Although teachers were certain of the benefits of “two schools in one”, it was more cost-effective to establish and maintain a single mainstream school than build two different schools for disabled and non-disabled groups of children. Critics of this approach focus on the gap created between children with SEN and those who are non-disabled (Lai and Gill, 2017; Thompson et al. 2016; Kiuppis, 2014). The estimated average cost of segregated placements which Kenya has adopted is 7 to 9 times higher than SEN learner placement in general education classrooms (Peters, 2003). Additionally, it is not economically viable for the government to employ teachers for two schools, have two headteachers and two deputy-headteachers, but share the same school playground. A further point to be considered is the persistent challenge of teacher shortages in Kenyan schools (Gatemi and Thinguri, 2018; Katitia, 2015; Sifuna and Sawamura, 2010). Information shared by the TSC in 2017 revealed a deficit of 92,000 teachers by 2016, which could rise to 116,513 in 2018 (Wanzala, 2017). Accordingly, the promise to employ 5,000 teachers (2,205 to primary and 2,795 to secondary schools) by 2018 will not ease the challenge.

### **5.3.3 Level of functional and adaptive abilities**

Understanding of inclusion was centred on the learner’s level of adaptive and functional skills. Skills defined as functional are those that support daily living (ADLs) with the outcome of independence and can be taught using different strategies. For some children with SEN, those skills may be self-care, communication skills or social skills. Adaptive skills emerge from adaptive behaviour and/or the conceptual, social, and practical skills that individuals have learned and use in their everyday lives. The subtle demand of acquisition of functional and adaptive abilities was seen as a sophisticated way of preventing the implementation of inclusive classes. Most children seeking inclusive education who attend early childhood classes are adequately taught these skills by the time they pursue mainstream primary school education. As established, teachers were willing to accommodate individual students who had gained adaptive and functional skills effectively to a level whereby they could manage to learn in the mainstream classroom without support. However, teachers appeared unaware that functional and adaptive skills are taught when educational goals do

not take precedence (Muuya, 2002). Most teachers mentioned that one of their main concerns in regular classrooms is the child who disrupts lessons, seeks too much attention from the teacher or peers, and who fails to cooperate when attempts are made to provide additional SEN support. Despite training in child psychology, teacher attitude was seen in the claim of finding it difficult to motivate children with SEN who are unreceptive (ST10:29).

Attitudes towards learners' adaptive skill deficits, behaviour and unfamiliarity with classroom adaptations demonstrate the disposition to engage learners with SEN in inclusive classes (ST17:140). In this study, this was probably due to teachers being uncomfortable with children who had not acquired some form of independence. Therefore, they indicated that delayed functional academic and adaptive skills might require specialised services that are only available in special schools. According to (Miller and Fenty, 2008) some students acquire functional and adaptive skills more slowly than others so those who cannot master instruction successfully need to be prompted without being stigmatised or labelled. With the kind of attitude indicated above, children who need additional assistance are likely to be excluded from opportunities for contact with non-disabled peers in suitable mainstream environments (Oliver, 2017; 1996). Teamwork and collaboration were missing between teachers and the government regarding the best ways to adjust the environment and remove barriers of access. Instead, teachers were found avoiding responsibility, lacking creativity and holding onto the belief that children with additional academic and social support needs cannot learn effectively in the same classroom or follow the same curriculum as non-disabled peers.

#### **5.3.4 The process of inclusion**

Following the process of inclusion, some teachers suggested inclusive classrooms would be implemented at the cost of non-disabled children who were successful academically, or to the detriment of individual happiness if the included child had learning difficulties, due to the competitive nature of mainstream school (ST10:29). The social justice perspective advocates the equality principle whereby local schools provide education for all children, irrespective of individual needs (Kelly and Byrne, 2018; Florian, 2014). The onus is upon the teachers and organisational management to take professional responsibility and avoid delaying tactics that have been used over an extended period to keep children with SEN at the end of the education queue, despite having the same rights as other children in Kenya. Miles and Singal (2010) observe that since the mid-1990s, there have been contradictions in

developing countries on who should be included or excluded in or from education. Indeed, there is no shortage of disagreement and contradictions as the current study has established. However, if teachers, in collaboration with organisation systems, are genuinely considering supporting successful inclusive practices for children with SEN in schools, they should avoid delaying tactics and devise ways of minimising disruption in classes including “failure“ regulation within the education systems caused by inclusion (Armstrong and Spandagou, 2011:30).

Howe and Miramontes (2015) proposed that inclusion challenges the traditional structure of school, educator knowledge of teaching and learning in inclusive settings. Discussing the kind of service needed and the process to be followed, teachers suggested the starting point should always be from a needs-based focus (However, this focus was more favourable on teachers than on the needs of the individual child). For example, ST9:46 suggested that teachers only wanted those disabled children who could fit comfortably in regular classes. From this understanding, flexible pathways that could be followed when children with SEN joined mainstream schools were mentioned by most participants.

Since the teacher is one of the many stakeholders of education, and crucial in determining the success or failure of appropriate inclusion (Westwood, 2010; 2018), negative perspectives could impede the process of inclusion of children with SEN in regular classrooms (Deku and Vanderpuye, 2017). Amongst others, the target of the current global education agenda is sustainable development, improvement and transformation of education (DFID, 2015). Emphasis is on education as a resource to develop human capital, improve economic performance, and enhance capabilities and choices of individuals (Peters, 2003). Therefore, failure to ensure inclusivity and promotion of educational opportunities for children with SEN can result in an astounding loss for Kenya.

### **5.3.5 Parental understanding of inclusion**

The findings from the parent’s voice strategy highlighted parents making an invaluable contribution to their families and society but receiving less than is practically adequate from the government for their children. Some of them expressed reservations regarding teachers and expressed negative attitudes (see section 5.2.4) including unwelcome environments in mainstreams schools (FG2:37; FG5:8). Although their children were included, experiences of feeling uncomfortable while engaging with teachers on matters concerning their children

were expressed (for example FG4:6). Although this study did not conduct an in-depth exploration of the long-term ramifications of parents' experience of being unwelcome in their child's school, there are possible adverse effects, engagements and associations (Siegel et al. 2018). The UNICEF (2009) manual on Child-Friendly Schools reveals that the cornerstone of welcoming schools links academic achievement, emotional well-being and an inclusive school climate. Ambivalence regarding teacher understanding of disabilities was identified, most parents were content with their child's placement and not demanding inclusion of their children into the mainstream classrooms (see section 5.4.1). On matters of inclusion, Seligman and Darling (2017) suggest that some parents lack awareness of their active role in mainstream provision. For example, it was noted some parents did not question teacher decision-making regarding their child's placement and transition.

#### **5.4 Barriers to inclusion**

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the professional capacity of teachers in catering for learners with SEN shows lack of effective strategies leading to exclusion from mainstream schools. One critical inclusive education debate is that nations cannot reach their full social, economic and political potential if they continue ignoring or marginalising disabled people (Forlin and Chambers, 2017; Rose, et al. 2015; Norwich, 2008; 2013). Kindiki (2011) argues the impact of barriers depends on the resources available. The indispensable task for all teachers and other education stakeholders is to identify barriers that hinder development and, moreover, find effective ways to overcome these barriers through effective improvement strategies (Singal, 2017; Polat, 2011; Armstrong et al. 2009; Vislie, 2003). The next section describes in detail the significant barriers to inclusion identified in this study.

##### **5.4.1 Teacher related barriers**

This study is informed by Richards and Clough (2004) that teacher training requires a series of improvements which prepare teachers for working inclusively to reduce exclusion for vulnerable groups of children. Therefore, any lack of knowledge and skill deficit for teaching a range of students with individual needs, is highlighted as a significant barrier to inclusive teaching (McKay, 2016). Research participants in this study were concerned about efficacy for inclusive practice and pointed out that they should not be reasonably expected to work with children with SEN without training or professional knowledge of disabilities and

inclusion. McKay (2016) and Richards and Clough (2004) affirm that the dynamic participation and support of teachers is crucial in the implementation of inclusive education programmes. Findings on barriers to inclusion raised confounding issues which are addressed here as (i) Teacher training and competencies for inclusive practice (ii) Teacher attitudes towards inclusion.

### **i. Teacher training and competencies for inclusive practice**

The overall goal of Kenya's Vision for 2030 is to provide quality education by improving teacher training and ensuring all schools have sufficient competent teachers (MoE, 2012). However, the idea of training teachers to make them competent to cater for diverse needs in inclusive classroom, shows lack of training leading to barriers to learning which leads to the exclusion of some children. Responses from the participants showed that teacher competencies for inclusive practice negatively influenced their ability to meet the educational needs of learners with SEN (PT5:6). Further, the practice of working with children with SEN and other medical conditions presents many new challenges to teachers previously trained to teach in general education. Lack of disabled teachers in this study was explained by ST12:157, who attributed it to unwelcoming school environments. For this reason, Katitia (2015) informs the findings of this study that society no longer highly esteems teacher education when compared to other sectors of education, due to the manner in which the government manages teacher education. Mismanagement gives rise to reduced image and negative attitudes accorded to the teaching profession by communities.

Participants cast doubts on the practicability of inclusive education. Nonetheless, due to the key issues in achieving equality in education and most likely wanting to be seen supporting inclusion, some participants seemed to endorse the of children with SEN into mainstream classrooms out of sympathy and pity (PT5:60). As subtle as this might be, placement without accompanying support for the sake of being seen to be inclusive, results to exclusion. Thus inclusion, whether out of sympathy or pity, was grounded on the medical model of disability, whereby disability was amicably regarded as an individual problem within the learner which requires compassion and care to deal with any resulting issues.

Some trends in education, such as provision of education on humanitarian grounds rather than entitlement, is a notion "in the past" when special schools were initially started from a benevolent, compassionate principle for "doing good" for disabled children (Armstrong

2002: 441). Similarly, in the 21st century, inclusive education should be informed by perspectives of pedagogy, policy and practice and teacher readiness to gain skills and use them to benefit all children (Katitia, 2015). In considering all the responses from the participants and policy already in place, it can be said that inclusive classes remain only a vision to be realised in the future. These findings, no doubt, will be much investigated but, considering the significant barrier of teachers lacking specific skills and confidence to attend to the diverse needs of each learner in their classes, the *vision view of inclusion* is yet to be valid and real in Kenya.

## ii. Teacher attitudes towards inclusion

Within the context of this study, there was a shared view was of the paramount need for training for teachers to play a useful role in implementing inclusive environments in their schools. However, a barrier to effective implementation of inclusive education arose from teacher attitudes and influences as well as the widespread feeling of limited skills. There appears to be broad agreement that teacher attitudes toward inclusive education are significant in implementing the ambitious goal of inclusive schools/classrooms, yet placement in regular schools does not always guarantee access to high quality education (Sharma et al. 2018). Attitudes towards inclusive education are a predictor of subsequent teacher actions and commitment to inclusive education. Therefore, unless schoolteachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion (Sharma and Jacobs 2016) and have knowledge and skills to include all learners (EADSNE 2013), successful implementation of inclusive education and practices continues to be a challenge for Kenya.

Efforts to identify factors associated with teacher attitudes and influences concerning inclusion in this study illustrated a variety of suggestions such as diversity of needs, degree of disability and lack of time for additional SEN support all being critical factors. Other factors considered were the teacher/student ration as shown Table 23.

Table 23: Teacher/student ratio

<b>Education Indicators</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Secondary teacher/student ratio	1:32	1:31	1:32	1:32
Primary teacher/student ratio	1:54	1:57	1:57	1:52

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2014)

Attitude and ration factors were seen as a barrier to teaching children with diversity of needs due to lack of ability to differentiate the curriculum or provide additional academic and social support. Negative attitudes emanated from the understanding that inclusive classrooms require prior and on-going training for teachers, available planning time to cater for individual needs, consideration of class size and numbers of children with SEN in a given class. From teachers' suggestions, such training included in-service courses, one-day training, seminars, workshops, conferences and online studies. Negative attitudes were more prevalent with secondary schools teachers who mostly suggested their lacking fundamental SEN skills to initiate principles and set standards that could strengthen the focus on inclusion. Sharma and others (2007) state that lack of contact opportunities with disabled people results in a lack of confidence to teach children with SEN. From the available data, there is reason to believe that most secondary schools were not making efforts to be inclusive and had mixed perceptions of the inclusion of children with special needs in their classes and its impact on their daily working lives.

Ambivalence and lack of confidence were noted in the majority of participants, such as (PT8:156). Explanations stated their support of inclusive schools yet were uncertain, as seen in the use of *but* to indicate the impracticalities of inclusive education. According to Rouse (2008), to create teachers who have who have positive attitudes and the tenacity to support all learners in the classroom, adequate teacher training should be provided so that teachers can teach all children with confidence. This concurs with the widespread acceptance that teachers must be guaranteed training and professional development for effective differentiation of the curriculum (Coe, Higgins and Major, 2014).

Lack of coordinated approach to teacher development is a challenge in Kenya, (Katitia, 2015). Presently, initial training is provided in colleges while the Kenya Education Staff Institute (KESI) is charged with the responsibility of in-servicing teachers. However, the organisation is facing human and financial resource challenges to undertake this task (ibid). These delimiting factors combined, typically shape a positive or negative attitude and feelings of inadequacy, as highlighted by Forlin and Sin (2010:1) below:

Inadequate teacher education and a lack of suitable resources often inhibit teachers from developing the appropriate beliefs or attitudes necessary for becoming inclusive practitioners

Some teachers in the current study were complacent and appeared to rely on initial training and extended professional experience to be better teachers. Notably, some teachers were taking ownership of their learning by undertaking school-based training during school holidays. Teacher concerns for lack of training are criticised by Pijl (2010), who argues that teachers committed to personal development should take ownership of their own learning. Smith and Tyler (2011) reinforce the idea of training and go on to say that those teachers already trained should willingly seek out opportunities for professional growth. It is therefore likely that a positive connection exists between teachers undergoing active continuing development and better opportunities to understand matters of inclusive education, such as the difficulties faced by pupils, in a significantly more nuanced and accurate manner. As the literature proposes, for teachers who make learning feasible within their own teaching career “there is a well-established link between learner engagement, learner behaviour and academic achievement” (Sullivan et al. 2014:45).

Nevertheless, although teachers committed to personal and professional SEN development may be willing to pursue numerous courses available in colleges and universities, college curriculum may also be a significant challenge. Literature revealed that teacher training is compounded by training institutions that are considered to be out of touch with the reality of how new teachers need to be prepared (O’Keefe, 2009 in Forlin and Sin, 2010). This drawback cannot be taken lightly, since teachers are the people who have the most significant impact on the learning of children with SEN (Richards, 2016b).

#### **5.4.2 School-related barriers**

International evidence shows that disabled persons are more likely to be illiterate, face barriers to access mainstream education systems, and consequently have little or no education. It could be said the numerous physical obstacles encountered daily in schools are a contributing factor to this discrepancy (UNDP, 2016). According to Peters (2004), a crucial aspect for disabled people is improving the physical environment and removal school-related barriers that prevent access to services and facilities. These barrier are discussed in the subsequent sub-sections as: (i) access to schools (ii) influence of standards agenda (iii) access to adapted curriculum (iv) Health and safety in schools.

### **i. Access to schools**

Analysis of the data and outcomes of this study revealed that the major obstacle that hinders children with SEN accessing mainstream schools is the numerous physical barriers (see the demographic profile (see Table 13). In the context of this study, access is used in the sense of how convenient or challenging it is for children with SEN to enter school buildings and classrooms, enrol, consult members of the school community or use the resources of a particular school. Some participants considered access as ‘presence’ in a school and one way of ensuring children with SEN have the same school experiences as non-disabled peers (ST17:72). Speaking at the Special Schools Heads Association of Kenya (SSHAK) annual conference, the Cabinet Secretary of Education<sup>24</sup> (CSoEd) Dr Fred Matiang’i, confirmed access to education being a challenge for children with SEN and disabilities:

For a country like Kenya endowed with vast resources it is not fair to have our children still unable to access education yet we have the sufficient capacity (Kajilwa, 2016).

The CSoEd promise validated that mainstream schools could accommodate children with SEN, since he confirmed availability of resources but lack of schools willingness to be inclusive. Moreover, the CSoEd validated the findings of this study that presence, free access, and enabling learning conditions are barriers to learning caused by lack governmental commitment and attitudes to funding SEN. Hastings and Wood (2002) suggest that there is a need to think when planning schools, namely to think about access and materials that enhance functional capacity and mobility within schools, so that all individual children’s needs can be accommodated. It is feasible that lack of planning capacity and accountability could be the reason the government fell short of the EFA agenda in 2015 (RoK, 2009:17). Consequently, Kenya did not meet the mantra of *leave no one behind* (UNESCO, 2016b). This equity gap was identified by the teachers’ evidence of not having enrolled a child with SEN in their school, despite long service ranging from 10-30 years. The implication of this finding highlights that children with SEN are missing in mainstream schools, despite the crucial milestone made towards the achievement of the UPE/EFA goals in 2003.

While it appears Kenya continues to struggle with EFA and UPE more than 20 years after the important inclusive action agreement (UNESCO, 1994), the world of education has

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<sup>24</sup> Formerly Minister of Education

moved from the broader vision of EFA to be more focused on inclusive education and quality education (Hodkinson, 2015). Failure to improve schools indicates that Kenya has not done enough to ensure the Salamanca agreement and uphold the right of inclusion for children with SEN. Although not comparable to Kenya in terms of resources, for Italy, the inclusion of students with disabilities is an important goal based on the premise of ‘no education for any child in a separate setting’ (Anastasiou et al. 2015:429). The process is not without challenges, but Italy is likely to be the nation with an education system most closely approximating full inclusion on the continuum of inclusiveness (ibid). Therefore, this finding, in relation to the finding of the current study, implies that:

Far-reaching changes are required in education systems, and in the values and principles of the people involved in delivering education, if the world’s most vulnerable and disadvantaged children are to gain access to their local school (Miles and Singal, 2010:12)

In this study, access to mainstream schools was polarised regarding issues of location and learner characteristics, with various debates centred on the level of disability for enrolment in mainstream schools. The result of such debates was indirect exclusion (see section 6.1.1), which is an invisible form of segregation (Riddell, 2007). Goodley (2016) identified a form of marginalisation similar to the one identified in schools in the current study (ST15:196), when children with SEN are expected to adjust into existing schooling arrangements without appropriate resources (see section 5.4.3). As established, the practice of special units due to barriers existent in mainstream school, can thus be understood as little more than a form of “mere assimilation” (Byrne, 2013: 234) and a weak resolve to educate all citizens (Ferguson, 2008). According to Mittler (2012), a child with SEN is said to access education when they have full access to the curriculum and are fully included in all aspects of school life. For children with SEN to access education, the learner must be able to get to school, enter the school gates and move about in school independently (UNICEF, 2015). Therefore, schools need restructuring to make them accessible and provide equality and opportunity for all children, review and change systems (Slee, 2011) rather than suggest how the child can change to fit the school (Ainscow, 2005; Booth and Ainscow, 2011).

Despite its long history of providing education, Kenya’s literacy rate of about 85.5 per cent falls behind many African countries (UNESCO, 2014), and the challenge of enrolment and outcomes persist (KNCHR, 2014). The low entry observed in schools in the current study

means that fewer children with SEN transition from primary to secondary school and even fewer access higher education after secondary school graduation. Such is the case with the study population in 2015 and 2016, where no children with SEN transitioned to secondary. It was identified that children with SEN are the only group of learners in Kenya that experience more inequity when trying to access education. Their primary challenge difficulties is not in learning (UNICEF, 2013b), rather is gaining access to their local school, receipt of appropriate education, retention and completion (Mutua and Dimitrov, 2001). Smooth transition to secondary, tertiary education and higher educational levels (Chataika et al. 2012) was another challenge they faced. Issues emerging from this finding relating specifically to access were summarised by Tomasevski, (2006) that access should be considered from the entitlement approach and does not need justification.

## **ii. Influence of standards agenda**

Another barrier to inclusion that emerged is the expectation of exceptional performance placed on teachers by the MoE and parents to post high grades in the national examinations. It was established that teachers feel the pressure because it goes to the extent that education official threatens to demote headteachers whose schools are considered to be underperforming. Therefore, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and the process of enrolment are linked to the standards agenda, one which prevents mainstream teachers from being welcoming to all children and which aims to minimise enrolment of students with diverse needs. In the current educational climate, schools and teachers are held to account for their results and have to justify poor results. Hence, the policy of inclusion and the performance agendas were seen as oppositional rather than complementary policies, with one, (inclusion) impacting negatively on the other. It is somewhat ironic that children with SEN are denied opportunities in mainstream classes, yet adults as old as 80 can be enrolled in full-time primary classes. This discrimination is considered ironic because mature adults who have been made redundant at work or have remained unemployed and decide to return to primary or secondary education, also have diversity of needs in terms of understanding the complexities and changes in the education system.

Conversely, emphasis on performance was prejudicial since some schools were observed in need of facilities and resources that can ensure the practical process of teaching and learning. Moreover, insistence on performance fails to consider individual difference. These findings aid understanding of school efforts to focus on those learners who show the ability to make

a positive impact on school results or interviews being conducted before children are enrolled to ensure schools did not enrol slow learners (PT6:29). Due to the pressure of reproach from the MoE over poor performance, weak students are denied the opportunity to sit for national exams by being made to repeat classes so that their *poor* performance does not impact negatively on general school performance (UNESCO, 2005a; RoK, 1999). As a result, transition is impacted or slowed while affected children eventually drop out of school due to frustration (Oketch and Somerset, 2010; Hungi and Thuku, 2010).

Notwithstanding these barriers, children with learning difficulties were considered to have a detrimental impact on school performance data, especially in upcoming primary schools and secondary schools. Thus, “educating children with special educational needs seems to present risks on many levels” (Cole, 2005:342). The ways in which the notion of success is conceptualised is ‘hostile to the notion of full participation’ (Lloyd, 2008: 229) and results in failure and marginalisation of those learners with special educational needs who are unable to reach the standards (Ngware et al. 2006). The Kenya SEN policy addresses the issue of assessment and promises to “design national examinations for learners with SEN as individuals” (RoK, 2009:40). Moreover, for learners whose diverse learning needs do allow for sitting the national assessment exam, the policy underlines provision of certificates that can be produced to prospective employers (ibid).

At the time of this study, there were children with SEN sitting for a standard national exam with their non-disabled peers (PT1:164). However, this is problematic for children with SEN who require the support of others (Goodley, 2014) because the tensions between the inclusion agenda and the standards agenda create an uneasy relationship. Reports show that ‘in such a relationship there will be winners and losers and the losers will be the children who are deemed as having special educational needs’ (Cole, 2005:334) emphasising the need to reconceptualise achievement to make it ‘attainable and accessible to all’ (Lloyd, 2008:229).

### **iii. Access to adapted curriculum**

Just as the environment must be accessible to students with disabilities, so should the curriculum facilitate access to education for all children in the same classes. Inclusive education was seen as challenging by most teachers because the national curriculum prescribes uniformity of content and intended outcome without room for modification to

meet the needs of individual learners, especially those with SEN. However, task-centred and more abstract activity-oriented subjects in schools posed a challenge to the enrolment of children with SEN (ST13: 68). Some teachers suggested that science subjects were a barrier of progression to secondary school because some subjects, including chemistry, physics and biology, are compulsory for all students. Additionally, science subjects in secondary schools raise safety issues because they involve practical activities that are performed in controlled laboratory environments. Teachers had concerns on how to overcome challenges of support during practical lessons.

The government demonstrates honesty regarding education for children with SEN, by conceding that adapting the curriculum and curriculum development is a challenge. In reference to this barrier, it is revealed that curriculum and support materials are introduced after non-disabled peers in mainstream classes are settled and already familiar with the curriculum content and requirements (RoK, 2009:39). Such lapses further delay children with SEN covering the syllabus, which can adversely affect their performance in schools. Furthermore, in other instances, by the time a personalised curriculum has been planned for them, new modifications may be again taking shape, hence the creation of “a vicious cycle” (ibid:39). From 1998-2013, Kenya received support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) who provided in-service training for science teachers to raise the teaching quality of mathematics and science in primary and secondary schools through In-Service Education and Training (INSET). Notably, during the second phase of training, the Kenyan government established the Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTE) and formed the “Strengthening of Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education (SMASSE) Project.

Taken together, these findings suggest that mainstream science teachers have ample training to work with non-disabled students. Nevertheless, Kiige and Atina (2016) findings on the success of SMASSE in Kikuyu district, indicate that the training had no impact on the performance of science subjects, nor did the training improve teachers confidence and ability or influence new skills. Teachers felt inclusion would introduce a new challenge in laboratories lessons since the curriculum was not adjusted to suit children with SEN. There was also concern of individualised attention to children with SEN, which would disadvantage the remaining non-disabled learners. Besides these concerns in mainstream education, science subjects are taught successfully in special schools, with teachers using

pedagogical strategies that encourage students' conceptual understanding of the way the world works (Trey and Khan, 2008). Since sciences cannot be scrapped from school curricula, a reasonable approach is to confront the challenge of teaching laboratory-based subjects to in collaboration with special school teachers. Based on their experience of teaching a wide diversity of needs they can give support to make modifications and accommodations in teaching methods on practical subjects. Trey and Khan showed that using essential tools for learning such as computer simulations may afford children with SEN opportunities to promote their understanding of unobservable phenomena in science (ibid).

#### **iv. Health and safety in schools**

The element of school safety was an idea proposed by the parents, who indicated that besides requirements for accessible education, acceptance and recognition in child- friendly schools, safe schools could not be overlooked. Therefore, parents expressed a reservation for mainstream schools due to limited risk assessment of facilities or to safeguard children within their care. These findings highlight the vital role of schools to meet high standards of safety. Ekemezie and Ezeh (2015) and UNESCO (2008) seem to agree with parents in this study that schools have a legal responsibility for safety of all children, especially those who are disabled.

Several possible barriers relating to safety in school were discussed, most of which remains the responsibility of the MoE. Moreover, some teachers demonstrated awareness of managing risks and expressed the importance of planning for safety, especially during practical lessons in the laboratory or during PE lessons. Lack of a planned approach to managing risks revealed poor architectural and structural design resulting or missing vital facilities that left children exposed to dangers and accidents. To create an unnecessarily risk-averse environment for inclusive teaching and learning most teachers stated that changes to the school physical features should be harmonised with funding. However, delay in addressing financial requirements was ascertained in Kenya so that school safety in schools was a compelling reason to justify exclusion from mainstream education for children with SEN.

### **5.4.3 Systemic and organisational barriers**

Although Kenya has made progress in the provision of educational services for persons with SEN, it has also faced various organisational challenges in mainstream schools (RoK, 2009), as illustrated by the research participants. One of the more noteworthy findings to emerge from this study reveals that such systemic challenges can be attributed to unstable, vague and weak policy foundations, resulting in long lasting effects on quality of education similar that made by Sifuna (2016) and Somerset (2009). Besides, the nature of education in Kenya, particularly on setting options, curriculum adjustment, pedagogy and assessment, is historically contentious. A more detailed account of systemic and organisational challenges is given in the following section as (i) Provision of teacher education (ii) The vision approach to inclusive education (iii) Funding (iv) Attitudes towards funding SEN (v) Policy and legislation.

#### **i. Provision of teacher education**

Transitioning from a special education system to an inclusive approach since the Salamanca agreement has been a slow and uncertain journey. Equally, teacher education, has shown limited accomplishment. Attempts made towards addressing reform initiatives geared towards the professional development of teachers in Kenya is demonstrated in legislation and policy (MoE, 2009; RoK, 2015). The Draft policy on SEN reports that, while the government is providing free primary education for all Kenyan children, lack of firm policy guidelines for the provision of SEN has resulted in situations where special schools and training institutions are established without proper coordination (RoK, 2009:23). The Draft policy further informs the findings of this study that poor coordination of activities of SEN service providers, such as teacher colleges, has led to duplication, sub-standard and unregulated provision of services to children with special needs and disabilities.

Besides increased support to skill teachers for SEN at KISE (RoK, 2009: 9), this study identified vastly divergent perspectives of participating trainings as outlined in Table 24. Literature reveals, there are 201,622 teachers employed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) in primary schools, and 40,449 employed by school management boards, bringing the total to 242,071. However, there is fragmentation of preparation, with five functional teacher education programmes the next Table 24 highlights.

Table 24: Teacher educational establishment in Kenya

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Mode of training</b>	<b>Provider</b>	<b>Curriculum Developer</b>	<b>Age based</b>	<b>Level</b>
Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE)	Trained through in-service courses	District Centres for Early Childhood Education (DICECE).	The National Centre for Early Childhood Education (NACECE)	3-6	Certificate programme
Primary Teacher Education	Training colleges	MoE	MoE	6-13	Two-year Certificate programme
Secondary Teacher Education	Training colleges	MoE	MoE	14-17	Diploma programme
					Three-year Degree programme
Technical Teacher Education	Technical Teachers Colleges/Institutes	MoE	MoE	14-17	Three-year Diploma programme
Special Needs Teacher Education	Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE)	MoE	MoE	3-17	Two-year diploma programme
	Universities	Universities	Universities	6-17	Four-year Degree programme

As highlighted above, primary teacher education is provided in teacher training colleges at certificate level, while secondary education is provided at diploma and degree level. Currently, the government of Kenya plans to phase out certificate courses in teacher training colleges and replace with diploma training, as part of ongoing education reforms (Ouma, 2017a). Literature highlights that teachers colleges are faced with the challenge of pedagogy regarding the individual needs requiring inclusion in mainstream schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Katitia, 2015). Training should ensure that trainees continuously develop knowledge, understanding, experience and interaction with a diverse range of pupils that society has traditionally excluded (Hodkinson, 2005; 2009; 2015). A breakdown of the subjects covered during the training years is demonstrated in Figure 10.

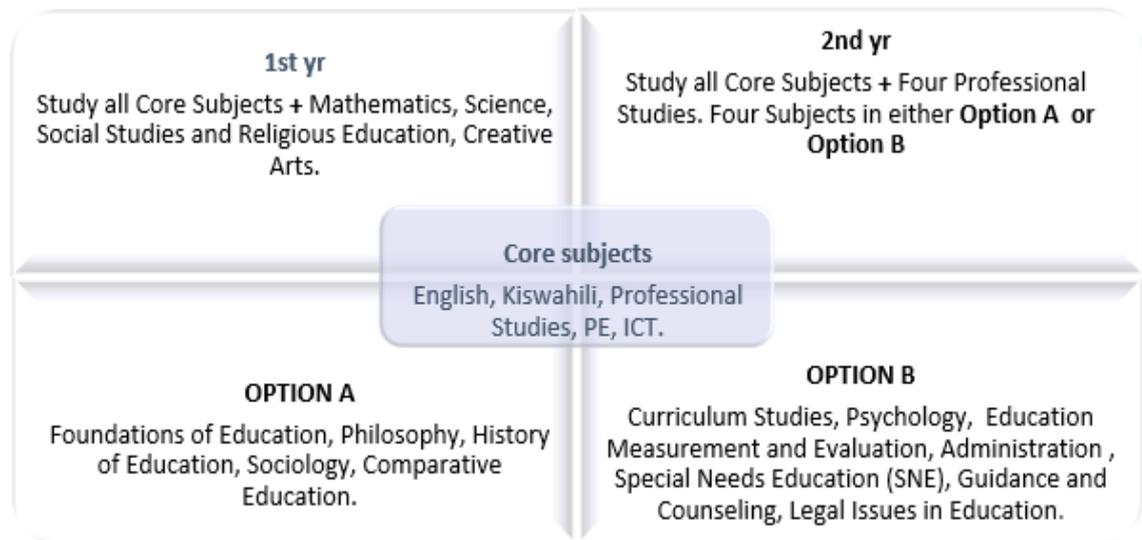


Figure 10: Primary teacher education subject coverage. Source: Adapted from (Katitia, 2015)

Figure 10 shows a very interesting finding regarding training and pedagogy in Kenya and probably the reasons trained teachers lacked knowledge on different ways they can support children with diverse needs in inclusive classrooms. As Figure 10 reveals the challenge to inclusion is that SEN is grouped in a cluster of other popular subjects that provide greater opportunities for promotion, such as administration, psychology or guidance and counselling. Moreover, a one term<sup>25</sup> training period is not long enough to provide adequate skills to move inclusive education forward. The prospects of teacher trainees who have no previous experience of working with disabled people or interaction with disability related issues, to select SEN module is minimal (Richard and Clough, 2004). Evidently, chances of selecting SEN option is minimal considering the findings of this study whereby SEN was associated with accommodation of behavioural difficulties and teaching interruptions. Evidence in Figure 10 shows a need for teacher training reform.

An equally significant aspect is training for secondary school teachers in universities and diploma colleges. At the end of four university years, trainee teachers are expected to specialise in one teaching area such as science, languages, humanities, technology or with two teaching subjects across the clusters. At the same time, SEN teacher preparation is provided to professionally qualified practicing teachers through a two-year diploma program

<sup>25</sup> Equivalent to a 12-14 weeks semester.

at the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) specifically trainees must be holders of teacher certificates and must have been teaching for at least five years<sup>26</sup>. The institute also offers a three-month in-service course for teachers in SEN schools. Currently, the areas of specialization are: visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment, mental impairment, autism and deaf blind impairment.

As observed, inclusive education is not a stand-alone subject of specialization in all colleges and universities. Literature has established that specialisation of subjects or rigid subject combinations influence trainee conceptions and attitudes (Ojiambo, 2018; Wilson, 2018), making some subjects appear more important than others and impacting on the learning outcomes of children with SEN (Jain and Prasad, 2018). While KISE may be offering diplomas in SEN and universities, such as Kenyatta and Maseno<sup>27</sup>, provide degrees, the number of trainees admitted is too limited to cater for the larger population of children with SEN in special schools, let alone in inclusive education. Annual enrolment at KISE is 240 trainee students at certificate level and 1,800 trainees graduating through open learning at diploma level (RoK, 2012). Conversely, the narrowed, rigid curricula offered in teacher training programmes, hinders the development of a common inclusive agenda. This evidence could explain the secondary school teachers' views of inclusion as an extra added on teaching load. In addition, Katitia (2015) reveals wide-ranging training offered in teachers colleges but little emphasis on SEN. Consequently, it could be said that teachers find it challenging to teach inclusive classrooms due to lack of in-depth pedagogical knowledge of diversity of needs.

Apart from teacher knowledge that ensures effective practice in diverse, multicultural, and inclusive learning environments, professional learning should help to identify competencies that are likely to support adaptation to change (Forlin and Sin, 2010). Within diverse classrooms, teachers should be proficient in adapting their planning and teaching on a daily basis as such classes are continually in a state of inconsistency. Preparation entails making appropriate decisions, active engagement and being able to present lessons in motivating ways that engross all children. If teachers with specialist training cannot meet the diverse needs of children with SEN in their classrooms, a situation result is the exclusion of these

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<sup>26</sup> KISE website: [www.kise.ac.ke](http://www.kise.ac.ke)

<sup>27</sup> Maseno University website:

[http://maseno.ac.ke/index/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=69:undergraduate-programmes&catid=52:undergraduate&Itemid](http://maseno.ac.ke/index/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=69:undergraduate-programmes&catid=52:undergraduate&Itemid)

children. Effective teaching includes planning for active engagement and motivating lessons for all children in class, irrespective of SEN, as informed by Beckmann and Minnaert (2018). Moreover, children who are gifted and learn quickly also have challenges for teachers to address, despite lack of specialist training (ibid). This means all classrooms are diverse, irrespective of whether they contain children with SEN or not.

These findings seem to support the literature that cites developing countries as struggling with educational reforms which include improvements for children with SEN (Sharma et al. 2015; Adoyo and Odeny, 2015; RoK, 2005; 2012; Ahmmed et al. 2012). Removing the barriers in a way to ensure inclusive education becomes a reality in Kenya should be made a primary task in teacher education. Consequently, as discussed in this section, there is a need for teachers to develop competencies to create stimulating learning environments for diverse children in mainstream classrooms (Elder, 2015).

#### **ii. The promise of inclusive education.**

The promise of education for children with SEN in Kenya is highlighted by national commitments to education to have all children learning in the same school. This objective is reflected in the signing and ratification of numerous treaties and declarations over the past few decades (Elder, 2015). All national decisions, including international agreements signed or ratified, cannot be enforced into new legislation until parliament reviews and enacts them as relevant law/policy (ibid). Evidently, country lawmakers, policymakers cannot claim to be ignorant of any commitments emphasising the rights, goals and objectives geared towards the development inclusive education agenda. For example, a conference held in Kisumu to review the 1990 Jomtien conference and prepare for the implementation of EFA legislation. In light of the emerging local and global issues at that time, the conference emphasised basic educational provision for disadvantaged and special groups living under challenging circumstances (KISE, 2002). Consequently, the Kisumu conference affirmed the promise for inclusive education and teacher training, but with no action as the conference failed to make changes that would benefit children with SEN in inclusive classrooms.

Kenya signed the Salamanca agreement, with a motive of strengthening the capacity of mainstream schools to educate all children within their communities (UNESCO, 2009). Therefore, Kenya had a vision of increasing the participation of all students and reducing their exclusion from the curricula and interaction with peers. Towards this vision, SEN

policy objectives were drafted with a willingness for capacity building and development through the provision of adequate services to children with SEN (RoK, 2009:21-37). Nevertheless, by 2012, inclusive education was still a promise with no improvement agenda, explicit direction or evident change to make schools inclusive. By 2012 it was estimated that three-quarters of children with SEN were in special schools and only a quarter in special units within mainstream schools (RoK, 2012). Kenya Vision 2030 quarterly report of November 2014 tracked the progress of education, showing procrastination at play in accomplishing the promise of inclusive education. Instead, yet another committee was formed to look into the way forward:

A committee has been established to commence review. The tools have been developed and validated through a stakeholder consultative forum, and review is on-going (Kenya Vision 2030 Flagship Projects Progress Report November 2014:32)

The endorsement above indicates improvement of the curriculum, especially for children with SEN had not commenced since 1994 when Kenya committed to the Salamanca agreement. The only notable response towards inclusion direction is funding of Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) resource centres in each of the 47 counties with capitalisation grants of Kshs 1020<sup>28</sup> per child and recruitment of 48,000 teachers trained in ECDE.

Overall, the past 20 years, ECDE and general education in Kenya has made notable improvements inspired by several education commissions initiated as circulars, guidelines or policy (Mwangi, 2013). Nevertheless, as this study established education for children with SEN remains a growing problem and left behind (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015). Recommendations of Salamanca have not resonated nor become functional in mainstream schools. The state has been slow in its' crucial role of making the vision of Salamanca Statement practical. The expectation of inclusive classrooms remains unachieved, despite all policies, circulars and guidelines addressing the issue of equal educational opportunity for all children (Sifuna, 2016; Adoyo and Odeny, 2015; Muricho and Chang'ach, 2013;). Lack of commitment reveals that educational provision in mainstream schools continues to remain a vision to be accomplished in the future.

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<sup>28</sup> Equivalent to £8

According to Singal, Lynch and Johansson (2019) we live in the age of international promises. However, it is interesting to hear strong statements of support within the education circles such as “Education for All” or “leaving no one behind” while schools still lack essential resources that can cater for a diversity of need. Evidence of double standards is governments recent proposal to funding private schools (Oduor, 2018b) which is not only a significant drawback to the creation of inclusive public schools but also clearly shows inclusion remain rhetoric, one only inspired by promises but no transformation. This study recognised a need to stop the narrative and re-imagine other fundamental approaches to SEN than what is currently available. A trajectory of special units annexed to mainstream schools is not sufficient support considering it has taken more than twenty years to be actualised in a few selected schools. It appears there is a lukewarm attention to inclusive matters (Gachago, 2017), recurrent generational promise have persisted unless substantial overhaul and adjustments are made without delay. Probably, the SDG commitment will result education overhauls, adjustments, new opportunities that will ensure education meant to be for all is truly for all.

### **iii. Funding**

Inclusive education is defined as a radical change of systems by UNESCO (1994). Literature positions this change as fundamental to establishing inclusive societies and social justice and equality in education (Terzi, 2014; Konza, 2008; Tomasevski, 2006). Remarkably, schools have failed to produce the expected wide-scale change and adoption of inclusive approaches due to funding issues. In this study, some teachers explicitly identified funding as a barrier that hinders the achievement of social justice and equality gained through inclusive education. Additionally, although trusted with the significant role of directing the way forward to attain inclusive schools, the MoE inopportunely acknowledged the various challenges regarding funding as the most pertinent obstacle to accelerating the attainment of EFA (RoK, 2009).

Considering the challenges and indicators of exclusion found in the current study, unless the government takes the initiative to motivate teachers by supporting mainstream school structures and teacher education, inclusive education remains a vision. Inclusion may be recommended at international and national forums, bring together academics, practitioners and experts in the field of special and inclusive education but, without funding, teachers cannot embrace new approaches. As Adoyo and Odeny (2015: 51) propose that “without

funding, schools and county departments cannot have ability to make any progress towards implementation of inclusive education”. In support of this finding, on 5th October 2015, primary and secondary school headteachers warned of an impending educational crisis caused by funds and grants being denied to schools over a long period in Kenya. As widely reported, children and school management teams have been affected since, apart from other overheads, community employed teachers and support workers have been paid sporadically (Murori, 2015).

As participants indicated, inadequate funding made them feel helpless in the implementation of inclusive schools. Therefore, envisaged educational changes such as inclusion can only be achieved if the participation of all children in education is secured (Bines and Lei 2011). It appears that government promises during election and what ensues thereafter does not seem to match. Inclusion support is possible if responsibility is taken and systems, such as accountability, conversant inspections and intrinsic links with services, agencies and communities, are put into place. Another important finding was participants’ suggestions that education budget holders set fairer priorities on financing for schools to be inclusive. Currently, the funding system is considered very subjective, with most rural schools lacking essential resources for accommodation of diverse needs of children. Mbiti (2016) observes that a big chunk of education budget goes to salaries and wages, while only a fraction is left for school improvement and resources. Therefore, given such resource constraints, school improvement leading to positive learning outcomes are limited.

Several scholars highlight that the challenge of funding comes from a paradigm shift demanded by structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), resulting in a cost sharing approach to education (Mbiti, 2016; Orodho, 2014; Oketch and Rolleston, 2007; Sifuna, 2005). Whilst government takes the greater cost of education, a situation is observed whereby parents are contributing more in tuition fees than the government, as seen in the new fees (Miguel, 2011). As reported in the Daily Nation, March 2015 the government contributes Ksh<sup>29</sup> 12, 870 (£103) per year per child, while parents are made to contribute Sh32, 385 (£259) for boarding before tuition fees (Otieno, 2016). A child with SEN, receives Ksh 1,020 which, according to most parents, is hardly enough for a child’s school. To understand this sum better, on July 29th, 2018, for the lowest paid primary school teachers (grades B5 to

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<sup>29</sup> £1=Ksh 130 (Central Bank of Kenya exchange rate 14-05-2019)

C2), the maximum monthly pay was between Sh21,757 (£168) and Sh43,694 (£337) (Oduor, 2017). In 2014 the World Bank Kenya office reported that, in a population of about 46 million, 39.1 per cent of the working age Kenyan population is unemployed, while 4 in 10 Kenyans live below the poverty line, earning less than a dollar a day (Ohito, 2014).

Moreover, resulting from funding, the out of pocket expenses for parents of children with SEN are numerous. FG9: 57 established the high cost of travel to a town located more than 60 Kms away to buy hearing aid batteries for their child. Other expenses, such as medication, expensive travel to appointments with professionals, reading glasses and the cost of school uniforms, are also covered by families. The official policy declares “Zero tolerance” which appears to be lip service by the government, since children are still turned away from schools due to lack of appropriate school uniforms, pens and books (Oketch and Rolleston, 2007). In 2003, school uniforms cost about Ksh480 (£3.70, approximately 2% of per capita GDP), which is disproportionate for many families since most are not signed up to NHIF<sup>30</sup>. Moreover, as participating parents indicated, some teachers turn away some children who tend to be from poor backgrounds, because they lack essential school items. In such instances, parents prefer to keep their children away from education participation, a factor likely to reduce the opportunity of development to independence for a child with SEN. Thus, government failure to take account of differing economic abilities of parents and fund all schools sufficiently, produces a causal sequence on the educational outcomes of children with SEN.

As established in this study, government priority regarding inclusion has been socio-political inclusion between parties and closer relationships between conflicting communities. Therefore education, as part of community experience, is mentioned but yet to be actualised. It can be said that there has been sustainable social change for children with SEN in mainstream school (Elder and Kuja, 2018), but the same cannot be said of academic inclusion in inclusive classes owing to funding issues. For nations including Kenya with stretched resources, less funding means fewer services for children with SEN (Adoyo and Odeny, 2014), less inclusion, understaffing and limited opportunities for training, and thus less experienced staff. With inadequate funding to create academic and social inclusion for all children, a possible implication is improvement in general education but marginalisation for children with SEN, a situation described in the literature as “one step forward, one step

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<sup>30</sup>National Hospital insurance fund. Kenya’s equivalent to NHS in UK

back” (Walsh-Childers et al. 2018: 174). Evidence from the study seems to suggest Walsh-Childers and others were over-optimistic, since this study found something similar to one step forward and several steps back.

#### **iv. Attitudes towards funding SEN**

For a long time, education deliberations, election promises and visions made by politicians have often occupied prominent positions in public debates. Assurances from politicians trying to please the people are mostly rigorously debated during political campaigns to gain high offices. Consequently, education outcomes and service delivery is politically influenced, and the narrative of ‘all children’ is political rhetoric. Instead of being focussed on the needs of all, achievement and educational outcomes only centre on some children (Mbiti, 2016). Evidence from the current study points to some children with SEN struggling to maintain standards (ST16:17), because education is heavily biased towards exam performance (Hungu and Ngware, 2017; Hungu and Thuku, 2010). In most nations, achievement of good literacy and numeracy skills is acknowledged as an important output of an education system. Machin and others (2018) inform this study that the law requires all young people to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday. This means pupils can leave their secondary school but have to go on to something else.

For this reason, a need to arises on change attitudes for funding on the part of education stakeholders. Children with SEN who are disengaged with mainstream education should get the opportunities to develop new skills in an alternative setting irrespective of whether service delivery for special education is two to three time higher (Eleweke and Rhoda, 2002) or regardless being higher than general education on per pupil basis (Kauffman et al. 2018). Children with SEN do not have less human rights because of additional educational costs, which may also require additional resources (UNICEF, 2007; Peters, 2004). Additionally, Kenya, like most developing countries is profoundly biased towards higher education, which only a limited few can access, unlike basic education (Mbiti, 2016). This could be a contributory factor to the overlooking of education for children with SEN although they have equal rights to educational provision, irrespective of cost (Terzi, 2014). National policies may cite the challenges of funding education for children with SEN in mainstream schools as expensive to run, yet failure to affording education is against their human right to education access; it goes with additional costs (Tomasevski, 2006). Access to education is linked to concrete improvements in health and nutrition; children are empowered to be full

and active members of communities including the influential protection factor of education by keeping children away from conflicts; child labour; trafficking, and recruitment into armed groups and forces.

The CSoEd cited the attitude of the government treasury of delaying disbursement of funds to schools as a challenge to education being due to delays that can be avoided (Kajilwa, 2016). Government must accept that achieving education vision has financial costs and children with SEN should have a proportionate share of the national budget. Moreover, Vision 2030's quality education starts from changing attitude, funding education and affording all citizens their basic human right to education, as explained below:

We should not allow our belief in the promises of inclusion to cause us to be silent if we see faults in its application. With the newly recognized rights of children to the education we offer, there must be an equal responsibility to see that those rights are truly fulfilled (Kauffman et al. 2018: 9)

The obligation of the government is to protect its people (FG9:14) yet, despite the overwhelming needs of children with SEN there is deficit in government policy to monitor funding intended for these children (Mukuria and Korir, 2006). This could feasibly be attributed to the hope expressed implicitly by parent FG9:14 that the CSoED should visit their child's school from the charity model perspective based on their experience of politicians giving gifts to communities rather than meaningful change to education that reflects entitlement to education.

The study participants highlighted school design as a barrier to inclusive education, since most primary schools are very old, some built in the early 1900 when education was first introduced by the missionaries and yet not adapted for use by students with disabilities (ST16, 12: 71). Interestingly, it was also observed that considerably newer schools were still not disability accessible in 2015/2016, when data collection for this study was undertaken. Hence, because of this oversight, children with mobility difficulties continue to contend every day with inaccessible buildings. This attitude of overlooking children with SEN is a matter of concern resonated by most participants. Thus, government should stand by its promises of enhancing funding and enact legislation that demands schools, education managers and local authorities understand their obligations and duties towards accessible schools

## **v. Policy and legislation**

As identified in official policy, the government appears to recognise access to quality education and skills development as a fundamental right for all its citizens, including those with SEN. None of the secondary schools within the context of this study had annexed a special unit; a common phenomenon in Kenya. According to recent research the government current policy is to create secondary school units to take children with SEN as a transition pathway from primary schools (Kajilwa, 2016 Muriuki, 2015). The education features mostly emphasised in the in the SNE draft policy are general strategies, such as the provision of funds for improvements on infrastructure, equipment and facilities in learning institutions, are highlighted. Other features include a focus on economic need, rapid reform and the national education system becoming ‘world class’, as evidenced through Vision 2030 policy. The inclusion pathways found active in education are thus not specified in policy. The education pillars described in Vision 2030 policy (RoK, 2010) seems to emphasise competitive education on the world stage rather than working to meet individual needs of disabled people especially concerning educational matters of children with SEN.

Notwithstanding political pronouncements and temporary solutions, education policies have not been beneficial and stand as a barrier to SEN (Oketch and Somerset, 2010). Government rhetoric continues to declare a philosophy of equal educational opportunities for all children through implementing free education initiatives but overlooking planning adequately for inclusive education practices. National policies emanating from proclamations have been criticised for aiming at political popularity with minimal significance for national development (Orodho, 2014; Amutabi, 2003). According to Sood et al. (2018), policies signify how an organisation is to be led. Therefore, strategy is required for effective management and outcomes in organisations. Sood and others further indicate that “effective policy development involves people” (ibid: 10).

It was established that some politicians take election period opportunity to confer on themselves the power to influence policy. However, politically motivated policies in Kenya have created the attitude among the citizens that policies are merely utterances made by politicians. Participants expressed dissatisfaction with education policies by pointing out the diverse education skills their children require other than reading and writing (PT5:204). This finding is supported by Hungi and Ngware (2017), Bunyi et al. (2011) and Amutabi (2003) who highlight inadequacies regarding the quality and quantity of educational provision.

Nonetheless, despite challenges of quality, through FPE policy, enrolment has improved dramatically (Orodho, 2014; Sifuna, 2005). A tremendous increase is noted in primary school enrolment in Kenya, from 5.9 million in 2002 to 7.2 million in 2003 to 9.4 million in 2010 (Hungu and Ngware, 2017; Ngware et al. 2009; Njoka et al. 2011).

The claim of increased enrolment in schools is ‘far from the truth because still there are some children not attending school’ (Lelei et al. 2015:133). This challenge points to a weak reporting process of children out of education and the reasons keeping them out. Due to tracking gaps, disability remains a significant factor that affects enrolment in education in Kenya (Carew et al. 2018). Participants in the current study identified the gap in government support and called for radical change through clear policies that support inclusive education (PT2:183). According to Adoyo and Odeny (2015:49), the lack of capability to offer children with SEN access to high-quality education within FPE is a matter of concern (ST17:215). As reported on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2016, Dr Fred Matiang’i of CSoEd promised Ksh<sup>31</sup>900 million (£6,756m) to improve special education. The CSoEd affirms the finding of the current study that some children with SEN have not yet accessed education and promised to improve special education and to look at inclusive education at a later date (Kajilwa, 2016). The major drawback with this explanation is lack of commitment including paradigm shift from promises to policies. It could then be said the government cannot guarantee the same learning experience for all children.

The majority of the participants in this study viewed education for children with SEN as experiencing challenges of recognition by existing policies. This is exemplified by the 2009 Kenya Housing Census, which was meant to provide population numbers in households and other institutions such as schools and colleges. The Census data, gained from unstructured interviews, failed to reflect a complete picture of the nation since the government could not compare data on children across the country, disabled persons in households, disabled persons in deprived families or children with SEN in schools. An accurate account of the population would have provided the prerequisite information needed by government to develop policies and plan and fund allocation for inclusive schools based on high-quality evidence. Enabling clear actualisation and application of procedures requires “governments

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<sup>31</sup> 1 GBP =133.223KES at current exchange rate

to translate broad agreements into specific decisions and offer consistent support” (Kaimenyi et al. 2017: 288).

It remains a daunting task for Kenya to plan for inclusion, determine with certainty the prevalence of disability, monitor children’s progress in education, evaluate the impact of interventions and propose new initiatives (Ingstad and Grut, 2007). An attempt was made to draft a Special Needs Education policy in 2013 but was never implemented due to parliament bill incapacity to pass it. Bii and Taylor (2013) contend that SNE is guided by the draft format of The National SNE policy framework, but with more focus on special schools and special units, not inclusive concepts. Challenges faced in attempting to implement SEN are noted in the draft as follows:

Educational opportunities for children with special needs and disabilities constitute a significant challenge to the education sector. The majority of children with Special Needs and Disabilities in Kenya do not access educational services (MoE, 2009:17).

Despite government commitment to equal access to education by all, including the implementation of existing policies, remains a significant challenge in Kenya because, as mentioned in the most current National SNE policy framework, there is a lack of among others “a comprehensive policy on SNE and proper guidelines on mainstreaming of special needs education at all levels and in the country” (MoE, 2009: 22). For this reason, policy gaps can be identified in the teaching experiences of participants and understanding of inclusive schools when teachers attempted to define inclusion. A misperception is observed in the use of the terms such as ‘Inclusion’ ‘Integration’ ‘Units’ as they were used synonymously when referring to inclusive schooling. Against this backdrop, the knowledge and understanding of these concepts, as displayed by the teachers, pinpoint to gaps in teacher training framework. To work in inclusive classroom where children with SEN are appropriately included, teachers have to differentiate specific characteristics regarding disabilities and inclusion (De Boer, 2011; Bukvić, 2014), while government has to increase its knowledge of legislation and policy related to inclusion through training (Forlin and Chambers, 2011; Kuyini et al. 2016). Inclusion policy often expressed as a rights issue, in many western democracies, governments are prompted by policy to support and promote the education of all children (Muwana and Ostrosky, 2014), in mainstream education.

However, this study found inclusive understanding dominated by the discourse of improving special educational and raising standards to international standards “as the potential to transform Kenya into a globally competitive economy” (RoK, 2010:3). This perspectives of education is not compatible with most democracies that challenge the notion of separate but equal policy in education (Peart, 2014). Thus even if facilities are equal and in the same location the fact teaching and learning occurs separately is segregation and violation of equality (ibid). Specifically, in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place and separate educational facilities are inherently unequal (Thompson, 2013:1252). In the twenty-first century, the current trend is quality inclusive education for all children and young people, irrespective of global location (Hodkinson, 2016). Therefore, all children should be equally valued, respected and celebrated by society in the same school setting.

#### **5.4.4 Learner related factors**

Associated learner factors are those related to a range of environmental needs rather than specific learning needs and may affect the inclusion of an individual. The inadequacy of appropriate arrangements in schools has led to concerns relating directly to rundown buildings or unmaintained structures and excuses from children concerning lateness to class and/or lack of participation in games and sports. Data analysis showed a small number of participants were positive about inclusion, although most were not keen on mainstream schools enrolling children with SEN. Such participants had firm conviction regarding accommodation of a range of diversity of needs without improved policies and that funding was a futile attempt. Children with SEN were seen as a significant ‘liability’ for mainstream schools, not only because of the facilities (PT3:58) and competitive nature of the curriculum (PT6:61) but also nature of disability (ST9:64) and accompanying frustration resulting from inappropriate resources and facilities (ST12:67). Such views appeared to reflect the ‘us and them’ debate’ which is conflicting and unhelpful (Miles and Singal, 2010).

Despite identifying the challenges named above, teachers appeared to avoid professional responsibility and the practical SEN support they would give children in inclusive schools. Booth and others (2002) advocate practice that involves identifying and minimising barriers to learning and participation while maximising resources to support participation and learning. Therefore, it appeared participants were certain that enrolment of children with SEN in mainstream education should be given an enrolment condition corresponding to a

learner's ability to meet mainstream school standards, demands and functions. Teachers implied that children must 'gain' some qualifications required to study in mainstream schools. Notwithstanding, parents had a different view showing they did not consider a child's disability as a challenge but, rather, that challenge and disability are constructed in people's minds (FG3:10).

In relation to learner challenges in school, Hughes et al. (2013) propose that inclusion is an educational entitlement because children with SEN belong, first and foremost, in mainstream classrooms. It is only when all options for meeting their needs are exhausted, can other special education options be considered. The authors are in agreement with the Salamanca Framework of Action, which advocates that inclusive education be promoted in mainstream classrooms only to the extent to which learners' educational needs can be addressed. The framework acknowledges the need for a continuum of alternative placements for children who cannot cope with mainstream education, a decision made by parents, the child and the school (Anastasiou and Kauffman, 2011). However, not everyone agrees with special education as an option. The Alliance for Inclusive Education indicates that inclusive education is incompatible with segregated provision, both within and outside mainstream education, suggesting that inclusive education should include everyone, both non-disabled and those with SEN, to learn together in mainstream schools, colleges and universities.

#### **5.4.5 Social-cultural barriers**

This study did not identify a strong influence of the African concept of disability in relation to external forces such as religion, witchcraft or curses, since the only mention of these beliefs was by children in their interactions in school (see section 6.2.4). Direct discrimination against children with SEN influenced by traditional beliefs was also not identified in this study, except for the one instance of curiosity where children asked about the cause of disability (see section 6.2.4). However, this does not mean that traditional beliefs or social and cultural barriers do not exist, or communities fail to consider disability from a cultural view as this lack of identification could be attributed to the research questions and focus. Another reason could be that disabled people in urban/ semi-urban communities are well assimilated in communities, unlike in some rural areas where traditional communal social organisation is more apparent (Ogechi and Ruto, 2002; Stone-MacDonald, 2010).

Disability, therefore, signifies a complex system of social limitations imposed on people with impairments by a discriminatory society. Thus, to be a disabled person means to be discriminated against in communities (Barnes and Mercer, 2010). Therefore, disability is a social creation within a social context, thus requiring social change (Mitra, 2018). As this study revealed, compelling evidence of social and cultural barriers was identified in the participants' understanding of disability (see section 5.2). Additionally, the language used by teachers' highlighted barriers in communities that result in stigmatisation and discrimination of children with SEN in education. Further, they were treated as different due to deficits that are of societies own making (Stone-MacDonald, 2010). According to Ogechi and Ruto, (2002), the view of children with SEN being considered as normal, abnormal or lesser achievers is determined by culture and society where disabled people are considered unproductive.

Overall, this study has established children with SEN continue to be excluded from schools (see demographic profile section 5.1), as disabled adults may lack opportunities for work, a situation that means they may have limited financial and social opportunities if they are without functional and adaptive skills (Stone-MacDonald, 2010). The mission of EFA, and of inclusive education, is to address issues of social justice, inequality and human rights and acknowledge cultural aspects that influence exclusion (Polat, 2011). This means education is acknowledged as instrumental in harmonising and creating a sustainable social fabric for societies (Owuor, 2007). However, schools are inaccessible partly because society has failed to harmonise its' attitude towards schools for all. This study found parents determined to obtain the best education possible for their children. Nonetheless, social and cultural beliefs and values play a critical role in how families and educational programmes interact.

Misunderstanding of disability and inclusion on the part of teachers highlighted that beliefs and values might interfere with family participation in the education of their children and raise trust issues between families and schools. Some children were ostensibly denied an education, and often hidden to prevent public shame from coming into the family (Stone-MacDonald and Butera, 2011). Others were withdrawn from schools due to lack of school resources and available services. Mutua and Dimitrov (2001) propose socio-cultural beliefs influence the lack of services for people with disabilities. Hence, solutions to problems currently facing Kenya should proceed from an understanding of local/individual capacities in promoting sustainable development (Owuor, 2007).

Some of the barriers associated with inclusion in the current study are negative teacher attitudes and stereotypes often caused by personal influences, poor knowledge and understanding. The attitudes and abilities of mainstream teachers, in particular, can be a major limitation since children with SEN are unlikely to receive satisfactory, inclusive education. Such attitudes were observed in the understanding of inclusion as new knowledge being introduced in schools. A head teacher, who opted out of the research citing other engagements, commented informally that:

Inclusion is a good idea, a good indicator of development but of late, there are various foreign ideas introduced to us from abroad. I think inclusion in Kenya cannot be implemented the same way it is done in developed countries or how it is advocated in the international conferences. We need genuine inclusion; we are a unique culture, we can only do it in our way. We shall introduce *them* to regular education gradually, and when they are ready.(ST: 216)

This view shows disabled people cannot make choices for themselves as power lies with others, such as teachers, to decide readiness for inclusion or improved educational opportunities for children with SEN. Many schools and teachers do not want to lose that power and shows why countries who have more inclusion have had to follow political routes to gain more power to make inclusion happen, irrespective of attitudes of teachers and others. Apart from policy framework, social-cultural barriers are also influenced by the media which parents identified as having ignored the documentation of the experiences of disabled people. FG4:51 suggested school textbooks do not depict pictures of disabled people. Most parents suggested TV and newspaper create negative conceptualisation of disability by absencing disabled people on the screen as though suggesting disabled people are not part of the mainstream society (Barnes, 2010). As parents indicated the advertising industry create negative conceptualisation of disability by highlighting disabled are less beautiful. An exploration of the media representations of disabled people shows the media shows use of disabling imagery even many years past (Barnes, 1992). Recently, Hodkinson (2012) identified a negative representation of disability by the media in children's literature and school textbooks evoking negative images of disability. Consequently, it could be said that some media representations influence attitudes and disability identity that yields negative attitudes towards disabled people. The parents in this study were certain the media in Kenya predisposed an outmoded sympathy/pity image of disabled children as lonely and dejected, by creating disabling images as seen in the advertisement for polio vaccine of

lone children watching football away from the field of play (FG4:51). Newspapers were also observed using disabling language and discriminative language such as ‘people living with a disability’ ‘handicapped people’ ‘poor people’. According to Booth 2011, developing inclusive education will increase response to diversity within the culture and curricula of mainstream schools and decrease exclusionary pressures.

## **5.5 Strategies for improvement**

The evidence collected suggests that parents and teachers desire to see a change from the current form of “inclusion” where children with SEN only interact with their peers in the playground yet they are said to be included within the same school. The findings show that many teachers lack a range of improvement strategies appropriate for addressing barriers that hinder the creation of inclusive schools. As this study established, teachers lack understanding of inclusive education and SEN and therefore it was challenging to suggest improvement of a process that is not initially understood. Most of the strategies teachers suggested included improvement of teacher training and support (see sub-section 5.5.1); school structures and infrastructure (see sub-section 5.5.2); Collaboration with multiagency (see sub-section 5.5.3); Most parents highlighted the need for creation of awareness, sensitisation of the community and advocacy (see sub-section 5.5.4). Lastly, a strategy on legislation and policy was implicitly implied (see sub-section 5.5.5).

However, apart from human and financial resources in addressing barriers, other approaches can be adopted toward the success of inclusive approaches that teachers did not consider. For example, children with SEN have a lot to teach teachers, especially in secondary schools because most will have attended a special primary school. Therefore, even with limited resources teachers should recognise the potential of children with SEN experiences and involve them in developing inclusive practices. Literature highlights that:

...children with SEN are an under-used resource that can be mobilised to overcome barriers to participation in lessons and contribute to improved learning opportunities for all class members (UNESCO 2017:33 )

Therefore, UNESCO (2017) suggests encouragement of children voice in all school activities is the best use of available resources, particularly human resources, to support learning. More there is strong evidence that participation of parents in school matters

encourages cooperation from children. Other strategies that were not mentioned are explained in more details in the next chapter.

## **5.6 Chapter summary**

In this chapter I have discussed the findings of the study based on the main themes identified in the study and which were guided by the research questions. The impact of inclusion has been highlighted to show subtle exclusion happens in mainstream school on a daily basis while blatantly exclusion is experienced through regulation of entry and transition from one level to another. For children who can be included in mainstream school, integration is the approach that is adopted while some participants understood integration as interchangeable with inclusion. This study identified inclusion is limited to a negligible group of children with mild special educational needs. Most children with SEN access education in segregated special unit annexed to mainstream schools. Regarding understanding of disability and SEN, teachers had limited understanding of the concepts mostly based on physical characteristics of the learner.

As it emerged, the outcome of systemic failure to support inclusive schools is the teachers negative attitudes to inclusion and overall exclusion of children with SEN. Negative attitudes were identified mainly caused by lack of understanding of disability issues, social construction of disability or traditional beliefs and religion, the effect being negative attitudes, discrimination, stereotyping and labelling. It has emerged in this study that dilemma of inclusive practice has led to debates on the approaches to be adopted to be inclusive. Most prevalent is the location of the learner, level of functional and adaptive abilities and the process to be followed to be inclusive. Several barriers to the implementation of inclusive education were identified as teachers, schools or organisational said to result from lack of commitment, support and funding. The strong influence of the African concept and attitude of disability was also identified as a barrier to inclusive schools. Finally, it has emerged that participants would like to see a change from the current “inclusion” and suggest strategies for improvement. However, it emerged the strategies were confined more to teacher development and infrastructure and less on the learner. Consequently, the next concluding chapter will recommend strategies for improvement that were not mentioned by the participants or were implicitly implied.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY**

### **6.0 Chapter overview**

This study set out to explore the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream educational settings, from the perspectives of primary school teachers and parents of children with disability in Kenya. Following analysis and discussion of the findings, this chapter provides a summary of the significant findings and implications for the theoretical context. I also include limitations of the research as well as self- reflection as a researcher. The insights gained from the findings are used to inform the recommendations. In essence the discussion in this chapter considers the significance of further enquiry into inclusive education matters.

### **6.1 Theoretical discussion and implications**

My study has principally been influenced by the social model and theory of disability, to identify the barriers that society has created that limit the inclusion of children into mainstream classrooms. The community in this research showed demonstrative behaviours consistent with both social and medical models of disability. The study verified that the social model perspective has much to offer by setting appropriate contexts in which inclusive practices can develop successfully rather than the individual model imposed by society and produces negative influences (Stella, Forlin and Lan, 2007; Barnes and Mercer, 2005). The social model questions how social orders, such as negative attitudinal beliefs and physical and communication barriers imposed on the disabled people, function. Because of societal, political and social thinking, only very few children with SEN can enrol in mainstream schools with most socially and academically excluded. Primarily, exclusion was due to the contingent features of their physical and social environments, including perceived deficits and impaired functions.

A fact some mainstream teachers fail to understand is that apart from academic achievement, schools perform many other important functions for children with SEN in modern society, such as socialisation, social integration and social placement in order for them to gain functional knowledge (Bowen, 2018). Regarding clarity of the functions of education, this research is principally influenced by the work of the functionalist theory of Durkheim (1858-1917). A sociologist and educator, his moral position was anti-discrimination and social integration. A deconstruction of Durkheim's work done by Pickering and Walford (2002) shows that Durkheim used three integral elements that are anomie, division of labour and

functionalism to address social issues. These theories were grounded on the concept of social facts, values and structures (ibid). The focus of this study is functionalism, which significantly explains the purpose of education as a tool for changing discriminatory attitudes against children with SEN, by developing social relationships. Durkheim argued that schools enable development through experiences and interactions with the outside world that families cannot provide. Durkheim addressed these relationships as the social character of education through the hidden curriculum which he referred to as curriculum that makes a child grow and truly become a human being (Durkheim 1951).

The hidden curriculum in this study denotes the unspoken or implicit values, behaviours, procedures and norms that exist schools and are not taught directly. Durkheim functionalism emphasised societal equilibrium, and that society should be analysed and described regarding its various functions. Therefore, if anything happened to disrupt the order and the flow of societal functions, social adjustments had to be made to achieve stability of a state maintained and shared through community norms (Durkheim, 1987). It could be interpreted, then that Durkheim was implying that changes whether positive or negative have an impact not only on individuals but also the whole society (Pickering and Walford, 2002). To counterbalance the disintegration of social solidarity, Durkheim (1893) saw shared values translating to rights and responsibilities.

Based on the above explanations, Education for All children is a right and not a gift to be bestowed (UN, 1948). The Salamanca Statement in 1994 challenged the social order of educational provision for children with SEN and suggested rapid developments to achieve stable nations that value all children. The statement reaffirmed the right to education for every individual regardless of individual differences in societies (UNESCO, 1994). This affirmation meant that the social reforms sought by society firmly placed education within a broader social agenda of entitlement. Therefore, it should be expected that nations must protect, respect and fulfil the right to education (Tomasevski, 2006; Terzi, 2014) and that all children have a right to participate in education (Freire, 2018). According to Durkheim's functionalism, elements such as discrimination, stigmatisation and exclusion identified in the history of special education in Kenya, meant that its society was and is malfunctioning in matters of education provision.

Discussing the diversity established in societies, Durkheim argued that traditional cultures, including Kenya, have an assumed homogeneity with shared values, religious beliefs and backgrounds characterised by interdependence, but not sameness. Durkheim appears to provide a framework to interpret the complexities of modern society and formulate ways to hold communities together, despite the diversity of interests and needs. He suggested that in traditional cultures, collective consciousness was mutual, social norms were strong and social behaviour was well regulated. In contrast, he corroborated modern societies had a complex division of workforce, beliefs and backgrounds and communal consciousness was less noticeable. A wide range of difference was identified in schools in Kenya, but the prevailing practice has been and continues to be the segregation of children with SEN to learn in special schools rather than within the framework of inclusive mainstream classrooms. This theory has the potential to influence the transformation of the education system and sociocultural factors and change attitudes. Academic communities in my study were generally resistant to inclusive education, citing lack of skill (see sub-section 5.5.1) and apparent barriers that prevent disabled children from accessing mainstream education within their communities.

### **Empirical implication of Durkheim's functionalism to inclusive education**

Durkheim addressed the French model of society, which is different from Kenyan society where parents' concern is children's academic achievement as a means to acquire personal advancement leading to higher education and employment. However, most compellingly, Durkheim has addressed a common issue in recent years of education being determined by the society within which it is practised (Durkheim, 2013), and the underlying concern that it is a fundamental human right (UN, 1948) and should be available to all children, irrespective of ability or disability (UNESCO, 1994).

For this reason, it appears Durkheim was urging societies to develop new ways to ratify social change such as a concrete policy to remove disadvantages in education, develop new platforms for all children to interact with each other, teachers and the educational content and to create the functionalism perspectives of education for all. The concerns that Durkheim in 1897 addressed are the concerns addressed in this study, similar to the social model of disability (see section 3.3.2). As functionalism perspective is understood, Durkheim saw education as an influencing factor of acting, thinking and developing positive attitudes

within communities. Thus, access to inclusive education cannot be discounted, but rather, originality of ideas is needed to develop a set of values that will help achieve the vision that students, teachers, leaders and the community have for a school. More specifically, creativity in terms of teaching styles, classroom structures and access to appropriate resources to meet students' diverse needs (Richards, 2016b). In addition, insights for adopting simple and flexible approaches to produce citizens with skills for local needs, including innovation to support a growing economy (RoK, 2012a; 2013b). These approaches would support Kenya's aspiration of transforming into an industrialised, middle-income country by 2030 (RoK, 2007).

However, despite these noble insights, failure by the government to provide quality standards of living for disabled people elucidates the notion that exclusion from mainstream schools, mostly affects children who do not match the values described in vision 2030's requisite to support a growing economy. Durkheim foresaw the education crises, namely inclusion, that required a complete reorganisation of the system rather than "timorous and partial reforms" (Durkheim, 2013: xiv) as evidenced by Kenya's slow progress to inclusive schools. He identified liberal systems as the pinnacle of societal evolution and the opportunity to provide individuals with social values and social inclusion. The outcome of which is a nation that gives all individuals choices, without discrimination, to achieve their goals and provide support to advance to the extent their potential allows (Pickering and Walford, 2002).

The point of societal transformation has not yet been achieved in Kenya due to the 'brute fact' (Talcott, 2013:2) of the competitive nature of education which classifies children by merit. As established, parents, teachers and communities seek schools that perform exceptionally well academically (see section 6.4.2), a phenomenon which empowers the "rewarding of hard work" (Alexiadou, 2005:102). Similar to the crisis Durkheim acknowledged, some participants in the current study indicated that most children with SEN are excluded from mainstream schools because they are associated with poor academic performance. Those who were already enrolled on the borderline regarding achievement were excluded from transitioning to secondary schools since they were not allowed to sit for the national examination. It seems feasible that league table performance is the major reason government-funded secondary schools are and continue to be mainly perpetuating inequalities in education.

Moreover, the goals of education (see Table 3) appear to be provided from a functionalist perspective as they are guided by three main components which are values, theoretical approaches and guiding principles (KICD, 2017). The functionalist perspective takes the values-based approach to education to facilitate the holistic development of all children to be educated to become skilled ethical citizens. As identified, curriculum developers have promised to introduce a value-based approach in the new curriculum framework aimed to promote “responsibility, respect, honesty and being ethical” (KICD, 2017:2), among other values.

Literature reviewed showed a paradigm shift could be beneficial in phasing out exam ranking at national, county and school tables that have a major impact not only on learners, but also prestige and, career prospects for all teachers (Somerset, 2009). The latter point has been critiqued by Hungi and Thuku, (2010) and Sawamura and Sifuna, (2008) who argue that teachers work under pressure to improve grades and league table ranking. A phenomenon in education that reduce critical thought, instead encourage rote learning (Harber, 2018). Passing exams and certification take preference while the focus on other aspects of education is neglected (ibid), such as inclusiveness.

## **6.2 Main findings of the study**

The main findings of my study are presented in this section based on the four research questions that have guided this study (see section 1.3.3).

### **(i) What is the impact of inclusion after the Salamanca agreement?**

Findings revealed that Kenya has not been wholly successful in making some change has happened a fundamental change towards the inclusion of all learners in the same classroom. However, the broad definition of inclusive education identified in discussions with teachers, parents and policy documents proposes a diverse understanding of educational inclusion for children with SEN. The current inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream classrooms only takes place when they do not need support from teachers. For those whose special needs require academic support from teachers, a twin-track process is adopted.

A twin-track process is whereby the specialist classes are not located within the mainstream school but are in a separate school. The gradual transition from the special school to the mainstream classroom is based on the child’s ability and teachers’ arbitrary decisions. The

academic exclusion was identified by children using the same entry gate but once inside the school grounds proceeding to separate schools: the two schools under two different roofs were separate and different but equal. Both schools had separate facilities and services, separate assembly sessions, separate staff meetings, separate toilets and separate dining areas. Teaching was, and learning occurred separately, and thus each school had its head teacher and deputy and other support staff such as cleaners and cooks.

However, the Salamanca Statement specifies that both policies and financing arrangements should encourage a common administrative structure (UNESCO, 1994). Indeed, separate educational facilities enhance the notion of unequal (Peart, 2014; Thompson, 2013), besides, if all children were seen as equal, they would share equal facilities. From this perspective, namely the financially unrealistic options of the twin-track approach with its multiple systems of administration, organisational structures and services, inclusive education was considered costly in Kenya. As informed by Peters (2003), the estimated average cost of segregated placements is 7 to 9 times higher than placement in general education classrooms. Therefore, the economic justification of the approach to inclusive education within the same mainstream by the Salamanca Statement appears to have some merit. Inclusive education can be not only cost-efficient but also cost-effective hence a sustainable means of equal access to education.

The justification for an integrated approach from the participants regarding special support units is academic and social inclusion, with the overall goal of creating inclusive communities and awareness of disability to non-disabled peers. Additionally, special support in the units was perceived as a solution to the challenges of educating all children in the same classrooms, by providing support away from other children whose learning might be disrupted. Another justification is that the units have reduced the rigorous, time-wasting, bureaucratic processes associated with the assessment of the need for entry into special residential schools. The general view was that residential segregated schools away from communities had been brought closer to the people to ensure a whole-school approach. As participants indicated, special units are currently “walk-in and learn” service for children with SEN and their parents. Although it is vital to acknowledge special units as social inclusion, the government considers them as a starting point for academic inclusion, providing balanced educational provision (Muuya, 2002) and promoting transition (Kiarie, 2014; Njoka et al. 2011) from special to mainstream classrooms, so that all children can

learn together. This impact is particularly significant to those with SEN who do not have to attend residential schools away from their homes, families and communities.

The presence of children with SEN in mainstream school playgrounds reveals children mix socially in education and acceptance of disabled people in some communities that previously isolated them. Thus, it appears that this approach has the potential to influence change in attitude and helps reduce stigma, especially because in traditional communities disability, was a sensitive issue, emotive (Crowther and Lloyd-Williams, 2012) and rarely discussed in public. Creating the means and support for children with SEN to interact within communities could be seen as communities making efforts to transform from traditional approaches that separated, rejected and sometimes exclusionary. Disabled people need a practice that is more receptive to the diversity of needs (ALLFIE, 2018). Hence, due to presence and exposure in communities, most parents are no longer ashamed, hide their children from communities or want to send their children to segregated residential schools far from their families. For this reason, the diversity of some children using assistive aids, prosthetics or sign language, or receiving physical support has increased in communities and in some mainstream schools. Other research agrees that a paradigm shift beyond segregated education to mainstream school pedagogy as efforts to align with the Salamanca Statement of 1994 (Adoyo and Odeny, 2015; Srivastava et al. 2015; Polat, 2011; Schwartz et al. 2010).

The economic justification by the Salamanca Statement of 1994 favoured low-cost solutions to inclusive education wherever possible by including all children in the same school (UNESCO, 1994) could be applied to Kenya. The framework indicates that both policies and financing arrangements should encourage a common administrative structure. However, Kenya has not yet tried this approach although it could be adopted in the future. Additionally, the same school approach would not only be cost-efficient but also cost-effective and thus a sustainable means of equal access to education. As previously mentioned, it could be said that the twin track approach Kenya has adopted is a costly and financially unrealistic option due to its multiple systems of administration, organisational structures and service provision.

**(ii) What is the teachers' understanding of disability and inclusive education?**

Most teachers perceived disability as physical and visible. Such understanding emphasised learners' conditions and categories described using various labels (see section 5.2). My study identified that teachers in mainstream schools have training and professional development across a variety of subject areas, but a majority have never been in contact and interactions with disabled people. Some teachers indicated they were not trained to teach children with a diversity of needs and, once they had left college, expected to teach non-disabled children whose learning needs did not require key curricular and pedagogical adjustments. In addition, most held the view that only teachers trained in special education can support children with SEN, which needed to be within the confines of a special school. As this study revealed, the teaching culture and orientation introduced of specialist trained teachers teaching in segregated special schools only is a practice that supports the medical model approach to education.

The idea of all children learning together was considered a foreign "western idea", and practically impossible since it was not the norm in Kenya. Nonetheless, social-cultural influence such as traditional beliefs and religion which emphasise functional abilities cannot be discounted in influencing attitudes and understanding of disability. This influence could explain teachers' attitudes and being less accommodating of children with diverse needs and especially those relating to functional and adaptive abilities. Although change of attitude to is paramount in including learners with different abilities and needs in regular schools (Forlin and Chambers, 2017), teachers appeared certain that any initiative within current policy parameters to create inclusive classrooms will result to a negative impact on teaching and learning.

**(iii) What are the current barriers to inclusion at the school level?**

Analysis of the third research question produced five major obstacles that stand in the way of children with SEN accessing, learning, and participating in mainstream schools as (a) Systemic-related factors (b) Teacher-related factors (c) School environment factors (d) Learner-related factors e) social-cultural factors, as summarised in Figure 11 below.

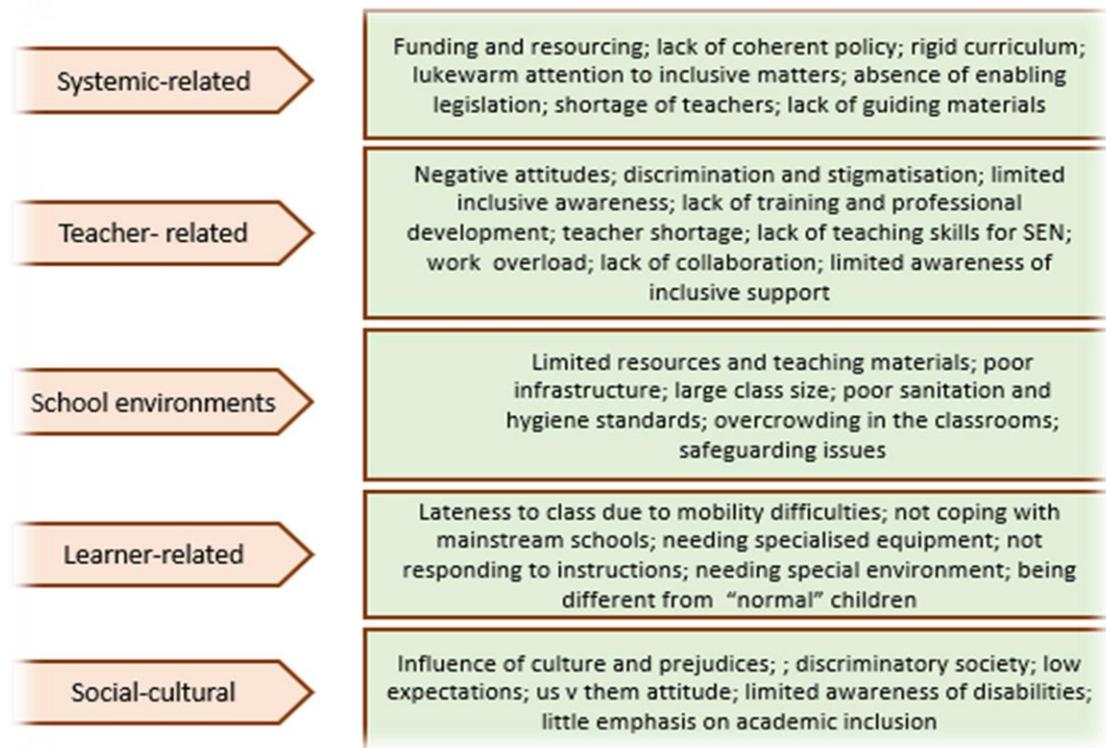


Figure 11: Barriers to inclusion.

Figure 11 above is a summary of the barriers to implementation of inclusive education found in this study. These barriers are discussed in the sub-sections that follow shown on the table.

**i. Systemic barriers**

The findings identified systemic and organisational related barriers as the major contributory obstacle to inclusive education. Evidence of the presence of diverse needs in primary schools and not in secondary schools showed that there is better awareness of inclusive education in primary schools. Inclusion in secondary school has not been successful due to needing human and financial resources, the pressure of covering the syllabus within the time allocated in mainstream schools and the absence of firm policy guidelines on transition from primary to secondary school (RoK, 2009:23). These factors have resulted in situations where

proper coordination is lacking. Despite the establishment of special units, there is no system in place to ensure progression to further education after primary education since the majority of secondary schools and vocational colleges do not accept children with SEN. Further, apart from the national exams, transition in education has been made difficult by devolution whereby vocational colleges are managed and funded by county governments while funding and management of tertiary colleges and universities is sole responsibility of the national government. This means that commitment to the right of every child to education access at all levels cannot be met due to the disparity of coordination and organisation. Therefore, transition to secondary school, vocational college or tertiary education to gain employability skills is still not assured for most children with SEN. Consequently, the major barrier to inclusive education is systemic failure to create explicit policies with implications that primarily focus on removal of structures and systems that serve to disadvantage children with SEN.

## **ii. Teacher-related barriers**

Various reform initiatives geared towards the improvement of education were identified with the government providing UPE/FPE to all children. However, from the exploration carried out in schools, data does not indicate that teachers are knowledgeable about inclusive teaching, there is professional development to equip them with new skills or knowledge regarding SEN. As data indicated, most teachers do not have basic understanding of inclusive teaching. It could be said that the government is strengthening the negative attitudes demonstrated by mainstream schoolteachers, by not providing training and personal development opportunities. Attitudinal barriers were identified with teachers isolating children with SEN from some school activities such as P.E and laboratory related lessons. Negative attitudes were seen in teachers using workload to avoid additional support; selecting learners to accommodate in mainstream schools; referring to children with SEN as slow learners and stereotyping those lacking outstanding academic performance.

Unintentional attitudinal barriers identified relate to lack of understanding, knowledge and the skills to work with children with SEN. As this study identified, the fear teachers have of inclusive teaching is children with challenging behaviour that are particularly disruptive, not only disturbing the learning of others, but also causing teachers to worry about the child or other children being at risk due to these behaviours. Teachers were also uncertain about the boundaries of teaching duties such as, for example, whether inclusion entails attending to

incontinence and personal care. Resulting from these dilemmas, teachers were not proactive in gaining inclusive teaching skills, seeking knowledge and understanding of disability issues or seeking collaborations with multi-agency teams. The results of this investigation show that teachers used lack of skills, knowledge, support and funding to validate the exclusion of children with SEN from mainstream schools.

### **iii. School-related barriers**

The abolition of primary school fees increased access to education. However, most children with SEN still did not access mainstream schools due to infrastructure barriers. As identified in this study, most schools are inaccessible to children with mobility difficulties; challenges and obstacles starting at the school gate, to within the school environment and in classrooms. This implies that mainstream schools fail to meet the criteria of child-friendly schools that welcome all children and are non-discriminating (UNICEF, 2009; 2013a). UNICEF also established that inclusion that responds to the diversity of needs requires participation in learning, cultures, and communities, as well as reducing exclusion pressures from and within education. Accordingly, inclusive education is not only relevant to children with SEN but should benefit all children as and when the development of inclusive societies can be achieved.

However, within the present parameters of funding and support, many schools are unable to cope with inclusion which demands the removal of all barriers to access such as physically getting into school, using pathway and class sizes. The most significant barrier to effective access to mainstream schools was identified as accessible toilets (see section 5.4.2). Most parents considered most schools child-unfriendly and questioned the purpose, relevance and outcome of mainstream education. The findings of this study revealed most mainstream schools cannot assure essential facilities, such as toilets, for some children with SEN simply because they are not available.

Accessibility to facilities is supported in literature, and schools need to think about access and materials that enhance functional capacity and mobility so that all individual children's needs can be accommodated (Hastings and Wood, 2002). The tenable principle high on the agenda of the Salamanca Statement was for nations, schools and educational policies to address concepts of access that underpin social justice (Ainscow and Messiou, 2018). Considering that Kenya is advancing regarding technology and better health care, in line

with the Government's Vision 2030 plan (RoK, 2010), there is the potential that schools will see an increase in children with a broad spectrum of needs, including those who previously would not have survived childbirth and reached school age. For inclusive education to be achieved, radical thinking of how to increase resources and a strongly framed pedagogy will be required, as insightful thinking is based on child centred ideas about their individuality, learning needs and values, and not on the teachers' interests (Sriprakash, 2010). Furthermore, rethinking safeguarding issues and risk assessment of school playgrounds. Besides, reconsidering the barriers of stairs, ramps, doors, passageways, footpaths, playgrounds, taps and so on, all of which expose children to harm and risks

#### **iv. Learner-related factors**

Teachers in this study were found to suggest the learner as a barrier to inclusion due to difficulties related to disability itself. Although the government of Kenya states that no disabled child is at risk of exclusion (RoK, 2009; 2016), this study identified both academic and social exclusion in mainstream schools whereby some children with SEN were not included in activities with non-disabled peers. Data analysis confirmed there are some children with SEN who are discriminated against, labelled and at risk of exclusion and illiteracy owing to teachers' lack of understanding of disability. It appears the risk of exclusion for children with SEN in all school activities due to deficits comes from the very people who are supposed to include them Hodkinson (2016).

#### **v. Social-cultural barriers**

The Salamanca Statement emphasised the removal of social-cultural barriers in schools by nations, teachers and communities and focusing on generating inclusive settings that uphold the values of respect and, at the same time, understand cultural, social and individual diversity (UNESCO, 1994). Although the participants of this study did not directly address the influence of culture and traditions on the exclusion of children with SEN from mainstream schools, discussion data reveals the influence of traditional beliefs in sins and other misdeeds deemed to cause disability. Whilst this study did not confirm the genesis of such a notion, it did partially substantiate implicit perceptions emanating from cultural influence that children with SEN cannot learn in the same classroom with non-disabled peers due to their disability. Some decades ago, children with disability often did not attend school (Groce, 2004). However, in modern times, this notion is manifested in the formation of two

schools within the school grounds. While such beliefs did not cause direct exclusion from education, they were contributory factors to indirect exclusion, discrimination, labelling and stigmatisation (see section 6.1.1).

Nonetheless, one of the more significant findings to emerge regarding the influence of culture is the normative approach to disability distinctions were evident between impairment and ability, success and failure, performing students and slow learners, which are elements that society used to approve functional inconsistencies within and between schools. Hence, the link between these factors that society has created resulted in barriers of low expectations from teachers (see section 5.2.4), the location debate (5.3.1), adaptive and functional skills all seen as qualifications to mainstream school entry. Teachers seemed to presume mainstream classrooms were specifically meant for non-disabled children and children with mild disabilities only that did not require any support. Other teachers were persuaded that secondary education only makes sense for children with SEN who have the potential to attain the basic learning objectives as planned for in the mainstream school curriculum. In short, teachers were saying the type and severity of dictates the child's chances of success. Hence, an underlying notion that those children with SEN could not learn in the same classroom with non-disabled peers due to disability itself (6.3.3).

Teachers had double standards in their belief of education for all children. For example, most mentioned the benefits of inclusion, others indicated it was unfair for children with SEN to be denied an education while still others emphasised that children with SEN get an experience of the "real world" once they enter mainstream schools. Yet, despite such positive beliefs, mainstream schools were still exclusionary. Apart from individual teachers, national double standards were noted in perspectives of dominant social and political discourses on democracy for all Kenyans and the championing of equality for all children (RoK, 2009), and yet children with SEN were still excluded from mainstream schools. Overall, discussion with a majority teachers showed attitude depends on how they perceive the nature and severity of the learners disability and less to the variables pertaining to themselves (Avramidis and Norwich, 2010). For this reason, they lacked total acceptance of children with SEN in their classrooms.

It was also noted that the term inclusion was common official rhetoric in political meetings and education circles but in the background, meritocracy to justify the social inequality in education was enhanced. Evidence was found in the rigorous and competitive methods used to sort and filter children for entry into mainstream classrooms, including transition between levels once enrolled. The issue of effective ways in which teachers should include children with SEN in mainstream classrooms or teacher training approaches to provide effective support in both academic achievement and social involvement were neglected. It was noted the curriculum was assumed to fit all children and was not adjusted. In this case, it promoted individualism and exclusion of some children with SEN from mainstream schools.

**(iv) What are the inclusion strategies that have not yet been implemented?**

The fourth research question produced perspectives in education that could promote social justice, academic and social participation. From the findings, it appears that the location of the learner debate within general education has taken precedence over the last 20 years and gained substantial development and firm grounding with teachers, parents, children and communities (see subsection 6.3.1). Hence, the strategies offered were not to advocate for inclusive classrooms but, rather, ways to improve mainstream schools so that all children could learn under one roof. The strategies that mostly emerged suggested that inclusive education reality is first to shape a teacher who has the confidence to support all learners in the classroom by providing adequate teacher training and professional development.

Most studies in the field of education agree that teacher training and professional development is pivotal in reforming education (Wilson, 2018; Pijl, 2010; Rouse, 2008; and Sifuna, 2005). Furthermore, access to appropriate resources and facilities support the outcomes of good practices that become evident (Smith and Tyler, 2011). Through awareness of inclusive education and disability issues, collaboration with education stakeholders, legislation and policies were considered essential strategies for inclusion. Analysis of data revealed that teachers and communities, in general, could respect differences, the dignity of all human beings and alleviate the notion of “one size fits all”, a prevalent mentality in mainstream schools fuelled by both increasing international pressure for inclusive teaching and ethical considerations for all children (UNESCO, 1994:7). Strategies that have not yet been implemented are discussed further in the recommendation section (6.4).

### **6.3 Study conclusion**

This study endeavoured to answer the question on the impact of inclusive education twenty years after Kenya committed to the Salamanca agreement. Important aspects of current inclusive education were clarified through data collected in three primary schools, three secondary schools and with ten parents. The Salamanca framework cautioned nations on finding “compelling reasons” to keep children with SEN from mainstream education and recommended education for the majority of children within mainstream schools (UNESCO 1994:ix). The study provides evidence that Kenya, twenty years after the Salamanca call, integration is perceived as a positive move forward in the reform of building an inclusive society and encouraging children with SEN into education (Kiarie, 2014; RoK, 2013a; Muuya, 2002). A collective understanding is that integration can resolve social and educational exclusion, as children with SEN need not be sent away to segregated residential schools and, at the same time, promote inclusive communities which were elusive in the past. Although how this is applicable, or whether children with SEN should stand aside and wait is not clear, it is argued that UPE/ FPE initiatives underpin inclusive education by providing a solid foundation for advanced learning (Ogola, 2010). However, the manner in which society shifts away from consideration of inclusive communities to the separation of children based on ability and disability once the children are in mainstream schools, still reflects UNESCO's earlier view (1994) of a context that is disabling and continues to focus on impairment rather than diversity.

In general, such units are founded on difference and individual weakness rather than the reality of all children learning under one roof in mainstream school using a social model approach. Segregation is criticised as a medicalised model of disability whereby the focus is on the students' medical needs rather than their learning needs (Mittler, 2012; Norwich and Lewis, 2005; Hornby, 2001). At face value, the Kenyan government appears committed to EFA and inclusive education. The introduction of special support units seems a way of showing commitment and justification of efforts towards an inclusive approach. It also appears that the integrated approach is the litmus test for the subsequent creation of inclusive of schools. However, the current study reveals that the cautious step the government has adopted is not entirely effective since, by its adoption, separation and segregation is perpetuated. Although literature reveals that Kenya is struggling to fund education (Njoka et al. 2011; Kiarie, 2014; Adoyo and Odeny, 2015), inclusive schools are a matter of priority

to educate together rather than the twin-track approach Kenya has adopted since all children learning under the same roof reduces cost of education.

Despite the current study being based on a small sample of participants, the findings revealed that various barriers to creating inclusive mainstream schools exist such as negative attitude, limited necessary awareness for becoming inclusive practitioners and lack of suitable resources often inhibiting teachers from developing appropriate beliefs or attitudes. A strong relationship between teacher education and attainment of EFA was identified. Existing special schools are few and cannot serve all children with special needs. At the same time, mainstream schools are currently not useful as schools for all children, particularly those with SEN. Consequently, government efforts for EFA are being undermined by various barriers, meaning that EFA cannot be achieved.

However, in as much as the effectiveness of inclusive education is challenged by teacher education and understanding, this study also identified contradictions prevalent in terminology used for integration and inclusion. Both terms are used interchangeably, not only by the participants but also in some government policies such The Basic Education Act No. 14 (RoK, 2013a) and the Constitution of Kenya (RoK, 2010). Similarly, in MoE quarterly report of (2013-2018) policy of inclusive education is indicated as having been extended to all children with SEN in regular schools “except those with autism, emotional and behavioural difficulties and specific learning disabilities” (MoE, 2012:35). Apart from the decreased of commitment to inclusive schools, which is clear from government rhetoric, such reports from the government further compound the understanding of inclusion and integration. It could be said that these reports cause misunderstanding to the education fraternity, literature and research since most literature appears to indicate inclusive education in Kenya has been successful, while clearly it has been addressing integration. Armstrong and Spandogou (2011) point out that inclusion means different things to different people, but there is a danger that eventually inclusion may eventually mean everything and nothing at the same time.

The MoE had shown interest in making all schools child-friendly by 2015. However, this interest appears to have been constrained by issues surrounding limited funds and building capacities for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (Milcah et al. 2018). As established, it appears that government focus is directed towards general education, with observable rapid developments made such as the introduction of UPE/FPE in 2003

(Somerset, 2009). Nevertheless, from the study findings, although UPE/FPE has been implemented, minimal efforts have been made to improve school infrastructure, train more teachers in special education or fund schools to be inclusive.

Arising from systemic barriers is the need for action on the part of the government in order to accommodate all children with SEN in child-friendly schools through modification of the curriculum. If not barriers of access to mainstream schools were identified as a major obstacle with some children being excluded from mainstream education. Some children were discovered to be at risk of exclusion from education due to the current rigid enrolment and adopted transition approaches. Thus mainstream schools have not reviewed, changed systems of enrolment or improved by being more focused on inclusion and quality education (Hodkinson, 2015). Considering the child-unfriendly structures identified, it seems mainstream schools have not changed to be educationally more effective, meaning that it is the child with SEN who is expected to change to fit into mainstream schools (Ainscow, 2005; Booth and Ainscow, 2011).

The study has also revealed that some teachers recognised inclusive teaching as a new thought, not indigenous to teaching culture, impractical and a western idea being imposed upon them. This attitude could be attributed to the government's continued support for special needs schooling and the twin-track approach. Findings suggest that, generally, the government has made no significant difference in moving from special education to inclusive teaching. Traditionally, special education has been provided in a few resourced special schools, away from most communities. It appears that the government's priority is the addition of more special schools annexed to mainstream schools within communities (Kajilwa, 2016). Benevolence for special schools and the training of special education teachers separately has resulted in the perception that mainstream teachers should not realistically be expected to teach children with special needs. In addition, parents of children who lack inclusionary competences should not realistically expect them to be able to learn with their non-disabled peers. This prejudice was identified in enrolment procedures. As identified, teachers considered behaviour control, personal care and independent mobility which did not call for adult support at the enrolment stage. Such biased assessment implies that there are some children with SEN who may never meet the qualifications expected of mainstream school enrolment.

This study raises the possibility that Kenya did not gain a clear understanding of inclusive schools from the Salamanca meeting. Gadamer's (2001; 1989) philosophy of truth and method explains the close connection between people's socialisation through which they gain access to their world and to the traditions which play a role in understanding of new experiences. He says people's experience cannot be "dissolved or set aside because they define them" (Gadamer 2001:43). Therefore, if people's understanding of issues is influenced by traditions and experiences handed down from the past, then it is possible to explain the current understanding of inclusive schools in Kenya and the teachers' negative attitudes towards inclusive teaching. It appears culture, traditions and peoples norms effect on education for children with SEN.

The history of discrimination, stigmatisation and prejudices that for many years have led parents to hide their disabled children away from communities can be seen in the backdrop of special education in Kenya. Gadamer (2001; 1989) argues that all understanding is interpretative and involves an exchange between the familiar and the unknown. Whereas common understanding leads to collective agreement, a linguistic barrier can also interfere with interpretation of the 1994 Salamanca agreement. It appears the matter under discussion was not entirely under the control of the conversational partners, as can happen in conferences, giving rise to diverse interpretation of the inclusive process. From the example of Kenya, it appears inclusive education was given a divergent interpretation resulting in weak implementation and widespread coercive power strategy common in most developing countries (Marsh and Huberman, 1984). Gadamer's theory of truth and method (1989) also demonstrates that inclusive education should be negotiated within the traditions, history and the social world in which they operate to understand the reasons teachers and some parents argue on impossibilities of teaching all children in the same classroom. Gadamer looks at prejudice as a process that should prompt thinking. Consequently, findings identified in this study on discrimination, prejudices, negative attitudes create an opportunity of reversing and being replaced with positive actions.

The most notable finding to emerge from data is systemically initiated barriers due to paucity of clear, firm and specific policy on inclusive education. Currently, inclusive education is envisioned within the SEN policy drafted in 2009, following the report of the taskforce on SEN appraisal exercise of 2003 (RoK, 2003; 2009). For reasons that remain unclear, the SEN policy has remained in draft format since 2009. Although it is more favourable in

supporting special education: it is in general, weak and not sufficiently inclusive to support the establishment of inclusive schools. Other initiatives for inclusive education remain at the level of well-intentioned statements and broadly defined policy objectives.

This study established that policy vacuum has added to inclusive barriers such as screening for enrolment and delaying the transition from primary to secondary school. Additionally, policy has not been clear on teacher training and the creation of inclusive schools. The present findings support the view that inclusive changes cannot take place in a policy vacuum. Rather, changes should begin by the MoE addressing educational and schooling culture in its entirety through the context of policy guiding (UNESCO, 1994). Consequently, shortfall of specific policy may be linked to the intended or unintended consequence of exclusion identified in mainstream schools. Moreover, the SEN policy fails in its purpose to demonstrate governmental expectation to education stakeholders, which is most likely the reason most teachers were not aware of its availability because there is no single comprehensive policy on inclusive education.

Mitchell (2018) points out that sometimes segregation is a choice that governments make through weak policies which strengthen special schools as legitimate places to educate children with SEN. Beside weak and very general policies resulting in disadvantage for some children, decreased goodwill and influence from government in transforming mainstream schools to be inclusive was revealed in this study. Rather than formulate a clear policy on inclusive education, the government made promises to create inclusive schools but practically established special schools to ensure all children are in some form of education. The excuse of funding has been used to put inclusion on hold. Nonetheless, the available funds have been redirected goals of creating at least a special unit for each mainstream school and integrating ICT into teaching and learning in special schools (Vision 2030 flagship projects report, online). Notwithstanding, teacher training and preparedness improves practice and pedagogy since teachers increase their competence and ability to accommodate children with SEN in learning activities (Richards 2016a).

It is apparent that the implementation of inclusive education values in Kenya is elusive and continues to remain a vision. Seemingly, government is hesitant of inclusive ideals, despite aiming for stable quality education by 2030. It seems that, although Kenya has strengthened special education and special education teacher training (a fact that cannot be undervalued), it is working in opposition to the Constitution (2010) that assures all citizen of social justice

on an equal basis through equity, inclusiveness, equality, human rights and non-discrimination. Inclusive education means making more profound systemic changes to accommodate all children with SEN in mainstream schools, regardless of need (Mitchell, 2018; Mittler, 2012). In the case of Kenya, it appears the initial step is the removal of barriers before creating opportunities for inclusive learning and teaching. The success of inclusive education will depend both on what Kenya does now and the plans it has in place to achieve education that is truly for all learners, regardless of individual need. Figure 12 is a summary of the conclusion this study.



Figure 12: Conclusion of the study

Figure 12 shows the conclusion of this study which is based on the social model of disability that the problem of implementing inclusive schools in Kenya is not the children with SEN themselves or their disability but the problem is with the unaccommodating, practices, systems and structures of the disabling society in which these children live.

#### 6.4 Recommendations from the main findings

*The future is not fated but will be fashioned by our values, thoughts and actions. Our success in the years ahead will depend not so much on what we do as what we achieve*

*(UNESCO, 1994: iv)*

The central message of UNESCO is simple, that all children matter in education. Based on this thinking, recent guidance regarding ways of promoting. Complexity arises, however, when we try to put this message into practice. Implementing this message will likely require changes in thinking and practice at every level of an education system from classroom teachers and others who provide educational experiences directly, to those responsible for national policy. There is considerable evidence from research around the world that including children with young people with the full range of impairments is successful particularly when there is change of thinking, planning, funding and training teachers (Rieser, 2018).

The recommendations discussed in this chapter are based on the interpretation of the findings, with a focus on the values, thoughts and actions that should ensure the Salamanca framework is strengthened as agreed and effective inclusive education is achieved despite diversity of needs. These recommendations are for consideration by schools, teachers, parents, the MoE and all education stakeholders such as policy formulators and education sponsors.

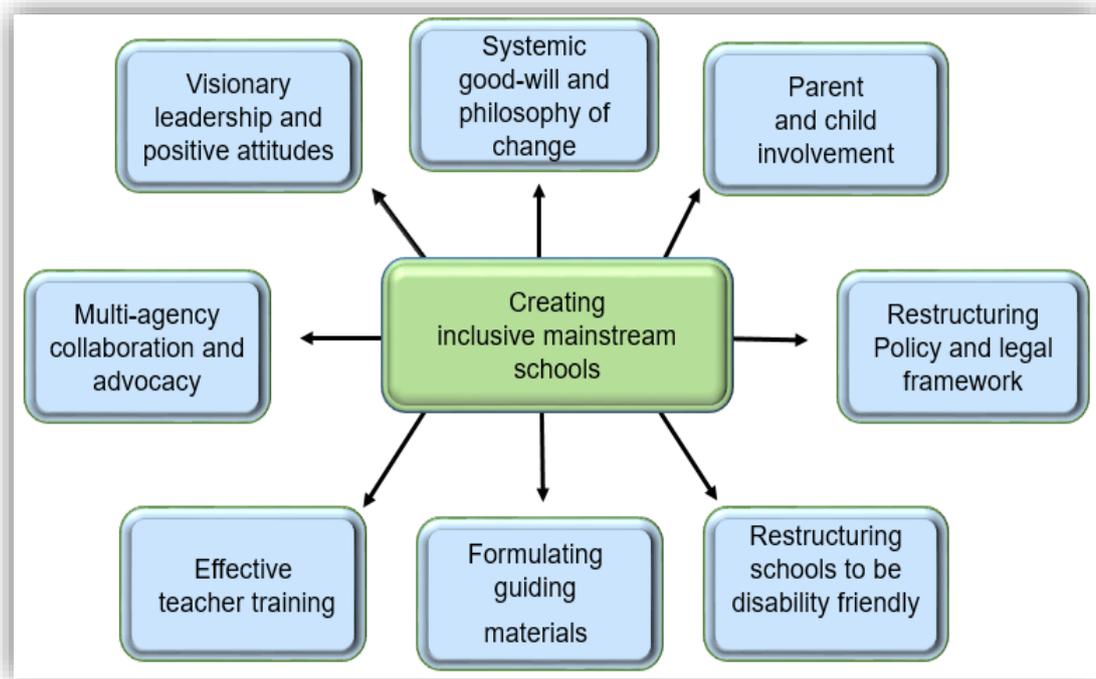


Figure 13: Summary of the recommendations

The summary of the recommendations shown in Figure 13 are further discussed in the subsections that follow.

#### 6.4.1 Developing a supportive child-friendly school

A detailed exploration of inclusive education in this study demonstrated the confusion that surrounds inclusion pedagogy. Subsequently, of major concern for Kenya is “*what to do now?*” This study proposes the creation of child-friendly school. The concept embraces the social model of disability and recognises the right of every child (UNICEF, 2009), hence the entitlement approach to education. However, child-friendly school redefines the purpose of the school not just through the social perception but also through the child’s perspective. A child-friendly school assures every child an environment that is physically safe, emotionally secure and psychologically enabling (ibid). All children are made to feel happy at school, they themselves are seen as the authors of the pedagogical practice and the authority of interactions (Sriprakash, 2010).

Therefore, education stakeholders in Kenya should embrace this approach as it is in the best interests of the children, since the child is constructed as an individual and difference is valued (ibid). Child-friendly schools aim for education standards that enhance the holistic

development of the child (UNESCO, 2008; 2010), and that the disposition and discourse of teachers is amiable towards all children. Children are natural learners, but their capacity to learn can be destabilised and sometimes destroyed (UNICEF, 2010). Communities should view the school as a community by itself, be fair, transparent and non-discriminatory towards children irrespective of individual differences.

Data from this study highlighted schools as unfriendly towards some children, due to academic performs in the classroom. In child-friendly schools, there is accommodation and differentiation of the curriculum so that children learn at their own pace in a child-centred manner, to increase their competence and ability when learning (Richards 2016a). Consequently, mainstream schools should be restructured in a way that all children with SEN are made to feel welcome through easy access to the curriculum, facilities and resources.

It is possible for schools to plan for solutions that lead to realisation of appropriate education for all children (Ekemezie and Ezeh, 2015:218). To reduce barriers to access, developing resources and infrastructure should be key strategies and measures. It is possible to reduce barriers through government funding of schools aiming to improve infrastructure and reduce physical inaccessibility to schools as well as make other adjustments, such as reducing class sizes, for inclusion to develop (Polat, 2011). Rather than adopt approaches that result in segregation, the creation of child friendly environments are a better, cheaper and more suitable pathway to foster the progressive realisation of child's rights to quality education. As this study identified culture has a part to play in exclusion and discrimination. Therefore, the MoE has an obligation to create child friendly schools so that communities can understand and be confident of having both non-disabled children and those with SEN learning together in the same classroom. Furthermore, the creation of child friendly schools should change attitudes and negative perceptions of disability, including demystifying SEN and disabilities. Towards this goal, it is expected that Kenya will change from rhetoric to practice and customise its education standards according to individual needs and circumstances of all children, while maintaining the initial agreement stipulated at Salamanca in 1994.

## 6.4.2 Inclusion support materials

This study found that teachers are uncertain about the implementation of inclusive schools simply because Kenya lacks the criteria that can guide such schools. This gap of guiding formulae on how to approach the inclusive process is the cause of exclusion of children with SEN from mainstream classes. Inclusion is difficult for teachers (Elder and Odoyo, 2018) and inclusive classes cause anxiety, uncertainty and fear for most teachers (Thomazet, 2009). Without bias or trying to offer a simplistic interpretation that reduces the complexity of school policies and practices (Booth, 2017), Kenya requires clear direction for the creation of materials to guide teachers in the process of inclusion. As all education stakeholders commence with asking questions on “what is in preparation for “what may be” of inclusive planning on a much broader scale” (Berlach and Chambers, 2011: 52), it is essential for all to have a clear understanding of the local environment, communities and, importantly, the variety of differences that tend to exist between cultures within Kenya.

However, transfer of ideas could be should be taken with caution, the propagation and approaches of inclusion toolkit across contexts could be disempowering for teachers and policy makers (Singal, Lynch and Johansson 2019; Le Fanu, 2015), translation or adaptation of any material that is developed within a different culture accounts for the socio-economic, political and cultural context of that culture (Polat, 2011). No country can borrow indiscriminately from another’s dimensions of inclusive education however successful it appears since some schools said to be inclusive in all respects still struggle with matters of equity (Ainscow, 2015). Due to substantial contextual and cultural differences, promotion of inclusive education on values primarily developed in the Northern-based academics should not be borrowed passively. Rather for countries of the Global south, attention should be paid to cultures, contexts and histories to shape understanding of inclusion (Elder and Kuja, 2018; Kisanji, 1993).

Hence, toolkits such as the Index for Inclusion primarily developed for the realities and diversity of England’s national situations could be beneficial in acting as an inspiration for a starting point (CSIE, online; Booth, 2017). While there is no complete procedure for instant inclusion (O’Brien and Forest, 1989:6), local agents can choose to adopt the relevant conceptualisation of this toolkit, augment and modify to address the provision of good quality education. In Lesotho, teachers who adapted inclusive approaches said inclusion materials helped them improve the school for all learners and made them ‘better teachers’

(Bines and Lei, 2011:420). With substantial barriers found in this study relating to creating inclusive schools, establishing practical first steps to inclusion is vital since pedagogy is intrinsically linked to education quality (ibid). As indicated earlier, developing guiding material will clarify the starting point through the complexities and contradictions as identified in the findings.

Although I cannot offer conclusive evidence, a reasonable approach to the initial steps could be to develop provision according to national need and cultural orientations. There is possibility that Kenya's own toolkit for inclusive schools could guide a practical approach to school improvement, inclusive cultures, production of inclusive policies and evolving inclusive practices (Booth and Ainscow, 2016). There is also strong prospects that inclusive approach, would go a long way in making the process of developing inclusive schools easier and more effectively sustainable. The important thing is a realisation that inclusion is not a one-dimensional construct to be measured with a single ruler, the process should be understood as on-going and a matter of commitment (Ainscow et al. 2004; Clark et al. 1999).

### **6.4.3 Teacher training and professional development**

A major finding regarding inclusive schools was the identification of teachers' gap of knowledge and perceived skill deficit in teaching a range of students with diverse needs. As demonstrated by recent work of UNICEF most teachers in developing countries get no training on including children with SEN. For those who have training, it is based on special needs model (Rieser, 2014; 2018). It is essential to have teachers who understand both the challenges and opportunities for developing a community, in which every child is valued equally' lack of training must not be used as a reason or justification for unequal treatment or exclusion' (Richards and Armstrong, 2016:2). A major failure for the current training to is that even those entrusted to manage teacher training do not have inclusive skills, and often have no direct experience of working with children with special needs. Accordingly, there is a need to ensure active participation by disabled people in teacher education and in ongoing support and professional development for inclusive education (ALLFIE, 2018; Richards, 2016; Oliver and Barnes, 2012). It is likely that the presence of disabled teachers will unquestionably change people's attitudes not only in education but also in communities.

According to the recommendations of disabled members of ALLFIE, a twin track training for all student teachers on including children with special needs would equip teachers with

appropriate skill for inclusion (Rieser, 2016). Track one would be on education based on principles of equality and child empowerment while track two would focus on education accommodation of different impairments, specific needs of children with SEN (Rieser, 2014). Teachers who are already have initial training should take ownership of their development and seek out opportunities for professional growth (Pijl, 2010; Smith and Tyler, 2011). However, this could be counterproductive, thus, the government should support teachers to get training specifically on inclusive education and the most important issues of the current educational times (Sood et al. 2018).

Most significantly, e-learning should be adopted for professional development as well as in-service courses, seminars, workshop for those already in the field since a majority of teachers have commitments that do not allow them to travel, study full-time or change lifestyle. The emergence and advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have changed the way teaching and learning processes are being conducted (Mtege et al. 2010). E-learning should be cost-effective since most schools are connected to the national grid and have computers. Probably a small allowance to buy data bundles could be offered; a gesture that does not equal the cost of full-time training per individual teacher and thus relatively cost effective. Importantly, government commitment to inclusive schools should provide teachers with strong foundations for the way in which they view and respond to all learners (Armstrong, 2016a), to avoid feeling incompetent and unable to accommodate children with SEN in learning activities in mainstream schools (Richards, 2016b). As Forlin and Sin (2010) proposed, when teachers are appropriately trained, have positive attitudes towards diversity, access to appropriate resources and support much good practice becomes evident.

#### **6.4.4 Policy and legislation**

United Nations' specialised agency for education points out that policy can influence and support inclusive thinking and practices by guiding the establishment of equal right of every individual to education (UNESCO, 2017). Therefore, policies have to be well deliberated, effectively implemented and monitored for impact (Ainscow and Messiou, 2018). However, findings from this study indicated that inclusive education policy vacuum has impacted on the creation of inclusive schools so there is need to rethinking of formulating specific inclusive policy. There is a clear need for a policy aimed at removing barriers and inequalities that serve to exclude children with SEN. A policy that has focus on highlighting the achievements of being inclusive rather than focusing on challenges that have made

previous policies impractical to formulate (Loreman 2014). Such a policy should give clear distinction regarding the terminology to be adopted to remove the confusion and inconsistencies that still resonate with integration and inclusion, disability and impairment. In addition, clear, comprehensible policy should guide practice and provide a foundation on which educational practices are legitimised while stipulating how the educational needs of children with SEN should be met in mainstream schools (UNESCO, 1994). As recommended in the Salamanca Statement, policy should make it clear that children with SEN must be educated in mainstream classrooms “unless the nature and severity of their disabilities is such that education in the mainstream classes, even with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (UNESCO, 1994: ix).

The legal framework should also provide for practice, procedure, services and other support that should be in regular education classes or other education-related settings, to enable children with SEN to be educated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible. Furthermore, policy should specify the role to be played by all service providers, including the child, parents, guardians and communities. This means that there is a need for the initiation of a comprehensive baseline data when planning for inclusive schools (Wamocho, Karugu and Nwoye, 2008). While teachers should be consulted in policy formulation and curriculum adjustments the legal framework should also challenge the school and the teachers’ decisions in the best interest of children with SEN. It is clear that legal frameworks will have an impact not only on the roles of teachers, parents and schools but also have significant implications on other sectors such as health, publishers, printers and contractors, amongst others. Since schools do not exist in isolation, policy guidelines should link broader communities and also elaborate on how all the stakeholders should collaborate in meeting the needs of children with SEN (Loreman, 2007). Furthermore, policies should encourage communities to be part and parcel of inclusive school creation and in preparing children with SEN to become active and productive members of society.

#### **6.4.5 Collaboration and awareness**

While collaboration is indeed not a new phenomenon in schools, it has recently re-emerged as one of the key elements for learning in the twenty-first century (Scott, 2015). Apart from all children learning together, inclusive education has potential benefit of cooperation and collaboration with schools, families, guardians and communities. As established in this study,

the collaborative approach in the Harambee<sup>32</sup> spirit is one such approach adopted within communities in self-help events, such as fundraising for development projects, construction of school buildings and school-feeding programmes<sup>33</sup> (Gakure et al. 2013). If inclusive education is to be successful, communities with representation from diverse groups in the community, including people with disabilities should be involved in the creation of inclusive schools because, as proposed by Save the Children (2003), “Children who learn together, learn to live together”.

A starting point for collaboration to promote inclusive education in Kenya is between mainstream and special education, a philosophy which reflects the ideals promoted at Salamanca (UNESCO, 1994). A collaborative approach between a school and a community marks the first step towards ensuring the school is appropriate for all children, since a wide range of decisions, including reforms, are made jointly by the stakeholders. Such collaboration, more importantly, captures the notion that a school is the property of the community and generates a sense of ownership so that everyone feels responsible for transforming mainstream schools into child-friendly learning environments. UNESCO (2017) suggests that communities will support and fund a course to which they become connected when they appreciate it is a worthy cause. Kenya is optimistic of improvement (Orodho, 2014). However, it is argued that “awareness of the problem is the earliest stage towards understanding and lateral thinking in planning for solutions at all levels” (Lamichhane, 2013:323). Therefore, visionary leadership should mobilise communities and create awareness for families so that they can support, influence and be part of the inclusive agenda.

## **6.5 Contribution to knowledge**

Despite its exploratory nature, this study has contributed to a clear focus on the current state of inclusive education in Kenya. The exploratory approach this study adopted has illuminated how teachers understand disability and SEN; identify and include children with SEN into mainstream schools. While this study has provided other important insights, about challenges as well as barriers, it devotes attention to practical strategies for improvement that can support the elimination of identified barriers and support inclusion. The social model

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<sup>32</sup>. Harambee literally means "all pull together" in Swahili, and is also the official motto of Kenya and appears on its coat of arms.

<sup>33</sup> Free meals in schools

of disability can be embraced in Kenya to lobby the government in changing policies to enable inclusion for learners with SEN in mainstream schools. The model could provide understanding to teachers, parents, organizations and lobby groups to pressure the government to promote healthy, friendly environments that are barrier free. To date, a considerable body of research has sought to understand special education in Kenya (Muriuki, 2015; Njoka and Syallo, 2013; Kiarie, 2014; Munyi, 2012; Murugami, 2009; RoK, 2009; Mung'ala-Odera et al. 2006; Muuya, 2002). However, literature is scant and limited on inclusive education as a human right, as more focused on specific policy for inclusive education and SEN (Kiarago, 2016; Adoyo and Odeny, 2015; Mwangi and Orodho, 2014), and thus limited attention on the process of creating inclusive schools. None have identified the initial steps of creating inclusive schools. This study has sought to fill this gap by advancing initial decisions that can make mainstream schools into successful inclusive schools.

This study has contributed to academic knowledge by extending the idea that inclusive education has a range of benefits not only for children with SEN but also non-disabled children, so that all become part of a school community. With differentiated learning opportunities, each child has the potential to excel and make effective use of a school's resources and facilities. Therefore, entitlement to an inclusive mainstream education imposes a duty on mainstream schools to provide for all pupils without exception, welcome them and adapt to their diverse needs (Cigman, 2010). This study has, for the first time in Kenya, demonstrated that mainstream schools can provide an experience which can meaningfully be called inclusive education: one that corresponds to entitlement by developing child-friendly schools.

A key strength of the present study was the parents' and teachers' voice strategy, which proved to be particularly valuable in highlighting the gap in advocacy, awareness and planning for the process of inclusive school development. In contrast to teachers' claims, parents suggested schools that wish to succeed in creating inclusive environments do not require high level collaboration but should consider interconnected collaboration with parents, children with SEN, communities, professionals and organisations at local levels.

However, these proposed strategies by other researchers and participants in this study are noble but there should also be the awareness of where to start because inclusive education must have a starting point. Teachers, schools, parents, the child and communities require a

set of materials to guide the process of developing inclusive schools. The present findings demonstrate that the unplanned “accidental” inclusion in mainstream schools does not benefit all children. Consequently, Kenya’s own Index for Inclusion could act as a starting point for enabling schools to serve all children, particularly welcoming children with SEN in schools that respond to diversity.

This study will be particularly valuable in education settings, since restructuring schools, training teachers, involving communities and multi-agency teams will clearly involve fundamental policy shifts which are required to promote the inclusive approach Kenya signed up for at the Salamanca meeting (UNESCO, 1994). In particular, it is necessary to create an understanding that quality education the government is working hard to achieve will not be a true education for all children if policy and legal frameworks are not in place to ensure equity for all (Armstrong, 2016a).

Although generalisation was not the aim of this case study research, generalisation is also possible since readers may find unique transferability knowledge addressed in this case study (Stake, 2005). The findings could be applied in educational settings to contextualise deeper understanding of inclusive education aspects, including the direction in which inclusive education provision and thinking are moving. Another significant factor that teachers are likely to take positively is having to commence online SEN training within their schools without having to leave their jobs or go away from their schools.

This study contributes to enhancing teachers’ understanding that it is only through change of attitudes and individual initiatives for creating inclusive schools that all children can learn *in the same school under the same roof*. This study has revealed the diversity of needs, interests, abilities and attainment observed in the mainstream schools since the Salamanca meeting. Fresh insight is added to UNESCO in their evaluation of the impact/outcomes in Kenya twenty years after the Salamanca Framework of Action (UNESCO, 1994). Finally, theoretical insights are provided for education stakeholders, the growing body of literature and other developing countries that are goal-oriented towards inclusion, in order to understand the successes and failures of a country struggling with UPE/FPA.

## **6.6 Limitations of the study**

There are some considerations to the validity of this study which must be taken into account when interpreting findings and making conclusions. The choice of Nyahururu zone for the study was subjective, based on my own observations and judgments and mainly undertaken for education stakeholders in this zone. Although the school samples were representative of Laikipia County, the study did not cover the other zones within the county where it is likely that new insights would have emerged on inclusive practices. The findings from different settings (primary and secondary) were not explicitly compared when reporting the findings because the aim of this study was to explore teachers' understanding and parents' general perceptions of inclusive education in public primary schools. By making comparisons, there is a high possibility that new insights would have emerged that would have changed the direction of the findings. However, this could of course form the basis for further future research.

Nevertheless, generalisation of the findings should be made with great caution. Moreover, the terminology in this study might be considered ambiguous since inclusive education appears to mean different things to different people. Furthermore, the discourse of "SEN" considers the within-child deficit and overlooks the skills and abilities that a child brings to a school. The findings generated in this study could be applicable elsewhere within Kenya or similar settings in developing nations, given that the study has provided crucial information for consideration.

One element which would have helped validate specific issues raised in this study was the interviews with head teachers who declined. The scope of this study was limited in terms of classroom observations so it is probable that a deeper insight could have been gained in curriculum, pedagogy in classes for children with diverse needs and the interplay between these factors and educational policies in Kenya. Current data (online or otherwise) from the MoE and government research database was found scanty and limited, a detail which made the search for literature on Kenyan education issues difficult. As a result, some information on disability was derived from medical and public policy journals most of which did not necessarily provide up-to-date information relevant to this study. Hence, this study has relied on current literature from economically developed countries, other developing countries and international organisations. Given that the research had a precise aim, every attempt was

made to ensure that the findings are objective, free from bias and will hold up to critical scrutiny by others.

## **6.7 Further research work**

Further research might explore perceptions towards inclusive education, commented as follows by the head teacher who declined to participate in this research:

Inclusion in Kenya cannot be done the way it is done in developed countries or how it is advocated in the international conferences, we are a unique culture, we can only do it in our own way (Appendix 12:216)

It is possible that such research could produce interesting findings that account for the uniqueness of cultures and the understanding of common principle of “our own way”, as resonated above, that most likely operates in mainstream schools. Indeed, a greater focus on teachers’ attitudes needs to be explored in more detail in future research. Also, further study could identify several courses of action such as a legislative framework for legal prohibition from discrimination in enrolment, assessment and transition of children with SEN into mainstream schools. Lastly, an understanding school on drop-out rate for children with SEN and the reason behind it and what they do once out of school. Moreover, it would be interesting to investigate what happens to young people with SEN who drop out of education because they cannot cope with academics or are denied enrolment in secondary school including youth polytechnics (village polytechnics). Finally, future research will be crucial for investigating how parents and communities can be instrumental in the development of inclusive schools.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: MAP OF KENYA SHOWING THE RESEARCH LOCATION



Source: Google maps

**Appendix 2**  
**PILOT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Who are children considered to have special educational needs
2. Can you say something about inclusion?
3. How do you identify children with special needs?
4. What is your view of admitting children with disabilities in this school
5. In your opinion how should a conducive learning environment be structured?
6. What resources do you use in your teaching to ensure that all children participate in learning?
7. How long have you been a teacher?
8. Tell me what trainings your school/local education office/ministry of education facilities for professional development
9. What are the challenges of educating children with special educational needs in mainstream schools
10. What progress has been made towards addressing the challenges you identified earlier or if you were to make changes to improve education for children with SEN what would you do?.
11. How do you feel about inclusion in Kenya?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add about the education of children with special needs that I have not mentioned but may be useful to this study

### **Appendix 3**

#### **INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE**

The following are extracts from interviews with the participants. The interviews were conversational although they were guided by the interview guides. The leading and the probing questions are in bold. All the items were numbered for ease of citation in the document.

1. What is your understanding of disability/special educational needs?
2. Can you say something about inclusion in education?
3. How does your school identify children with special educational needs?
4. What is your view of admitting children with disabilities in this school?
5. In your opinion, what do you consider to be a favourable learning school environment for children with SEN and disabilities?"
  
6. What resources do you use in your teaching to ensure that all children participate in learning?
  - a. How long have you been a teacher?
7. Tell me what trainings your school/local education office/ministry of education facilitate for professional development on SEN.
8. What are the challenges of educating children with special educational needs in your schools?
9. What progress has been made towards addressing the challenges you identified earlier
  - a. if you were to make changes to improve education for children with SEN what would you do.
10. What is your opinion of inclusive teaching in Kenya? .
11. Is there anything else you would like to add about education for children with SEN that I have not mentioned but may be useful to this study?

## Appendix 4

### SAMPLE OF A TRANSCRIBED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

Extract	Code	Question
1	Q1	<b>What is your understanding of disability/special educational needs</b>
2	PT1	These are children with impairment or handicapped.
3	PT2	Children who are not able-bodied, who cannot do some of the things that are done by the able-bodied, e.g. day-to-day activities. By observing them, you can see they have physical disabilities, mental problem because some will be drooling or unstable.
4	PT3	Children cannot see, walk, some of them are lame such as the little boy in the special unit while others have mental disabilities
5	PT4	Children who are different, and suffer from a condition that prevents them from doing normal things like normal children
6	PT5	Those children with physical, mental and with behaviour that is extreme and difficult to manage. Sometimes they result in bullying others. <b>Please elaborate</b> Not always, although sometimes it makes me uneasy, but I cannot complain, it is expected that I can manage any behaviour since I attended college to be trained and acquire skills to deal with learner behaviours amongst other skills. <b>Do you think you can use the same skills to manage the behaviour of learners with special needs?</b> It's not the same. Special needs behaviour calls for special training, but we are trained general teachers, not special teachers, the learner may not be aware they are misbehaving because of the level of mental capacity.
7	PT6	Children who cannot perform duties/roles that are performed by other children, maybe they cannot walk because of the crippled legs they cannot see or hear. Some of them that need physical support from other people.
8	PT7	They are children who need support to do things because they cannot do it themselves due to their problem of being disabled or having disability-related conditions. But the support the students in this school need is not to do with specialist teaching because some do not have learning difficulties, their special need is related to the school infrastructure that's where they need help.
9	PT8	Those who are physically disabled, poor hearing and learning problems.

10	ST9	A student with forms of disability which may be physical, and mental
11	ST10	Students with some kind of limitation in respect to a normal child maybe in terms of sight, walking, hearing, he has some hindrances on herself or himself
12	ST11	Those who have a limitation which may be physical and are different from other children
13	ST12	Students who have got problems in their bodies e.g. hands, limbs that are deformed. They have other hidden disabilities such as slow learning or low mental capacity.
14	ST13	Children with disabilities have poor hearing, inability to talk or to see, walking problems. Other children are seen to have very challenging behaviours.
15	ST14	Anybody who has challenges whether mental handicapped or physical disabilities. Normally they are different from the other children due to disability
16	ST15	A student who attend special school because of some challenges like mental and physical problems.

**Appendix 5**  
**FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE**

- Question 1      Tell me about the school that your child attends.
- Question 2      Who decides which school your child will attend?
- Question 3      In your opinion, what is a good learning environment for your child?
- Question 4:      Where would you prefer your child to be educated amongst the following: special school, integrated or inclusive schooling and why ?
- Question 5      What is your opinion of inclusion in education ?
- Question 6      what are the challenges of educating children with SEN in regular school?
- Question 7      How can the challenges you have mentioned be addressed?
- Question 8      Is there anything else you would like to add about education of children with SEN in regular schools that I have not mentioned but may be useful to this study?

## Appendix 6

### SAMPLE OF A TRANSCRIBED FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

1	<b>Question 1</b>	<b>Tell me about the school that your child attends.</b>
2	<b>FG6</b>	<p>My child studies in local integrated unit. Appears to learn much as compared to previous experience of learning in the regular schools. The child is now capable of doing quite a number of chores. I can see new understanding of instructions given either in school or at home. Normally, the child operates between the special unit and the regular school. I think education should be provided and made compulsory for all children with or without disability, so that parents will fear to keep children at home</p>
3	<b>FG7</b>	<p>My child who is fourteen years old, is slow, studies in an integrated unit though she had started in a regular nursery school. A certain special needs trained teacher visited that nursery school and identified my child as having special needs. She requested the school to be allowed to contact us the parents. When we met she said my child was best suited for a special unit. Since joining that unit she has improved a lot, she joined. She can now talk, run and eat without assistance. Integrated has been good for her.</p>
4	<b>FG2</b>	<p>My child started at a special school and progressed to a regular school. I knew my child had to get an education right from the beginning. She is well understood by the teachers and her fellow students. She fits well in the school. She participates in all activities in school.</p>

## Appendix 7

### OBSERVATION SCHEDULE FOR SCHOOLS

Date.....Schools Name.....Day/Residential.....

School enrolment .....Girls.....Boys.....

Teachers.....Female.....Male.....

Format	Place	Time	Date	purpose
<b>Infrastructure</b>	School gate			
	Administration Block			
	Staffroom			
	Classrooms			
	Toilets			
	Pathways			
	Playground/field			
	Library			
<b>Groups</b>	Teachers			
	Children			
	Support staff			
<b>Activities</b>	Morning/evening routine			
	Assembly			
	Playground			
	P.E			
	Co-curricular			
<b>Daily reflection</b>				
<b>Evaluation: Activities fostering inclusiveness</b>				

Adopted from Sutton and David (2011: 160)

## Appendix 8

### PARTICIPANTS INFORMATION SHEET

#### **Introduction**

The research study topic is: **An Exploration of Inclusive education for children with Special Educational Needs in Kenya Twenty Years after the Salamanca Call.**

In case you have wondered why *Salamanca call*? It is about a World Conference on Special Educational Needs, organized by UNESCO and the Government of Spain in a city called Salamanca from 7 to 10 June, 1994. It is used here because of its importance in addressing a subject of world-wide concern that is often neglected - Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education. That was Twenty years ago when Kenya became a signatory to the document.

#### **Aims and Purpose of the study**

The research project aims to explore and understand your views on how inclusion strategies have been developed post 1994 Salamanca agreement, the challenges of developing inclusion practices and identify inclusion strategies that have not yet been implemented. This way we can generate greater understanding of inclusive practices for children with disabilities and how they access quality education in a non-restrictive environment

#### **Your Personal Involvement**

Your name was chosen randomly among many others that were recommended by the Head Teacher /Principal. Participation is voluntary, If you agree to take part in the study you will sign a consent form. Remember all this is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time

In order to carry out this research a face to face interview will be conducted at an agreed venue. The conversation will be recorded, but as said before it is all voluntary. The recorded interview sessions will be played back for you to confirm it forms a true record of what you said. If you choose not to be recorded recording all the answers will be written down and then be read back to you to confirm it is a true record of the interview. You will then be asked to sign.

#### **Confidentiality**

All the recorded data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the thesis will be entirely anonymous and that no clues to your identity appear in the thesis. On completion of the dissertation, the data will be destroyed. However, the thesis may be read by future students on the course and study may be published in an academic journal.

This research is self-funded and part of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree that I am studying at Nottingham Trent University in the United Kingdom. Please feel free to contact me in case you have further enquiries. My contact telephone number is XXX

## Appendix 9

### INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project	An Exploration of Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs in Kenya Twenty Years After the Salamanca Call	
Researchers Name	Violet Gachago	
Contact Address	Po Box .....Kenya	Tel no.....
<p>Please complete all the sections in this form by putting down your initials in the box</p> <p>I confirm I have read and understood the information on the briefing sheet of the above study and had the opportunity to ask questions.</p> <p>I understand my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving reason.</p> <p>I understand all information given will be held in strict confidence.</p> <p>I agree to anonymised quotes in publications.</p> <p>Name of Participant                      Date    Signature</p>		

## Appendix 7

### POEM: Welcome to Holland

When you're going to have a baby, it's like you're planning a vacation to Italy. You're all excited. You get a whole bunch of guidebooks, you learn a few phrases so you can get around, and then it comes time to pack your bags and head for the airport. Only when you land, the stewardess says, "WELCOME TO HOLLAND." You look at one another in disbelief and shock, saying, "HOLLAND? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I SIGNED UP FOR ITALY." But they explain that there's been a change of plan, that you've landed in Holland and there you must stay. "BUT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HOLLAND!" you say. "I DON'T WANT TO STAY!" But stay you do. You go out and buy some new guidebooks, you learn some new phrases, and you meet people you never knew existed. The important thing is that you are not in a bad place filled with despair. You're simply in a different place than you had planned. It's slower paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy, but after you've been there a little while and you have a chance to catch your breath, you begin to discover that Holland has windmills. Holland has tulips. Holland has Rembrandts. But everyone else you know is busy coming and going from Italy. They're all bragging about what a great time they had there, and for the rest of your life, you'll say, "YES, THAT'S WHAT I HAD PLANNED." The pain of that will never go away. You have to accept that pain, because the loss of that dream, the loss of that plan, is a very, very significant loss. But if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to go to Italy, you will never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things about Holland.

Source: Emily Perl Kingsley (online)

