

An Examination of Teachers' Perspectives on Inclusive Education:  
A Case Study of Thika East District, Kenya

by

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative case study explored teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. The research questions focused on teachers' experiences of educating students with disabilities in mainstream schools; the advantages and challenges of educating students with disabilities in mainstream schools; ways in which the needs of students with disabilities could be addressed; and the skills teachers required to provide sufficient support for students with disabilities. The study participants were 15 special education teachers from Thika East District who had been teaching students with disabilities in their classrooms. The results of this study reveal that most of the teachers had positive perceptions of inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The perceptions were subject to several factors such as level of training, support and collaboration from administrators and the community, availability of resources and materials, school infrastructure, large class size and the degree of disability. Overall, this study revealed that teachers' perceptions influence how teachers and schools adopt, implement, and commit to the inclusion agenda.

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) recognizes education as a basic human right. This commitment has been reiterated by the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (Article 24) that stresses that state parties should ensure that persons with disabilities can access an inclusive education system. Inclusive education is an approach that fosters equity by educating students with disabilities in general classrooms, and many governments around the world have established this type of learning environment in their school systems (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Mitchell, 2005). The concept of inclusion in education is important because it allows students with special needs to be placed, and receive instructions, in mainstream classrooms, and to be taught by classroom teachers (Haider, 2008).

The initiative in Education for All (EFA) was originally launched in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, and served as a framework for global efforts to improve the equity of primary education, and to increase access (UNESCO, 1996). According to UNESCO (1994), all-inclusive educational institutions create an enhanced approach of combating discrimination against people living with disabilities. Following these declarations, many countries have recognized the importance of including children living with disabilities in mainstream schools (Pumfrey, 2000). In 2002, the UN launched the Millennium Project to develop an action plan which focused on reducing the disparities existing in education across the globe (Stromquist, 2006).

A study by Beacham and Rouse (2012) affirmed that teachers' knowledge and skills, together with their attitudes and beliefs, are crucial in the development of inclusive practices. The study further revealed that teachers often felt inadequately prepared when faced with matters of diversity in their classrooms. An appropriate inclusive environment heavily relies on the attitudes, skills, experience, and knowledge of the teachers. Therefore, for teachers to

successfully work with special needs students in diverse settings, they require extensive training (Ashan, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2012; Lancaster & Bain, 2010). Moreover, a study by Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden (2000) revealed that teachers with high levels of special education training had more positive attitudes toward inclusion than those with no special education training. According to Shippen, Crites, Houchins, Ramsey, & Marsha (2005), an introductory course in exceptionality transformed the attitudes of both general and special educators. Therefore, inclusive education practices are potentially enhanced when appropriate training and resources are offered to general and special education teachers.

In 2011, Kim observed that special education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion improved after completing special education coursework. Results showed that as teachers increased their levels of knowledge about including children with disabilities in their classrooms, they became less anxious. This is supported by a study carried out by Burke and Sutherland (2004) that revealed a crucial relationship between teacher's knowledge of students with disabilities and attitudes towards inclusion. A more recent study by Davis and Layton (2011) also confirmed what other scholars have suggested: teachers' attitudes play a significant role in the inclusion of students with disabilities in a mainstream classroom.

According to Berry (2010), effective inclusion is better implemented by teachers who hold positive attitudes regarding inclusion, and who are willing to teach students with disabilities while taking responsibility for their learning. Further, teachers' sense of self-efficacy is an essential component of teacher preparedness that greatly influences their attitude toward inclusion (Kim, 2012). Teachers with higher self-efficacy and better outcome expectancy may be more willing to include students with special needs in their classes because they believe in their ability and skills to educate these children academically and socially (Podell & Soodak, 1993).

Jordan and Stanovich (2004) concur that teachers who possess a higher self-efficacy towards teaching students with disabilities tend to use effective inclusion strategies such as individualizing instruction, peer tutoring, and varying the level of instruction more consistently. Therefore, as teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusive education increases, self-efficacy perceptions also increase. On the contrary, teachers with low self-efficacy demonstrate lack of confidence in their abilities to meet the requirements and goals set forth by the students' individual education plan (IEP) and put less effort in adapting the environment (Sarı, Celikoz, & Secer, 2009).

### **Significance of the Research**

Inclusive education is a continuous process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners regardless of factors such as disability, gender, age, ethnicity, language, and sexuality. Inclusive education practice recognizes that all people can learn, and involves working to modify the structures, systems, policies, practices, and cultures in schools so that they can respond to the diversity of students in their locality (UNESCO, 2005). By undertaking this research, it was my hope that the data from the participants and document analysis would shed light on teachers' experiences working with students with disabilities and some possible interventions that could be employed to make schools more inclusive. This study could guide policy makers in gaining resources and designing programs that would enable teachers to fully embrace inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools. Similarly, the findings from this study add to the body of knowledge of teachers' perceptions toward inclusive education in Kenya.

### **Inclusive Education in Kenya**

Kenya adopted inclusive education as the national educational policy with the purpose of increasing the quality of education (Ministry of Education, 2009). This was done by admitting every student regardless of individual differences into the mainstream education system and providing the support required to ensure effective education.

Kenya's efforts towards educating children with disabilities date back to 1953 when the British colonial government, through the Legislative Council, established the Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya (APDK; Republic of Kenya, 1964). The pre-colonial government established further legislative acts on behalf of individuals with disabilities including Kenya Society for Deaf Children (KSDC), and the Kenya Society for the Blind (KSB; Republic of Kenya 2003, 2009). This motivated religious, secular, and other non-governmental organizations in the country, and as a result, facilities of organized care and rehabilitation were constructed. According to Ndurumo (1993), the earliest organized care facility for individuals with disabilities in Kenya was established by the Salvation Army with the aim of providing rehabilitation services to injured veterans of the Second World War. The facility later became the first school for children with visual impairments in the country. At the same time, the Salvation Army established the first school for individuals with physical disabilities in the country. Other religious organizations followed suit and established various institutions and schools for individuals with disabilities on their mission sites. After Kenya attained independence in 1963, there was a renewed commitment to the provision of quality education and training for its citizens. This move was an effort by the government to meet the Education for All (EFA) goals. Following this, the government of Kenya formed a Ministry of Education whose vision was to

have globally competitive education, training, and research for Kenya's sustainable development.

In 1964, the government formed the Ominde Commission whose role was to examine the national educational policies of the time, and to advise the government on directions for further development (Republic of Kenya, ROK, 1964; Sifuna, 1990). The Ominde Commission's recommendation focused on the need for creating awareness of the issues that result from disability and teaching for all children with disabilities in the country (Kiarie, 2005). The commission also recommended equipping teachers with proper skills so that they could become familiar with disability at all levels of children's interactions, development, and education (ROK, 1964). The recommendations led to the publication of the Sessional Paper Number 5 of 1968, which addressed key issues regarding the government's role in providing better services for individuals with disabilities. In 1971, the Vocational Rehabilitation Division and the Industrial Rehabilitation Center were established along with ten other centers in the country (Ndurumo, 1993).

Following these developments, further legislative actions commenced to articulate the objectives and policy guidelines for the education and training of individuals with disabilities. Articles from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST; 2003) show that the government undertook a number of activities geared towards the promotion of people with disabilities in the country. These activities highlighted important issues regarding the education for children with disabilities among the policy makers and other key stakeholders. It is important to note that the education of students with disabilities is enshrined in the new Constitution of Kenya (2010), and in the country's development blue-print, titled, "The Kenya Vision 2030." In 2003, a policy framework on Education, Training and Research was developed through a Sector

Wide Approach (SWAP) to address equitable and inclusive basic education for children with disabilities. As a result, the Special Education Section was set up to manage the education of students with disabilities and to train specialized staff to oversee educational issues affecting various disability categories in Kenya (Disability Rights Promotion International, DRPI, 2003).

Another development by the Ministry of Education was the establishment of Educational Assessment and Resource centers in the districts (ROK, 2009). Currently, there are as over 52 Educational Assessment Resource Centers (EARCs) in the country, with at least one in every district. There are also 345 sub-centers carrying out the same duties, some of which are based in mainstream schools (Muga, 2003; ROK, 2009). These educational assessment and resource centers were introduced in 1984 with the primary purpose being to ensure early identification, assessment, intervention, and placements of learners with special needs and disabilities (MOE, 2009).

The Government of Kenya has continually developed various legislations for the empowerment of marginalized populations in the country, including disabled people. This includes legislation such as the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERSWC), 2003-2007; the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on Education Training and Research; and the enactment of Persons with Disabilities Act (2003), prohibiting all forms of discrimination of persons with disabilities such as lack of access to education and training (ROK, 2003). The provisions require adaptation of infrastructural, socioeconomic, and environmental facilities to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities (ROK, 2009).

The government of Kenya has also ratified and domesticated various global policy frameworks in education to demonstrate its commitment to equal access to quality education and training opportunities for all Kenyans. These include signing article 26 of the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, thereby recognizing and committing to the right of every child to access education. Other international policy frameworks ratified and signed by the government include, the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); the 1990 African charter on the Rights and welfare of the child; the Salamanca Statement (1994); the framework for action on special education (1999); The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and Education for All (EFA) 2015 (MOE, 2009).

Apparently, in spite of this growing development in the education sector, inclusion is still lagging far behind (MOEST, 2012). The integrated schools do not necessarily mean integrated classrooms, but rather, only rooms that are provided for students with disabilities within mainstream schools. Another challenge is that most of the individuals with disabilities live in the rural areas, yet most educational services for children with disabilities are located in urban areas (Mukobe, 2013). Additionally, many students with special needs in Kenya do not attend primary school. For those that do, their primary education starts much later as compared to their peers. There are even fewer students with special education needs attending Kenyan universities because there are limited facilities for the disabled. Therefore, there are not many people with disabilities who have been able to attain a university degree in Kenya, with the exception of those who studied overseas (Adoyo, 2007).

Thika East district has 13 public primary schools, one special school (Maria Magdalena), eight public secondary schools, and five private schools. A report from the district indicated that there are 2,807 girls and 2,952 boys enrolled in public primary schools as of April 2017. The data of students with special needs in the district has not yet been established, however, all public primary schools have been implementing inclusive education. With this in mind, I found it important to examine teachers' perspectives on inclusive education. More specifically, to explore

teachers' experiences educating students with disabilities in mainstream schools, identify some of the existing challenges, and consider some possible interventions to increase inclusivity in schools.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This qualitative case study is grounded in the social model of disability as opposed to the deficit model. The deficit model views the person with disability as having a problem that must be corrected so as to transform the disabled individual into a "normal" person. Since most disabilities cannot be corrected, the deficit model implies that the disabled individual can never be a "normal" member of society (Pfeiffer, 2002). Furthermore, according to the deficit model, people with disabilities are seen as dependent, weak, a problem, and a drain on society's resources. People with disabilities are therefore expected to cooperate with all medical procedures recommended by doctors, regardless of their efficacy and desirability, in an attempt to reduce their burden on society (Borsay, 2005). This model focuses on the individual deficits, functional limitations, and impairments. For instance, Vic Finkelstein's experience of rehabilitation in the 1960's was that if cure was not possible, the medical profession became almost obsessed with the aim of increasing the functioning of a person with a disability to that of a non-disabled person. (Oliver, 1990).

Based on the literature, it is evident that medical treatment and rehabilitation was imposed on people with disabilities in a way that was oppressive and disempowering. This led to the development of the social model of disability. It was started in the 70's by the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPIAS), this group challenged deficit model of disability and its definitions of impairment and disability (Oliver,1990). The UPIAS's (1976)

statement which was foundational for the social model of disability, emphasized the difference between disability and impairment:

In our view, it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairment. By the way, we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from all full participation in society. We define impairment as lacking part or all of a limb, organ or mechanism of the body and disability as the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairment. And thus, excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities. (UPAIS, 1976, p. 14).

On the other hand, the social model of disability perceives disability as a result of the attitudinal, social, and environmental barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in the society. It emphasizes the limitations and loss of opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in life on equal terms as being due to various social and physical barriers (Michigan Disability Rights Coalition). The social model of disability is guided by proactive thought based on making it possible for people with disabilities to participate in society by making various adjustments to ensure that they are not excluded. For instance, in the school environment, it is the responsibility of the administration or an instructor to implement a curriculum that caters to all students in the classroom regardless of whether or not a disability is present (Institute of Medicine, Committee on Assessing Rehabilitation Science and Engineering, 1997).

Social model writers such as Finkelstein, Oliver and Barnes, agree that oppression and discrimination occur because society is geared towards the needs of people without impairments. The physical, organizational, and attitudinal barriers are what disable people with impairments.

Thus, people with disabilities are excluded and disadvantaged not by their impairments, but by the fact that society does not take account of their needs (Oliver, 1990).

### **Criticism of Social Model of Disability**

Criticism of the social model of disability has been a focus for writers in disability studies since Michael Oliver first used the term as a description of the UPIAS principles in 1983 (Barnes, 2004). For example, Charmaz (2010) argues that the social model of disability portrays illness and impairment as being distinctly separate entities, and therefore neglects to consider the social and relational nature of impairment and illness. He further states, "Some people may have an illness long before they receive a diagnosis which may then constitute impairment, and others may be impaired but receive a diagnosis of illness long afterwards (p.16)." Concurrent studies by Albrecht and Devlieger (1999) showed that defining impairment and disability may exclude people with cognitive impairment, thus failing to consider that their experiences of externally imposed restrictions may not be similar to those of people with physical impairments. Additionally, the social model of disability does not engage with embodied experience, and although separating the body from culture has meant political gains, it has been at the cost of disabled people's identities (Hughes & Paterson, 1997).

Feminist disability theorists, such as Liz Crow and Jenny Morris, concur with the analysis presented by Hughes and Paterson. They have called for the social model of disability to be reconceptualized (Morris 1991, Crow 1996). For instance, Morris (1991) observed that the social model has denied the fact that physical and emotional pain experienced by disabled people due to their impairments has any impact on their political daily living. She further notes, "There is a tendency within the social model to deny the experiences of our own bodies" (p. 10). In addition, Crow (1996) argued that the social model of disability has not made adequate

accommodation for the subjective experiences of pain, fatigue, depression, and, to an extent, the uncertainty that disabled people inevitably experience as a result of their impairment. She called for a renewed social model with, “a more complete recognition and understanding of individual’s experiences of their body” (p. 210).

Oliver, who invented the term ‘social model of disability’ argues that the model was never a complete theory of disability on its own, but a model for thinking about the collective experience of disablement (Oliver 2004). He further explains that social model is an umbrella term for all critical theories of disability that present an alternative to the traditional, medicalized individual models.

### **Research Questions**

This research is an examination of teachers’ perceptions on inclusive education in Thika East District. The following key research questions have been considered: (a) What are teachers’ experiences educating students with disabilities in mainstream schools? (b) What are some of the existing challenges being encountered in mainstream schools? (c) What are the advantages of educating students with disabilities in a mainstream school? (d) What are some possible interventions that schools could employ to become more inclusive?

### **Definition of terms**

Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) define *attitude* as “an individual’s viewpoint or disposition towards a particular ‘object’ (i.e., a person, a thing, an idea)” (p. 273). They consider attitude to be an individual’s way of seeing and reacting to a social phenomenon. In this study, *knowledge* refers to the way teachers define inclusive education, their understanding of the issue, and their awareness. In this regard, knowledge entails the understanding teachers have towards the various

needs of students with disabilities, the comprehension of the various teaching strategies, and adequate training in teaching them.

*Inclusion* refers to students with learning disabilities having full access to the social and educational opportunities offered to their peers without disabilities, concurrently, and in the same environment (Connor and Ferri, 2007).

Inclusion is thus seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8).

*Inclusive education* is described as students with disabilities having full membership in age appropriate classes in their neighborhood schools with appropriate supplementary aids and support services (Lipsky & Gartner, 1999). Finally, an *Inclusive classroom* is a general education classroom in which students with and without disabilities learn together. Teachers plan for all learners, often using a universal design approach to learning.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

The following chapter provides an in-depth examination of different areas including conceptualizing inclusion and mainstreaming in education, teachers' perceptions of inclusive education, and the benefits and challenges of inclusive education.

### **Conceptualizing Inclusion and Mainstreaming in Education**

Waruguru (2002) indicates that inclusion is a product of mainstreaming. In educational mainstreaming, a child with special needs is brought to class and is expected to make adjustments to fit into his/her new environment. On the contrary, in an inclusive setting, the school system makes adjustments to accommodate the special needs of the child. For example, in mainstreaming, the child is viewed as the challenge, while inclusion views the education system as the hindrance to educating a child with disability. Unlike mainstreaming, inclusion provides students with disabilities equal educational opportunities and advocates for students with disabilities to learn at their own pace while following their unique curriculum. Through inclusion, regular students also get a chance to interact with students with disabilities and, as a result, stereotyping and the stigma that is associated with people with disabilities is reduced (Weiner, 2007).

Inclusion International (1995) argues that the inclusion process will promote a society where all individuals in that society have a sense of belonging by being accepted and valued as a productive part of humanity. This view is echoed by Stainback and Stainback (1992) who argue that all children should be included in the social life of the school, as opposed to just in the classroom. With an inclusion mindset, schools will make an effort to adjust their environments in order to meet the child's educational needs. Although inclusion does not change the person's

physical stature, it has the capacity to maximize the disabled child's potential, as well as to help the regular students embrace their peers (Knight, 1999).

Ainscow (1995) purports that inclusion goes beyond a child attending school and fully participation at every possible level. Inclusion is not only limited to the classroom environment; it also involves inclusion in the community and in the work environment. It relies on the participation of the parents and the community at large in order to meet all or most of the needs of the individuals with disabilities. A similar observation by Soder (1997) shows that inclusive education is based on heterogeneity instead of homogeneity as the only way to appropriate education and equal opportunities and participation. Additionally, Stangvik (1997) points to the belief that inclusion is not only about access by the disabled, but rather an adjustment of the education system in order to meet the educational needs of all children. Savolainen et al. (1996) affirms that the child is not only received in school to study, but that he/she is also empowered to participate, thus removing barriers to learning.

### **Teachers' Perception Towards Inclusive Education**

Teachers are key to the success of inclusionary programs as they are viewed as pillars in the process of including students with disabilities into regular classes (Whiting & Young 1995). This is further supported by Malone, Gallagher and Long (2001) who acknowledge that inclusive education can only be successful if teachers are part of the team driving this process. A similar observation by Hammond and Ingalls (2003) indicate that teachers' perceptions may influence their behavior toward acceptance of students with disabilities into regular settings. For instance, negative perceptions of inclusive education may become obstacles as teachers attempt to include students with disabilities in their classroom (Cawley, Hayden, Cade & Baker-Kroczyński, 2002). While positive perceptions could create the right climate for inclusion, they also play a

significant role in implementing inclusive practices (Burton & Pace, 2009). The following presents a literature review of some of the factors that may influence teachers' perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream settings.

**Training of teachers regarding educating students with disabilities.** Training in special needs education or inclusive education has been consistently found to be an important factor influencing teachers' attitudes towards inclusion (Subban & Umesh, 2006). Inclusion has an impact on classroom teachers as they are faced with the challenge of meeting a wide range of student needs through inclusive practices. Further, teachers are expected to understand different categories of students with disabilities, manage a diverse classroom, implement differentiated instructional strategies, and make appropriate accommodations for individual needs (Winzer & Mazurek, 2011). Teacher training is therefore the key to the success of inclusive education. This is evidenced by a study conducted by Lambe (2007) on changes in pre-service teachers' attitudes after completing a post-graduate diploma in education in conjunction with a field experience. This study indicated that the program had a positive effect on teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities which significantly increased after the field experience through their interaction with students with various special needs. A similar study found that a single unit course on inclusion positively changed pre-service teachers' perceptions about inclusion. However, teachers overwhelmingly indicated that they still required additional knowledge and skills in order to, "... operationalize their changed perceptions and beliefs" (McCray & McHatton, 2011, p. 149). This is confirmed by Hodkinson's (2006) study on first year teachers who felt their pre-service training provided them with a good understanding of the theory of inclusive education, however their understanding of the practical delivery was limited, and they needed more experience in order to manage students with disabilities effectively.

General education teachers commonly complain that they lack knowledge about students with disabilities and have their limited skills in inclusive practices. As a result, teachers have expressed the need for teachers' training to specifically target classroom management skills so that specific needs of students with disabilities are adequately addressed. (McCray & McHatton, 2011) This concurs with Cassidy's (2011) finding that teachers lack adequate experience and the necessary resources and support needed to sustain inclusion, making them unable to fully support the inclusion program. Although the literature demonstrates that some teachers perceive inclusion negatively, it is also clear that this negativity emanates from the inadequacies in resources and support.

In a study by Shade and Stewart in 2001, general education teachers indicated that they were not adequately prepared to teach students with special needs in their inclusive classes. Thus, they were unable to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of individual students. Similarly, Schultz (1982) noted that for classroom teachers to effectively teach students with disabilities, they would require relevant information, advice, additional help on disabilities, and the services of a specialist support teacher. According to Schultz, support services would include, in-service or pre-service training, all of which could be achieved through simulations, discussions, and panel presentations (Leyser and Tappendorf, 2001). In conclusion, Schultz suggested that if teachers are given extra assistance, they will feel more competent to engage students with disabilities in the classrooms, and more confident in their ability to respond to their specific needs. This is supported by Sanger and Osguthorpe's (2011) finding that teachers in inclusive schools need specific workshops that will prepare them for working with students with disabilities in their classrooms. Smith and Smith (2000) further determined that adequate training in such areas as characteristics of specific disabilities, making instructional accommodations, and

developing collaboration skills would significantly help teachers to better meet the demands of including students with special needs in their classrooms.

Placing students with disabilities in the hands of teachers who feel inadequate can cause negative feelings. Earlier studies revealed that most teachers with negative attitudes toward inclusion did not use effective teaching strategies when teaching students with disabilities as often as teachers with positive attitudes (Bender, Vail & Scott, 1995). Yet, a negative attitude would hinder inclusion, while positive teacher attitudes toward inclusion are fundamentally crucial to its success (D'Alonzo, Giordano & Vanleeuwen, 1997). These authors have suggested that teachers make adaptations to their teaching techniques in order to benefit students with disabilities. Studies by Shade and Stewart (2001) reported that teachers expressed a feeling of fear, frustration, inadequacy, and the lack of capacity to address the distinct needs of students with special needs. They suggested that if teachers changed their attitudes they could facilitate inclusion without feeling overwhelmed or overburdened by extra work. Furthermore, as Cassady (2011) observed, teachers also require more training that should be geared towards familiarizing themselves with the special needs of students with disabilities. Cassady's (2011) research also revealed that, besides change in teachers' attitudes and training, teachers need to be equipped with appropriate and adequate resources, so as to lessen the challenge of integrating students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) concluded that teachers with training in special needs education are confident enough to include students with disabilities in their classrooms and hold more positive attitudes towards inclusive education in general. Therefore, training is an important factor in contributing to more positive attitudes towards inclusion in teachers.

**The nature and the severity of the disabilities.** According to Ryan (2009), teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms depends on the type of the disability of the student and the extent of instructional adaptations required for accommodating such students. For example, some students with developmental disabilities are sometimes viewed as too impaired to participate in meaningful literacy learning experiences with their typical peers (Humphrey, 2008; Mirenda, 2003). Another report by Soodak, Podell and Lehman (1998) indicated that teachers hold the most negative attitudes towards the inclusion of students with moderate learning disabilities and emotional disturbances affecting their relationship on a daily basis. This notion is reinforced by Avramidis et al. (2000) whose study revealed that teachers' negative attitudes do not encourage them to augment their lesson plans and curriculum in order to accommodate students with disabilities. Consequently, teachers make no effort to design individualized education plans, and are also unwilling to accommodate students with disabilities into their classrooms.

On the other hand, Jones, Thorn, Chow, Thompson, and Wilde (2002) were opposed to the idea of having a student with an emotional or behavioral disorder in the classroom. They argued that such students disrupt the rest of the class, yet the student gains little academic or social benefit. This was confirmed by Clough and Lindsay's (1991) study whereby the majority of teachers surveyed ranked the needs of children with emotional and behavioural differences as being the most difficulty to meet, followed by children with learning difficulties, and then children with visual or hearing impairments. Similar results by Avramidis et al. (2000) showed that students with emotional and behavioral difficulties cause significantly more concern for teachers than students with other types of disabilities. Furthermore, a study by Rakap and Kazcmarek (2010) found out that teachers had difficulties controlling classroom behavior when

students with different types of disabilities were included in their classroom, especially those with multiple disabilities and behavioral problems. Therefore, teachers were generally more receptive towards students with mild disabilities, and less receptive towards including students with severe disabilities in their general education classroom. Consistent with these findings, Soodak et al. (1998) found that general education teachers were more willing to include students with physical disabilities as they were easier to manage than students with emotional/behavior disorders who are regarded as being too challenging. Wilczenski (1995) concluded that teachers are more willing to include students with mild disabilities than students with more complex needs.

**Teachers' experiences with students with disabilities.** Another factor that influences teachers' perceptions is the experience of working with students with special education needs. Villa, Thousand, Meyers and Nevin (1996) found that teachers who had more frequent contact with teaching children with disabilities had more positive attitudes towards inclusion than their colleagues with less experience. Cook et al. (2000) concurred that the greater the exposure to inclusion, the greater the concern teachers felt for students with special educational needs. This is then reflected in a greater willingness to persevere and to persist in efforts to help students with special needs learn. A similar study carried out by Santhi (2012) investigating the attitudes of mainstream teachers towards inclusive education found that teachers with more than 10 years of experience showed more positive attitudes towards inclusive education than their counterparts with less work experience. This was associated with the fact that as their experience increases, teachers become more aware about disabilities and how to cater to the learners, leading to positive attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms.

**Administrative support.** Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) noted that school leadership plays a valuable role in helping teachers create inclusive education, and is the most influential factor in the effectiveness of any school program. This is echoed by Stanovich and Jordan (2002) who stated that leaders who create “school wide systems of support and resources” (p. 162) can expect to have teachers who are more willing to work with children with special needs, and are more confident in their efficacy to work with varied curricula and methods in delivering instructional services. A concurrent study by Livingston, Reed and Good (2001) further determined that administrative support toward inclusive practices is key to the success or failure of inclusion in regular schools.

The importance of administration in determining teachers' attitudes towards inclusion was noted in many studies throughout the literature. For example, in 1990, Levine and Lezotte observed that principals must provide effective instructional leadership for student achievement, and that their support is essential for the success of inclusion in mainstream schools. Similarly, a study carried out by Hammond and Ingalls (2003) found that teachers believed the principal's support was instrumental as they implemented inclusive education practices for students with special needs.

Guzman (1994) suggested that in order to implement inclusion successfully, principals should offer ongoing, structured, amicable support, and provide specific skills and knowledge training to staff members. In addition, Black and Simon (2014) noted that a key function of school leadership is to obtain the resources, aides, and technology needed for inclusive classrooms. Concurrent studies showed that the role of headteachers is key in developing inclusive education which could lead to fostering new meanings about diversity and promote inclusive practices in schools (Ryan, 2006). It was further determined that inclusive minded

administrators seek to educate their entire school communities, promote dialogue, adopt inclusive policy-making, and incorporate whole school approaches and cultures. Blasé and Blasé (2000) further showed that principals have a great impact on learning and should ensure their staff have the confidence, encouragement, and coaching to adopt strong instructional approaches. As a result, teachers would be more willing to be creative in their teaching practices. Therefore, administrative leadership is key to positive teacher attitudes in schools as they implement inclusive education practices for students with disabilities.

### **Benefits of Inclusive Education**

Inclusion has been defined as the philosophy that seeks to integrate learners with various forms of special needs into a regular classroom environment. It is meant to provide equal access to education and opportunities to share experiences with peers to all children (Friend & Bursuck, 1999). Inclusion aims to bring resources and support services to students with disabilities so that they can reap some of the benefits that are associated with learning in a regular classroom (Allan & Brown, 2001).

One of the major benefits of inclusion is the attention accorded to special needs students. In an inclusive education environment, the student and his/her specific needs are essentially the primary objective. Ferguson, Desjarlais and Meyer (2000) echo this in saying, "The regular education class provides an environment in which students with special needs have more opportunities to learn, to make educational progress in academic achievement" (p. 207). Thus, inclusion ensures that students with special needs have more engaged instructional time and have greater exposure to academic activities (Salend, 2001).

Inclusion is extremely beneficial to students with disabilities because it ensures that the child is provided with the necessary support services, exposed to age appropriate curriculum, and

receives individualized instruction to support them in the general education classroom (Allan & Brown, 2001). Additionally, in an inclusion environment, the child with a disability can learn and interact with peers thus developing friendships and social skills. However, one of the beliefs held by mainstreaming advocates is that students with disabilities belong to the special education schools and classrooms, and for them to be accommodated in the mainstream classrooms, they must first be proved to be worthy (Stout, 2001). This type of thinking is detrimental since it constantly highlights the shortcomings of students with special needs.

On the contrary, proponents of inclusion strongly believe that all students, especially those with disabilities should begin their learning journey in a mainstream school and mainstream classroom. They argue that students with disabilities should only be moved to a special needs class when the support services they require are no longer accessible in the mainstream classroom (Salend, 2001). However, those pushing for inclusion have pointed out that the relocation of students with disabilities to special needs classrooms should be avoided at all cost because doing so highlights their disabilities and disrupts their education. Also, by avoiding relocation, students with disabilities and their educators are motivated to come up with alternative solutions, which further enhances students' ability to be independent (Friend and Bursuck, 1999).

Inclusion, in Humphrey's (2008) view, has expanded beyond advocating for children with disabilities to be educated in mainstream classrooms, but for the provision of a high quality educational experience for these students. Moreover, inclusion enables students with disabilities to spend more time on general education curriculum, leading to the completion of the intended school course (Kochhar et al., 2000). This is evidenced by findings from the National Center for

Education Statistics of United States Department of Education (2002). The statistics show that more students with disabilities are receiving high school diplomas today because of inclusion.

### **Challenges to Inclusion**

Despite the benefits of inclusive education, research has revealed that inclusive education has not been without challenges. This section of the chapter will examine numerous challenges that hinder the successful implementation of inclusion. These include disruption to regular students, behavioural issues, global differences and teachers' attitudes.

### **Disruption to Regular Students**

A survey on the attitudes of 49 mainstream school teachers and 23 specialists outside of the United States of America indicated that teachers were apprehensive about adopting inclusion of children with disabilities in the mainstream classroom because the move could have a negative impact on the learning of regular students. For instance, students would receive less attention, and class disruption would also occur (McGregor & Campbell, 2001). Results from this survey revealed that 53% of specialists and 65% of classroom teachers did not support the full integration of students with disabilities in the mainstream classrooms.

### **Behavioural Issues**

Emam and Farrell (2009) interviewed teachers and special needs coordinators of 17 students with disabilities who were placed in the regular classroom setting of mainstream schools. The results indicated that interactions between teachers and students with disabilities were negatively impacted by tensions emanating from disability related behaviors mainly due to poor social skills. Similarly, Mavropoulou and Padeliaou (2000) surveyed 35 regular education teachers and 29 special education teachers in parts of Europe about their perception of students with disabilities. Only 55% of regular education teachers held positive perceptions toward the

idea of integration or inclusivity, while 63% of special education teachers did not intend to teach in a regular classroom with students with disabilities. This is supported by Hastings and Oakford's (2003) finding that teachers had negative perceptions towards students with behavioural and emotional problems based on their belief that they could create havoc in a school. They further suggested that their individual needs should be catered for in a specialized setting.

### **Global Differences**

In a study carried out in Nyeri county, Kenya determining the challenges of implementing inclusive education, it was revealed that inadequate teaching and learning resources, large class sizes, lack of administrative support, and inadequate specialized teachers to handle the special needs education curriculum contributed to teachers' negative perceptions of educating students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Orodho & Mwangi, 2014). A similar study by Nthia (2012) indicated that lack of motivation, irregular attendance of inclusive education learners, large class enrolment, and lack of support from colleagues hindered the implementation of inclusive education.

Another study conducted by Masuku (2010) in Swaziland observed that the numerous barriers teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education included lack of trained personnel to manage inclusive classrooms, lack of funds, and insufficient instructional materials. This was further supported by Itimu's (2008) comparative study of Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia that showed that all the three countries lacked sufficient resources for special needs education, and had an urgent need to train more teachers in special needs education.

On the other hand, Kalyanpur (2011) described how Cambodia adopted a strong inclusive education policy. However, it was hindered by lack of clarity and consistency over what

inclusive education meant and how it should be implemented. For example, students with physical disabilities are integrated into mainstream classes because they can be enrolled with little adjustment on the part of the school. While students with more challenging disabilities are referred to special schools, or do not receive education at all.

### **Teachers' Attitudes**

According to Mwaura (2001), teachers' attitudes do contribute to the challenges being experienced, and have a significant impact on the ongoing efforts geared towards achieving inclusive education goals. It was further determined that teacher's attitudes formed the greatest barrier or the greatest asset to the development of integrated schools. For instance, research conducted by Hammond and Ingalls (2003) found that teachers implemented inclusion practices but lacked a firm commitment to the practice. Teachers did not believe that there were significant benefits of inclusion to students in general and special education. In addition, they cited a number of issues that complicated the implementation of inclusion including inadequate training, and lack of support from administrators and other teachers. Therefore, teachers who hold a less favorable attitude about working with students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom tend to feel that inclusion demands too much, and students with disabilities should be taught separately where they can receive individual instruction (Berry, 2010).

This notion was reinforced by Heflin and Bullock (1999), whose study revealed that teachers had a tendency of regarding inclusion as a burden that created excess load. This perception therefore builds negative energy towards inclusion and produces emotional frustration, resulting in teachers feeling overwhelmed with their duties.

As revealed by McLeskey and Waldron (2002), some general education teachers feared that inclusion will cause the overall academic performance of the class to go down. These writers

also found that teachers feared the negative perceptions of other teachers if they have passed students with disabilities onto the next grade without them having mastered the materials.

### **Proposed Solution to Inclusion**

To ensure that all students' opportunities for participation are maximized, schools must show readiness to embrace the demands of inclusion so that classes and activities are scheduled to include students with disabilities (Campbell, Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2003). Furthermore, for the process of inclusion to be successfully realized, the school administrators, teachers, and other staff must responsibly endeavor to meet personal, social, and academic needs of all students when they are in school. Teachers must position themselves to ensure that planning, support, and inclusion practices for students with disabilities are provided successfully (Kochhar et al, 2000).

Mwaura's study in 2009 revealed that inclusion had a long way to go to achieve all of the inclusive education objectives. He argued that inclusion will not work unless there are more contributions by all stakeholders, information distribution, and change of attitudes among educators, as well as allocation of resources, and alleviation of poverty. This was supported by a study carried out by Sodak, Podell, and Lehman (1998) who proposed that the solution to inclusion was teachers changing their negative perception towards students with disabilities. The study concluded that besides embracing their responsibilities, teachers should have an open mind when dealing with special needs students. Also supporting this proposition, Ryan (2009) added that teachers who fully embraced students with disabilities in their mainstream classrooms subsequently offered more effective instructions compared to their counterparts who held negative beliefs regarding inclusion. For instance, studies in the United States have shown a positive attitude towards inclusion, as confirmed by Robertson, Chamberlain, and Kasari's (2003) report revealing that teachers' relationships with their students with disabilities were

relatively positive. Further studies conducted in the United States revealed that teachers showed willingness to include students with disabilities in their classrooms (Cassady, 2011). While studies in Georgia revealed that almost all teachers (92%) held positive attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities, special education teachers' attitudes were significantly more positive than those of general education teachers (Cassady, 2011). Indeed, teachers' attitudes are an important component that can have a positive influence in the successful implementation of inclusion in the classroom (McGregor & Campbell, 2001). A similar observation by Horrocks, White, and Roberts (2008) indicated that the position and attitudes of teachers may determine acceptance or discontentment, which may eventually contribute to the success or failure of inclusion and disability interventions within the regular classroom.

In conclusion, many studies have sought to examine teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education. These have revealed that effective inclusion is better implemented by teachers who hold positive attitudes towards inclusion, are willing to teach students with disabilities, and take responsibility for these students' learning. It is clear that the successful implementation of inclusive education significantly relies on teachers' perceptions. However, there have not been enough studies focusing on teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education in Kenya. As such, the reason for carrying out this study in Thika East District was to examine teachers' perspectives on inclusive education.

### **Chapter 3. Methodology**

In this chapter, I provide the methodological procedures that were used in this study to examine teachers' perspectives on inclusive education. These include the research design, recruitment of participants, data sources, and data analysis procedures.

#### **Role of a Researcher**

Working and promoting inclusiveness of children with special needs has always been my passion. It is this inner drive that compelled me to pursue a career in special needs education, in which I found much fulfillment in the last 12 years. My encounter with children with disabilities has brought me closer to the real challenges they face, especially in their attempt to access education in Kenya. This is why I have held similar beliefs to many of the participants in my study regarding the need for special schools for students with more severe disabilities. Teachers believe that all students belong to mainstream schools, but often the resources are not available to adequately meet their needs. While the goal of inclusion is to include everyone regardless of their disability, the inclusion of students with severe learning difficulties in mainstream schools require greater attention. For example, medical attention; dietary needs; adaptive equipment or adaptive communication devices; and language tools, that are limited in mainstream schools, are necessary. Therefore, to have students with and without disabilities achieve educational goals best suited for them, sufficient resources and funding, among other factors, should be allocated to support their learning.

I had been teaching in one of the special schools in Thika West district and am familiar with the districts in the region. To address potential bias, during the interview process I followed the interview guide, listened to the participants as they responded to the questions, and gave each

person a chance to tell his or her story without interrupting. I therefore did not communicate any personal views. I collected rich and detailed data that answered the research questions.

### **Research Design**

In this study, I adopted a qualitative case study method which allowed for an in-depth investigation of a defined, limited or bound setting using comprehensive and exhaustive data collection procedures (Creswell, 2008). Labaree (2013) defines case study as a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning. This is echoed by Yin (2003) that, "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 13). The primary purpose of a case study is to obtain a detailed description and gain an understanding of the case (McMillan, 2004). It is conducted to shed light on a particular phenomenon that is, "... a set of processes, events, individuals, programs, or any other events or circumstances of interest to researchers" (Gall & Borg 2010, p. 339).

I chose a case study design to be able to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth, that is teachers' perspectives on inclusive education. Teachers' perceptions were the focus of the study because these perceptions influence the quality of instruction, teacher efficacy, and attitudes toward students in the classroom (Gottshall & Stefanou, 2011).

### **Recruitment of Participants**

Purposeful sampling involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criteria of importance and can be useful for identifying and understanding cases that are information rich (Patton, 2001). Participants were selected through purposeful sampling as it allowed me to find knowledgeable participants who could provide information relevant to the study (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010). The research participants were recruited through the Coordinator of

the Educational Assessment and Resource Centre (EARC) via an information letter (see Appendix A). The role of the Coordinator was to forward the letters to the participants who then contacted me directly. Therefore, this individual had no influence over the participants.

The criteria for participants was that they must have worked in public schools, interacted with students with disabilities on a daily basis, and had a willingness to participate in the study. These criteria ensured that the selected participants had relevant experiences and perceptions regarding teachers' experiences with students with disabilities and inclusive education.

### **Description of the Participants**

A total of 15 participants were interviewed (see Table 1). They were all working with students with disabilities in their classes and had been trained in special needs education/inclusive education. Thirteen participants had teaching experience working with students with disabilities in mainstream schools ranging from five to fifteen years. Two of the participants had one to two years' experience working with students with disabilities. I interviewed them to find out if they had the same experience as other participants with more teaching experience. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants, as anonymity is an important aspect of qualitative research (Guenther, 2009).

Table 1

*Participant Demographic Information*

Pseudonym	Gender	Years of Experience	Years teaching inclusive class	Grade (range)	Level of Education
Tomi	F	16	13	4 - 8	Bachelor's
Temi	F	14	11	1 - 3	Diploma
Jeff	M	9	9	6 - 8	Bachelor's
Nellie	F	7	7	4 - 6	Diploma
Kim	M	15	6	1 - 3	Bachelor's
Rena	F	6	6	1 - 3	Diploma
Dominic	M	13	8	4 - 8	Diploma
Odour	F	6	6	4 - 6	Diploma
Amina	F	14	14	7 - 8	Bachelor's
Jackline	F	5	5	1 - 3	Diploma
Tom	M	11	6	4 - 6	Diploma
Kanyingi	F	13	7	6 - 8	Bachelor's
Jessica	F	6	6	1 - 3	Diploma
Loise	F	2	2	4 - 8	Diploma
Terry	F	1	1	2	Diploma

**Document Analysis**

Document analysis is a technique utilized in research to add credibility to the findings through triangulation of the data. The process involves carrying out an analysis and interpretation

of information and data obtained from the examination of various records and documents related to the topic of study (Kohlbacher, 2005). I analyzed documents that were emailed by some of the participants following the telephone interviews, as well as obtained several documents that were available online. The documents included: (a) Mid-term and end-term exam analysis, 2017; (b) Kiswahili Teacher's guide and pupils' book class one and two; (c) English Teacher's guide and pupils' book class one and two (teaching plans and student work); (d) A policy for Education, Aligning Education, and Training to the Constitution of Kenya 2010, Kenya vision 2030 and beyond (MoE, 2012), (f) Free primary education disbursement fund, 2016 (allocation for government funding); and (g) Kenya National Special Needs Education (SNE) policy framework (MOE, 2009).

### **Research Permission and Ethical Considerations**

Before conducting the research, I sought ethics approval from the Education Nursing Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba (see Appendix B). A research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) authorizing the collection of data was obtained (see Appendix C). Written permission was also obtained from the County Director of Education in Thika East District (see Appendix D). I provided the research participants with an informed consent form (see Appendix E), which they signed and returned before I began collecting data. I ensured that issues of confidentiality and anonymity of participants and the information they provided were protected during and after the research.

### **Data Collection**

In this study, I conducted telephone interviews and documentation review. A total of 15 participants responded, 13 had been teaching students with disabilities in their classes for five

years and above. Two of the teachers had been teaching students with disabilities for a range of one to two years.

I used an interview guide so that the questions related to the teachers' experiences with students with disabilities, their perception towards inclusive education, and the challenges they encountered were consistently covered (see Appendix F). Once I received a message on the willingness of the teachers to participate in the study, a telephone interview was scheduled at a time convenient for the participants. I used probing questions in order to obtain a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions. The interview lasted for approximately 40 to 55 minutes, was audio-taped, and was later transcribed fully. This type of interview method was suitable for this study because it allowed me to unravel in-depth data, and provided the participants an opportunity to describe their feelings about the topic being explored (Glesne, 2011). Participation in this study was voluntary, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without question or penalty. No participants withdrew from the study.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Gay (1992), data analysis involves organizing, accounting for, and explaining the data. Specifically, it involves making sense of the data in terms of respondents' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories, and regularities. To analyse the data for this study I adopted data analysis as described by Marshall and Rossman (2006). I listened to the audiotape, transcribed the interviews into written form immediately, and organized the data in a manner that was manageable and easily accessible. I read and re-read the transcripts numerous times to familiarize myself with the participants' experiences.

Coding is the process of organizing data into segments of text, and writing a word representing a category in the margins (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). I examined and studied the transcriptions carefully, developed several codes, and new codes were created by combining two or more codes. I created categories by bringing several codes together, which was done through prolonged engagement with the data. I therefore identified the salient, grounded categories of meaning held by participants in the setting.

Finally, I offered interpretations. As Patton (2002) notes, "Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of the findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences and considering meanings" (p. 480). Guided by the social model of disability, I asked myself what have I learned from the data, what were the connections among the participants' experiences, and how were the interviews consistent with the literature. In answering these questions, I explored the findings in a larger context which enabled me to communicate the participants' perceptions accurately. I extracted salient themes and reoccurring ideas throughout the interviews guided by research questions. I used direct quotes from the interviews to ground the findings of the analysis.

### **Member Checking**

"Credibility is defined as the extent to which the data, data analysis and conclusions are believable and trustworthy" (McMillan, 2004, p. 277). Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe member checks as, "... the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). It is taking data and interpretations back to the participant so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account. This is echoed by Creswell (2005) who defines member checking as, "A qualitative process during which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account" (p. 594).

Member checking was employed in that each participant was given the opportunity to review their own interview transcripts, thus ensuring the integrity of the research study. Research has shown that many interviewees made changes to their responses upon being given their transcript for review (Crow, Wiles, Heath, & Vikki, 2006). This could be an issue of participants rethinking their initial response, or feeling as though they did not express themselves adequately (Crow et al., 2006). This was the case in the current study, in that, one participant requested for a phrase to be omitted from her transcript because she felt as though it was a slip of the tongue. I respected her request, and did not include the phrase.

### **Triangulation**

Triangulation is the collection of information from different data sources (McMillan, 2004). In this study, I collected data from participants' interviews, and through a document review. A case study research methodology requires the researcher to use varied sources of data collection to add breadth and depth to the information gathered, to assist in triangulation, and to improve the validity of the research (Yin, 2009). I utilized semi structured interviews and document analysis to validate the findings.

### **Trustworthiness**

Transcriptions, notes, and audio recordings were kept in a secure place for privacy purposes. I reviewed the data repeatedly to ensure the interpretations reflected the nature of the phenomena, used audio-tapes, and engaged participants in member checking. This helped enhance the credibility of this research study.

### Chapter 4. Findings

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study, accompanied by a discussion of some of the major themes and sub-themes that emerged during the analysis of the data. Table 2 provides an overview of the themes and sub-themes.

Table 2

*Themes and Sub-Themes Related to Teachers' Perspective on Inclusive Education*

Themes	Sub-themes
Training in special needs education	On-going training Communication skills Teachers' knowledge (about specific disabilities or conditions) Short term courses
Teachers' perceptions	Teachers' experiences with students with disabilities Types of disabilities Level of understanding of the individual student's disability Materials and resources
Co-ordinated support and services	Government and Non-government organization Accommodations Change of Curriculum (culture of ranking schools)
Working with families and communities	Culture beliefs Educating the society Team work

Themes	Sub-themes
Difficulties working with students with disabilities	Large class size
	Syllabus coverage, lack of enough time
	Lack of support from administration
	Lack of financial support
Strategies for effective practices	Lack of structural modifications
	Support to general and special education teachers
	Creating awareness
	Government involvement
	Resources and funds
Impact of mainstream learning	Modification of the environment
	Social connections
	Sense of self-worth
	Leadership skills
	Acceptance of students with disabilities by peers and community
	Academic, social, and emotional development

### **Training in special needs education**

All the participants in this study indicated that training was a major part of the success of inclusion. This study revealed that training of educators on special needs students plays a significant role in the implementation of inclusive education. On the topic of the major challenges facing inclusive education, all the participants cited lack of training as a major impediment to educating students with disabilities. Tomi noted, “Regular teachers without the training of special needs education feel having students with disabilities in their classrooms [is] a

burden and a waste of time.” Temi adds to this point by stating that, “Most teachers do not have the skills to communicate with pupils with disabilities, especially in sign language and braille.” Thus, it is clear that the successful implementation of inclusive education depends on, among other factors, the training received by the teachers on educating students with disabilities. The Kenya special needs policy (MOE, 2009) affirms that for inclusive education to be successful, the teachers ought to be knowledgeable and skilled in matters of special education. It further explains that teachers are not well trained in assessment and lack the necessary facilities to assess learners with special needs, and often have a limited understanding of special education needs beyond, “... physical, sensory, and behavioral difficulties” (p. 21).

The participants had varying opinions on the level of training that teachers should receive in order to be comfortable with students with disabilities in their classroom. Some participants proposed that basic knowledge on special needs education was enough, with one participant stating, “All teachers should acquire basic skills in special education to enable them to cope with learners with different exceptionalities.” However, this point was contradicted by Nellie who noted, “Basic knowledge would not suffice, as the teacher would have general information which would prove inadequate in most cases.” She further suggested, “On top of the basic skills and knowledge, each special need educator could concentrate on a specific special needs area.” Jackline alluded to this notion when she asserted that teachers should have, “... knowledge of braille, sign language, and be updated on simple medical issues to enable them handle any emergencies that may crop up.” Kanyingi further proposed that,

All teachers should acquire skills in the learning process in order to present the lesson in a manner that will benefit all learners, and more training should be provided to improve skills in teaching and learning approaches for learners with diversity.

The results further reiterate that teachers should have excellent communication skills. The teacher should be a good communicator and the language used should be at the level of understanding of the learner. Also, the teacher can use different techniques such as demonstrations, modeling, prompting, and verbal instructions to promote learning for children with disabilities.

General and special education teachers need support and continuous training to provide a high-quality education based on a student's needs. Kim noted, "For inclusive education to materialize, teachers need additional training in methods of instruction to meet the needs of all students with disabilities in their classroom, and more teachers [need] to be posted in our schools." The Kenya SNE policy (MOE, 2009) affirms that insufficient numbers of trained teachers influence teacher-learner ratio in learning institutions. It also attests that schools do not have enough trained teachers in sign language, braille, guidance and counseling, and special skills to handle children with special needs.

### **Teachers' Perceptions**

When asked to share their experiences dealing with students with disabilities and give a summation of their relationships with these students, participants responded positively and were all happy to work with students with disabilities. An important note from all the participants is that working with students with disabilities was challenging initially, however, as they settled in and came to know the students, the experience was much easier and eye-opening. Odour stated that the relationship with his students was particularly deep since he had firsthand experience with their challenges as he had disability.

That being said, most of the participants were only comfortable working with students with mild to moderate disabilities because their schools did not have the necessary supports and

resources. Kim noted, “We have been talking about inclusion, but I feel as a country, we are still very far from achieving this. For me, I am only comfortable working with mild cases.”

Temi echoed,

It is only students with mild to moderate that can be accommodated in our schools. I have been teaching for many years and I have fears handling students with emotional behavior and autism. I therefore see the need of refresher courses planned in the district as well as in the county.

This is affirmed by policy framework on education (MoE, 2012) that describes access and participation of pupils with special needs being low, and their needs are not being specifically addressed. This is especially true for children with behavioural difficulties and those with various forms of learning difficulties and attention deficit. Further analysis revealed that such negative teachers' attitudes have led to discriminations and prejudice which, as a result, translates to students with disabilities having limited access to education (MoE, 2009).

All participants responded positively regarding their relationship with their learners with disabilities and expressed a level of empathy for the students and the challenges they face as a result of their disabilities. They described working diligently to help the students cope, find ways to work against their disabilities, and tap into their skills and talents in order to be more productive in schools and society by preparing them for an adult life outside the classroom. Jessica noted that her experience with these students has been “awesome,” and she enjoyed, “discovering the uniqueness and talents of these students despite their disabilities.”

The level of understanding of the individual student's disability also had a significant effect on the participants' perceptions towards the inclusion of the students with disabilities in mainstream schools and the interventions that they were willing to implement. The participants

displayed a comprehensive understanding of how to handle and teach students with disabilities together with their non-disabled counterparts, and thus viewed teaching them in a positive manner. However, as some of the participants revealed, in the mainstream schools there are teachers that have the training to deal with the students with disabilities but choose not to assist them. Tom recounted an experience in which a colleague with a negative view of students with disabilities still took part in the training. She furthered, "... when you upgrade in special needs education, there is allowance. For me (the colleague) I am not able to handle them (SWD) and would prefer them in special schools." This point is reinforced by other responses from the participants that teachers who do not have special needs training, but have students with disabilities (SWD) in their classes, provide only the minimum support. Dom clearly states:

It is so sad because most of the general education teachers do not have skills to handle SWD, so they present the lessons without putting any effort in the child. At the end of the year the child has acquired very little, and this leads to repetition.

Furthermore, from the participants' responses it was clear that apart from those teachers that have special needs training, the rest of the teachers in inclusive schools do not fully understand the needs of students with disabilities. These teachers expressed discontentment at teaching these students and did not take responsibility for their lack of success. Rather, they preferred students with disabilities be taken to special schools. The Kenya SNE policy (MoE, 2009) further explains that inadequate capacity of teachers to handle learners with special needs has made it difficult to integrate special needs education in mainstream schools.

### **Coordinated Support and Services**

Inclusive education benefits students with disabilities, their fellow non-disabled classmates, their educators, other teaching staff, parents, and the community at large. For

inclusive education to be successful, there is need for strong collaboration, co-ordination, and support from all the above.

On the topic of the accommodations that they made or were willing to make for the students with disabilities, all the participants responded positively on making the necessary accommodations in the schools, classrooms, and curriculum in order to better include the students with disabilities. There were a range and types of accommodations that the participants were willing to establish for the students. Several of the participants were already implementing accommodations that allowed the students to access and demonstrate mastery of the curriculum. This was accomplished by having individualized education plans for the students with disabilities. However, from the analysis of the results, these are the only accommodations made. According to all the participants' responses, it was evident that the necessary accommodations were not being established, and they agreed that mainstream schools have not been made accessible to students with disabilities.

However, the view on the resources and support services to be provided to students with special needs varied with different participants. Most of the participants were of the view that, because mainstream schools do not have enough resources to deal with the education of special needs students, they should include external parties, such as the government and non-governmental organizations to provide these resources and support services. This support, as proposed by Rena and reiterated by most of the participants, would be in the form of "... changing the education system so that students with disabilities are tested according to their capabilities." This move would play a significant role in the advancement of inclusive education, which is unlike the present system. Kim noted the system is currently characterized by "... the ranking of students, classes and schools at the end of every exam which makes inclusive

education very difficult as the schools concentrate on the mean standard score.” The mean standard score is obtained by summing up all the scores of all the students in the classroom and dividing this sum with the total number of students in the classroom. This assertion was supported by Jeff, who noted:

The mean standard score is killing inclusive education in our schools. This is because teachers do not want to be associated with students with disabilities who will lower their mean standards score. They want to work with students who are considered to be above average. There is no room for students with disabilities.

Kenya SNE policy (MoE, 2009) states that, “Academic performance and examinations creates an unfavorable learning environment with special needs and disabilities and even moderate learning difficulties, and this poses a challenge to the integration and inclusion of children with such disabilities in regular school” (p. 18). This is echoed by the policy framework on education (MoE, 2012) in that the current summative assessment at the end of primary cycle does not adequately measure a learner’s ability. Rather, the system of education dictates the teaching/learning process towards examinations as opposed to learning, thus creating failures and fails to identify individual aptitudes, skills, and competencies.

As such, the government, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, should encourage and ensure that schools have adapted curricula that cater to students with special needs. Dominic proposed for “... the government to work with non-governmental organizations to provide resources required in schools.” However, Loise explicitly proposed that the aim should be “... to encourage the schools and other educational settings to recognize the diversity of pupils within their population and accept responsibility to address their needs without recourse to external assistance, except in complex cases.” Most support and resources can be availed to

students with disabilities without any external intervention. As Tom notes, “Schools can enlarge classroom doors to accommodate learners who use wheelchairs, modify other areas such as toilets and latrines, and desks and chairs to accommodate the different challenges in students.” Amina adds that the schools can “... sensitize the parents and educators through forums, seminars, and workshops ... with the help of [the] district education officer on the importance of such support services as individualized education plans that will help further inclusive education.”

Furthermore, according to Kenya SNE policy (MoE, 2009), the theme of coordinated support and services is supported in that it is necessary for the parents and the community to collaborate with schools in order to embrace and adopt inclusive activities, not only in schools, but also in other aspects of society. Thus, for effective inclusion, support services are important in order to have appropriate educational opportunities and full participation in the society. It also attests that most barriers of inclusive education can be dealt with through collaboration between policy makers, education personnel, and other stakeholders in the education sector. Such claims are in line with the participants' responses on the need for collaboration between various stakeholders to ensure that inclusion is properly implemented.

### **Working with Families and Communities**

For inclusive education to be fully accepted and embraced, there is a need for the teachers' and schools' administration to work in tandem with families for the benefit of students with special needs. From the results, this theme was evident in that most of the participants alluded to the fact that for proper implementation of inclusive education, the schools, the teachers, and the administration needed to assist the families and the communities with handling

special needs students. As Terry stated, “The need to work with the families comes about so as to educate the society on the need of educating students with disabilities.” Kim said,

One of the major challenge[s] is the belief and attitude people have towards persons with [a] disability. Our society still believes that having a child with [a] disability is a curse or you did something to the ancestors. So, when parents get children with disabilities, some of them tend to hide them, and the community distance[s] themselves from them [the family].

Working with the families and the communities, the participants will go a long way in ending the stigmatization against students with disabilities. One of the participants stated that, “It is an effective way of reducing discriminatory attitudes towards people with disabilities, building an all-inclusive society, and thus achieving education for all.” This is echoed by document analysis that describes the main challenges relating to access and equity in the provision of education and training to children with special needs as being “... cultural prejudice and attitudes” (MoE, 2012, p. 36). In support, the Kenya SNE policy (MoE, 2009) further explains that society in general has negative attitudes towards people with special needs, and the students with disabilities are sometimes left out of sex education, HIV and AIDS education, and life skill education programs. This is because many believe that these individuals do not engage in social activities, including sex.

### **Impact of Inclusion**

All of the participants agreed that there are numerous benefits to inclusion for both students with and without disabilities. Students with disabilities are able to learn from their peers and they develop social skills. As noted by one participant, “The peers have positive attitudes

towards SWD and are always ready to help them. They work and play together, and it is fulfilling when I see them participating in different activities outside classwork.” Terry echoes:

One of my student cooperates very well with others and does well in modeling and brings clay to share with others. You see ... this is one area [in which] this boy can be helped to excel. He is always very excited and brightens up as he works in the group.

At the same time, students with disabilities develop a sense of self-worth as they interact with their peers. One of the participants explains, “Most students with special needs come from very difficult background[s] where they are not accepted and have low self-esteem. When they come to school and connect with the other students you can tell the difference.” Nellie supports this idea:

I was very impressed [when], just the other day, one of my students was able to ask permission to go to the toilet. A great improvement [which] shows she is gaining confidence. We only need to love, accept them, and be patient as we work with them.

Inclusion was also noted to be beneficial to parents in helping them to respect people from diverse backgrounds. As stated by one participant, “Some of the parents come to understand and appreciates that their children are in school rather than staying at home, and become examples in the village.” Tom reiterated:

One of the parent[s] shared with me that his child has greatly improved and he can even dance alone without fear. One thing that surprised the family is that he is able to coordinate doing things. And the neighbors were surprised to see the improvement and could only ask, ‘kumbe’ (you mean) this boy can do something?”

On the other hand, students without disabilities develop leadership skills as they assist students with disabilities. Loise explained, “The students in my class are loving and helpful

towards the students with special needs. They take initiative, and this experience is building their future skills as leaders.” Jessica reiterated:

When one of the students with special needs has not reported to school, some of the students are so concerned and want to know what has happened to them. They ask questions like, is she sick? Is she coming tomorrow? This is a real connection that they are part of them.

It is clear from this study that inclusion of students with disabilities benefits society as a whole. Students with special needs develop communication skills, their families become part of the school community, and students without disabilities become friends with special needs children, thus forming good relationships.

### **Difficulties Working with Students with Disabilities**

The implementation and adoption of inclusive education practices in Kenya is hindered by several challenges. These include: (a) large class size; (b) syllabus coverage; (c) lack of support from administration; (d) lack of financial support; and (e) difficulties modifying the environment.

**Large class size.** The participants in this regard presented some of the challenges they face daily while working with students with disabilities in regular schools. Among the most challenging aspect of inclusive education was the size of the classrooms. Most of the participants stated that due to the free primary education initiative in Kenya, classes have been overcrowded, and dealing with students with disabilities has become difficult. One participant stated that, “I have a class of 48 pupils and 3 SWD, I am always overwhelmed covering the syllabus and meeting the special needs of my students with disabilities.” It is thus challenging for the teacher to cater for the needs of the whole class while having individualized educational plans for the

students with special needs. This point is corroborated by another participant who stated, "Classrooms are overcrowded and students with disabilities need close attention and monitoring from teachers which they do not sometimes get." Classrooms are inevitably overcrowded, and one participant noted that:

The teachers may end up with very large classes of learners with varying disabilities making learning difficult and large classrooms also lead to teachers being overworked which make them less inclined to cater to the needs of the students with disabilities.

Rena's response supports this point as she states, "When it comes to mark the work of the students, the students are too many so you are overwhelmed and you are left without enough time to cater for the needs of the students with disabilities." Large classes influence the teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education. As Kim noted:

I think teachers have a negative attitude towards students with disabilities because they feel they are overworked, understaffed, and underpaid. You get to school at 8:00 a.m. and you leave at 4:30 p.m., and nowadays there is a lot of paperwork to be done.

As a result, large class sizes lead to poor performance for the whole class. However, this is more detrimental to students with disabilities as "... over-enrollment in most regular schools hinders achievement of inclusive education. This is because each learner with disability requires I.E.P," as pointed out by one of the participants.

Document analysis also revealed that the access to education in Kenya has, for a significant period, been hindered by poor school infrastructure coupled with the increased enrollment of both typical students and students with disabilities. As a result, most public schools

in Kenya are characterized by overcrowded classrooms. This lead to instructional and evaluation problems which has a significant impact on teachers' attitudes (MoE, 2012).

**Syllabus coverage.** The curriculum was also cited as another challenging aspect in working with students with disabilities. Inclusive education dictates that each student with a disability is taught and assessed according to his or her ability. Document analysis presented that the action of inclusion includes, among other factors, adoption of the curriculum based on the needs of the children with various educational concerns (MoE, 2012). Although students with disabilities are to be taught in the same classroom as regular students, they should have an adapted syllabus compared to their nondisabled counterparts. This is a practise that has not been adopted by the ministry of education as presented by the participants. All the participants stated that a challenge they commonly faced with students with disabilities is their low grades, which are the result of a curriculum that has not been adapted to their abilities. The regular syllabus is, as Amina notes:

... overloaded [with] content that will discourage learners with disabilities. Also, the issue of an inappropriate syllabus is worsened by large classes that lead the teachers hurriedly teaching though the syllabus in order to finish all that is required within a short period.

Odour corroborates:

There is a lot to be covered in a term. I always feel overwhelmed to finish the syllabus and [I am] not allocating enough time for the students with disabilities. You know what, there is a lot of pressure in the system that students with disabilities can likely be left out without IEP.

The results also revealed that most of the teachers with students with disabilities in their classrooms feel pressured as the Kenyan system primarily focuses on the mean grade. This means a teacher with students with disabilities in his or her class will always have a lower mean standard score as the students with disabilities are evaluated by a system that does not take their abilities into consideration. Consequently, another challenge that presented itself was the emphasis on scores from a standardized syllabus and assessment methods. All the participants stated that the current assessment methods were a major impediment to inclusive education. Jessica points out that “methods of assessment have been a challenge” and proposed that the system needs to change. She went further to explain that, although some teachers try to adapt their teaching methods to cater to the student, their efforts are frustrated as “... there is no adaptation of the exams [or the] curriculum, and this has led to many dropouts as students with disabilities are always the last one in the analysis. Very disappointing indeed. The system has failed them.”

This was confirmed by analyzing first term mid- and end term examinations 2017 and it clearly portrayed that students with special needs were ranked in the last five positions, most of them scoring 2% to 5%. However, it is important to note that although there are significant challenges associated with working with students with disabilities, the teachers teaching class one and two are happy with the already established strategies meant to support and promote inclusive education. Such initiatives, as several participants noted, have had a positive impact on the attitudes of regular and special needs teachers in elementary classes. From the document analysis exercise, it was clearly evident that teachers teaching class one and two had very positive attitudes towards the ‘Tusome’ (“let’s read” in Kiswahili) that was launched in 2015.

This point was reiterated by Jackline who noted:

You know what the 'Tusome' program is working out well. The work is well organized for the teachers, the pupils, and for me. I find it easy working with the students with disabilities as I compare with previous years, and I hope the government continues with this system to other classes.

Rena explained,

In the ministry of education, a guy named Dr. Matiangi was appointed to the education docket in 2015. For the first time in history in Kenyan education we can feel the change. I have been teaching class one to three for several years and ... the new introduction of "Tusome" (let's read) ... has greatly improved the reading skills of my pupils. And we have been inducted on "Tusome," English and mathematics at the end of the day am able to cater for students with disabilities.

As such, the negative attitudes towards inclusive education are as a result of several challenges teachers face with students with disabilities in their classes.

**Lack of support from administration.** Although the curriculum and class size play a significant role in the proper implementation of inclusive education, support from the schools' administration is key in order to embrace, adopt, and maintain the culture of inclusive education. All the participants were in agreement and saw the administration as an integral part of inclusive education. However, from the results it was clear that the lack of support from the schools' administrators was a substantial impediment to working with students with disabilities. Kanyingi notes:

In my school, teachers are involved in planning and presenting the needs of the students with disabilities to the administration, but [in] my opinion, [it] is as if we do it as a requirement from the ministry. I always notice a lot of delay or no response at all when it

comes to buying items for [the students with disabilities], and this I tell you creates a lot of negativity, inequality, and discouragement.

This is echoed by Terry who expressed frustration because, every time she asks for classroom items for the students with disabilities, the answer from the school administrator is always, "... we are first concentrating with the candidates." This shows how the needs of students with disabilities are an afterthought for most administrators. This point was reiterated by Tomi who, from her own situation, noted that:

It is always discouraging because students with disabilities' needs comes as second. The priority goes to students without disabilities, and the administration does not give proper audit of the cash used. I am not ashamed to say there is corruption in our schools.

This is affirmed by the document analysis on policy framework on education (MOE, 2012) that a major weakness of the present structures is mismanagement of resources and the general non-accountability that occurs across all levels. It further elucidates that, "... funds sent directly to [an] institution and those managed by ministry of education offices are at times not properly utilized for intended purposes" (p. 54).

**Lack of financial support.** Another major challenge of inclusive education is the lack of adequate funds to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools. This was a popular position amongst the participants who noted that working with students with disabilities becomes a huge challenge without the necessary funds. As stated by one participant, such challenges arise due to "... lack of teaching aids and teaching equipment as a result of lack of funds." Another participant added that "most of the schools' lack funds to buy most of the educational resources needed for smooth learning and teaching of learners with disabilities." However, it is important to note that it is not that funds are not available for inclusive education,

rather, the funds allocated are not enough, as evidenced by some of the responses. One stated, “The money allotted for students with disabilities is not enough. They are given the same amount as other students without disabilities, and it becomes an issue when you go to office to request materials for them.” This point is corroborated from the examination of funds disbursement documents. One such document, a letter from the ministry of education in Kenya (2016), clearly shows that the amount the Kenyan government disburses for each child for three months is Ksh. 102.50 (i.e., approximately one and fifty cents Canadian dollars). This adds up to about Ksh. 400 (i.e., approximately four Canadian dollars) for one year.

Furthermore, most participants were in agreement that corruption in the schools’ administration also contributed substantially to the unequal allotment of funds. As Temi stated, “When donors help the school with some funds to be used for students with disabilities, it is used for other things. The administration just keeps quiet and teachers fear questioning in case [they] are victimized.” Another participant noted,

We do meet for planning and all classes presented but most of the time this is formality as our suggestions about the needs of the students are not followed. The question I ask myself [about] the little we get [is], ‘where does it go to?’

**Modification of the environment.** Ultimately, the consensus from all the respondents was that the regular schools’ environments had not been adapted to cater to the needs of the students with disabilities. Dominic put it plainly in saying, “The environment is not modified for the students with disabilities.” Most of the participants agreed that a school cannot be truly inclusive if the facilities have not been modified to accommodate everyone. As one participant stated, “The environment is not modified and therefore[it] becomes hard to admit students with physical disabilities.” Kim supported this point and added:

“Our schools are not modified to accommodate students with disabilities especially those who are physically handicapped. There are no ramps that is why we prefer those on wheelchairs to go to Thika School for the physically handicapped. Because there are ramps and the movement will be very easy”.

Such suggestions are due to the fact that, as stated earlier, the classes are typically overcrowded and students with disabilities that eventually make it to the classrooms are forced to make use of the same facilities that regular students use. For instance, Terry stated, “The desks in my class are few that the students are so squeezed that writing becomes a problem.” The Kenya SNE policy (MoE, 2009) affirms that facilities are still inadequate despite the government’s commitment to support the provision of equal access to education for all children. It is therefore apparent that without enough facilities and resources to cater for the needs of the students with disabilities, implementation of inclusion is hindered.

### **Strategies for Effective Practices**

Another prevailing theme that presented itself from the responses of the participants was the need for effective strategies of addressing the needs of students with disabilities.

**Support to general and special education teachers.** All the participants were optimistic about the implementation of inclusive education and provided various strategies and suggestions. The most frequently occurring suggestion was more training for both general and special education teachers. Odour suggested that the “... training of teachers in special needs and inclusive education, as well as having refresher courses and seminars, could help in creating positive attitudes towards students with disabilities.” This position was supported by Tom who added that training could assist to “... change [teachers’] attitudes towards [students with

disabilities], and [provide] ideas on how to handle different categories of students.” More results indicated that there is a gap between the general and special education teachers.

Amina narrated,

In my school, we do not work together as a team. Each does [their] own planning. No one bothers [with] what the other teacher is doing with the students. The general education teachers have a feeling that special education teachers should handle all the students with special needs. This does not go well with others.

She further suggested that “there is a need to have continuous meetings [and] workshops within the school and the district for the members to share their opinion.” Tomi echoed this by stating:

I am always stressed at the end of the year when we analyze the results and decide the students to promote to the next class. The teachers without special needs skills are the majority and bring to the table most of the students with disabilities to repeat. I am telling you, they always get their way. I feel there is need to collaborate and understand one another and more so students with disabilities.

Further results showed that support to general education teachers in terms of training has a crucial role to play in ensuring that they are prepared for educating students with disabilities.

**Creating awareness.** Kim stated that: “Many teachers think that working with a child with disabilities calls for training while, in real sense, training is not necessary.” He goes on further to clarify his position by proposing that a more effective strategy for addressing the needs of the students with disabilities is “. . . by creating awareness about the nature, causes, prevention, and intervention of conditions that cause disabilities.” However, other participants’ opinions were that creating awareness should not replace training. As Kanyingi suggested, “It should complement it and create more awareness that disability is not inability in schools and

community.” This notion was reinforced by Loise, who stated that “the government should create awareness to all stakeholders in education as well as [work] hand in hand with non-governmental organizations to provide resources required in schools.” The policy recognizes that lack of awareness about issues surrounding learners with special needs and disabilities by service providers, policy makers, and the community at large is a common problem that needs to be addressed (Kenya SNE policy; MoE, 2009).

**Government involvement.** Most of the participants stated that the government has a significant role in the implementation of inclusive education. As such, most of the strategies by the respondents revolved around the involvement of the government. Tomi suggested that the government should “encourage more teachers to do special education [and] sensitize the parents and educators through forums of seminars, workshops, and conferences.” This will help teachers “... to understand the advantages of teaching SWD in regular schools given professional skills and training.” Additionally, Nellie suggested that “curriculum developers should make the resources available [and modify] the curriculum so that SWDs are assessed according to their ability.” This suggestion was reiterated by Jeff who stated that “the ministry of education needs to change the system so that students with disabilities are tested according to their capabilities but not assessed like any other student.” This suggestion is reinforced by the Kenya SNE policy (MoE, 2009), in that strategies should be employed that encourage the use of curriculum differentiation by teachers so as to modify the assessments, content, and activities in order to respond more flexibly to the different needs of the diverse learners in the classrooms.

**Resources and funds.** Other suggestions regarding the ministry of education involved making the resources needed by students with disabilities easily accessible. Jackline stated, “The ministry of education [must] make assistive and adaptive resources. We need them so that we

can handle the students with ease.” Odour noted that “resources to SWD [should] be provided according to each student’s need. With good planning and understanding from the headteachers, the students, I feel, will greatly benefit.”

A major resource, believed to be the most crucial by many, was money. One participant stated, “The funds for each child with [a] disability should be higher and under proper management from administrators that do not have a negative attitude towards inclusive education.” Funds can also be utilized for the modification of the schools’ environment in order to better accommodate the students with disabilities. One participant believed that “funds should be set aside to upgrade schools’ facilities so that they can accommodate learners with disabilities.” Consequently, the modification of school environments was also a major suggestion from the participants. As noted by Tom, “Modifying the classroom environment, as well as outside the classrooms, would go a long way in addressing the needs of students with disabilities.” This point was expounded by Rena’s response that “modifications such as enlarging classroom doors would accommodate learners who use wheelchairs.”

Document analysis revealed that the government of Kenya is already employing some of the proposed strategies such as collaborating with sponsoring institutions to facilitate improvement of learning facilities and school infrastructure through provision of grants (MoE, 2012). Furthermore, certain legislations such as the Persons with Disabilities Act (1994) provide a framework that outlaws discriminative treatment of persons with disabilities and provides for the adaptation of school infrastructure to ensure that the school environment is suitable for the students with disabilities. Additionally, the gender policy in education (2007) singles out education for learners with special needs and disabilities as an area of specific focus. This policy states that to increase participation, retention, and completion for learners with special needs and

disabilities, the government should provide a conducive environment. This should be done through flexible curriculum, providing trained personnel, equipment, and facilities, and ensuring accommodative physical infrastructure for learners with special needs and disabilities.

### **Conclusion**

Inclusive education has the potential to benefit students with and without disabilities. It requires effective interaction and collaboration between administrators and general and special education teachers. In addition, many support to students, teachers, and classrooms are necessary to ensure all students can participate in school activities.

## Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter, I discuss the results of the study in relation to the objectives of the study, present the implications of the results to the present Kenyan education system, offer recommendations that could be developed and implemented in the Kenyan education system to tackle some of the challenges of inclusive education, and conclude by suggesting areas of focus for future research.

### Teachers' Perceptions

The results of this study revealed that teachers with special education training generally had positive perception on inclusive education. However, it was noted that most of the general education teachers, and a small portion of teachers with special education training, still hold negative perceptions of inclusive education in mainstream schools. The following factors influenced teachers' perceptions:

**Training.** Training was determined to be a major factor contributing to the implementation of inclusive education. In this regard, from the results, it was evident that general education teachers in mainstream schools do not have special educational training to facilitate effective education to students with disabilities. Therefore, they have a negative perception towards these students and, in most cases, provide minimal help. These results are consistent with those of Leyser and Kirk (2004) who found that general education teachers often use strategies and adaptations directed toward the class as a whole, and incorporate only minor or no modifications based on student's needs. These findings are also validated by previous studies which alluded that teachers who have undertaken training in special education hold more positive perceptions about implementing inclusive education than teachers without training (Ali, Mustapha & Jelas, 2006; Cornoldi, Terreni, Scruggs, & Mastripieri, 1998; Wanderi, 2015). As

such, the teachers in this study agreed that comprehensive training was required with ongoing training, seminars, workshops, and refresher courses being offered periodically so as to keep in pace with the evolving needs of special needs students.

Furthermore, it was identified that teachers require additional training in specific areas such as methods of instruction, sign language, and braille. This will enable general and special education teachers to be confident in their abilities (McGregor and Campbell, 2001; Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slusher, & Saumell, 1996). This explanation is supported by Buell, Hallam, Gamel, and Scheer (1999) who demonstrated that teachers' would benefit from additional training that included "program modification, assessing academic progress, adapting curriculum, managing students' behavior, developing IEPs, and using supportive technology" (p. 153).

**Types of disability of the students.** Most of the teachers showed confidence in working with students with mild to moderate disabilities in inclusive classrooms. For instance, students with physical impairments were favored as opposed to students with varying emotional, cognitive, or behavioral disabilities. Most of the teachers recommended that students with emotional disabilities should be placed in special schools. However, it is important to note that this recommendation was not influenced by the fact that they did not want them in their classes. Rather, in the current school environment, they did not have the necessary resources to deal with such students (Korir & Mukuria, 2007). Additional research reported that teachers perceived students with behavioral or emotional disorders as being more difficult to work with in the classroom than children with different disabilities (Chhabra, Srivastava & Srivastava 2010).

**Lack of administrative support.** It was noted that support from the administrators is paramount to the success of inclusion of students into mainstream schools as they are the link between the school, community, government, and donors. The teachers did not feel fully

supported by the administrators to implement inclusive practices in school. They expressed frustration as they inquired about the resources and materials needed in their classes to work with students with disabilities. As viewed by Brownell and Pajares (1999) successful inclusive efforts are associated with administrative support, adequate materials, and personnel resources. These results are consistent with those of Sodak, Podell and Lehman (1998) who found out that teachers are more willing to accommodate students in their classrooms when they perceive that their school administration fosters a supportive climate, and the school culture encourages teaming and collaboration.

**Collaboration between the special and general education teachers.** It was also clear from the findings that there is lack of collaboration between the special and general education teachers. As noted by Villa and Thousand (2003), teachers need to work together effectively to create diverse learning opportunities for learners who have a wide variety of interests, learning styles, and intelligences. This view is supported by Voltz et al. (2001) who noted that general and special education teachers should routinely meet to engage in collaborative problem solving around issues that may arise in the inclusion process. Concurrent studies by Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, and Lead (1999) showed that it is important for school systems to encourage teachers to work co-operatively and also to provide them with opportunities to plan and share information if students with disabilities are to be successfully educated in inclusive classrooms.

**Inadequate infrastructure and resources.** This study also revealed that many schools do not have the necessary infrastructure to enable access for students with various physical disabilities. For instance, lack of ramps hinders accessibility to classrooms, and the lack of adapted toilets affects students' independence.

The teaching and learning resources, such as adequate educational facilities, were also reported as being a challenge in mainstream classrooms. For example, adequate reading materials, furniture suitable for students with and without disabilities, playgrounds, toilets, and play materials were reported to be lacking, despite an increase in the number of students (Johnstone & Chapman, 2009; University of Nairobi, 2012; Wanjohi, 2014).

**Socio-cultural factors.** Most teachers agreed that society greatly contributes to the negative attitude towards students with disabilities. A number of parents still believe in ancestral sins and would prefer to keep these children, who are considered to be a burden, at home. These attitudes also contribute to the fact that they are often ignorant about their child's education. These findings are consistent with those of Groce (2004) who found out that in various developing countries around the world children with disabilities often do not attend school because it is thought that they cannot learn or will be disruptive to other learners. The teachers pointed out that parents should be sensitized on the importance of taking their children to school and not view them as a curse. As noted by Polat (2011), "Changing attitudinal barriers among school professionals and in the wider community is one of the essential aspects of making inclusive education happen in low-income countries" (p. 57). Prior literature indicated that a shift in perspective is needed in order for children with disabilities to have more access to schools. The traditional 'African disability as a curse' perspective needs to shift to a strength-based perspective if there is to be any substantial educational changes in Kenya (Mukuria & Korir, 2012).

In this study, I revealed that students with disabilities are still being labeled in schools, which carries negative connotations and influences how students with disabilities are viewed by others. This is confirmed by Hardman, Drew and Egan (2011) who found that the stigma

associated with this label consciously or unconsciously lowers teacher's expectation of that student.

**Lack of funding.** This study found out that lack of sufficient funds is a major constraint to the practice of inclusion. Additionally, most of the participants raised concerns regarding lack of policies, accountability, and managerial skills among administrators. These findings support research by Kiarie (2005) who demonstrated that lack of policy and proper funding, compounded with cultural attitudes towards persons with disabilities, hamper attempts to address critical issues pertinent to those individuals with special needs in Kenya. He further determined that the existing policies seem to be contradictory due to lack of designated supervisory and implementation mechanisms. In addition, Wilderman and Nomdo (2007) revealed that without financial support from the ministry, the burden associated with the implementation of inclusive education becomes overwhelming to school officials. Therefore, they swiftly revert to a special education model of education delivery.

**Large class size.** Most of the teachers pointed out that large classrooms are difficult to manage and hinder their ability to fully make the instructional adjustments to meet the learning needs of students with disabilities. The results also showed that most students are not supported well in their learning because of time constraints, large class sizes, and a lack of additional teachers to cater for the increased student enrolments. These results are consistent with those of Yaman and Uygulamada (2009) who found out that overcrowded classroom conditions hinder teachers' attention to individual students and slows down the progress of students' learning. For instance, teachers have limited time to focus on the needs of delayed learners and are forced to neglect them to keep pace with the prescribed time allocation for each learning area. They are also forced to abandon student-centered learning and focus more on teacher-centered lessons

which become the culture of teaching. This view is echoed by Westwood (2004) who found that larger classes place additional demands on the regular educator while reinforcing concern that all students may not receive proper time or attention from the teacher.

### **Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms**

From this study, it is clear that the impact of inclusive classrooms goes beyond academics. The teachers unanimously agreed that students with disabilities are able to socially interact, and develop genuine relationships, with their peers which creates a feeling of being part of the school. Furthermore, a study by McCarthy (2006) observed that students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms showed improvement in their ability to follow directions and initiate contact with others. Additional research reported that inclusive education enhanced social interaction and inclusion among the students and minimized stereotypes on special needs students (Ali et al., 2006).

### **Education System in Kenya**

Teachers were unanimous in their responses regarding the education system in Kenya. The results showed that the focus on educational achievement is making it impossible to achieve inclusion. For example, the culture of ranking was identified as one of the factors negatively influencing the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms. As a result, general education teachers prefer working with students who are average, and fear working with students with disabilities who will lower their mean standard scores. The teachers expressed that students with disabilities can thrive in many areas apart from academics such as artwork, music, and dance, and that these could be incorporated into the curriculum. The results further revealed that due to over-emphasis on academic scores, students with disabilities are also discriminated against when it comes to the advancement to the next grade. The teachers recommended a review

of the curriculum and teaching strategies for the successful implementation of inclusive practices. Most of the teachers felt it is important for every student to be educated according to his/her level of development and needs. This explanation is also supported by Zalizan (2000) who found that when dealing with the students with special needs, teachers' willingness to adapt and change is necessary to ensure that teaching and learning process is carried out according to the abilities of the students. Ghergut (2010) stated:

Optimum application of inclusive education in the education system requires a series of changes in the operation and upgrading of the system components according to the new standards emerging in many countries promoting and supporting an educational policy that focuses on inclusion and full valuation of the individual in the community/society" (p. 715).

Teachers' views indicated that clear policies are needed to guide the implementation of inclusive education in Kenya. These results are consistent with those of Adoyo and Odeny (2015), who pointed out that a major factor that is hindering the implementation of inclusive policy in Kenya is the lack of clarity in the special education policy of 2009 regarding the means through which schools can meet the goals of inclusive education. This lack of clarity has led to inaction by the stakeholders involved.

### **Limitations**

The sample of this study concentrated on one of the districts in Kiambu county. It is subdivided into twelve sub counties or constituencies. Due to the large size of the county, time constraints, and the wide distribution of schools in the county, I restricted the study to one constituency.

The headteachers and general education teachers were not interviewed, and generalization cannot be made about the perceptions of teachers from other districts in the county. I used interviews and document review, and the use of additional methods could have improved the research findings (e.g., observing students with disabilities interacting with teachers and peers).

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results of this study I developed the following recommendations:

**Creating awareness.** There is need for continuous awareness creation and campaigns among stakeholders on the issues affecting students with disabilities. For instance, there is need to address the gap on information and education on disability. This will help combat negative perceptions of disability within the society and embrace inclusive policies. A pilot project could be initiated in the district to demonstrate to teachers, families, and policy makers how to achieve educational inclusion. This demonstration school could be established to provide education programs for all students, with or without disabilities, to enhance their development in academic and social skills.

**Redesigning the curriculum.** The educators in this research highlighted the traditional attachment to the mean standard score and ranking mentality as the norm in the education system. Therefore, there is need to redesign the curriculum to embrace full implementation of inclusive education. For instance, practical areas of learning could be included in the education system for students to express their talents. There could also be well-structured and coordinated ongoing training to enable teachers to keep up with the new developments in education, and to handle the needs of diverse students in their classes. The Ministry of Education could require a

follow up on the courses offered in teacher training colleges to ensure that student teachers are equipped with skills to handle students with disabilities in regular classrooms

**Support for headteachers, and general and special education teachers.** This study has demonstrated that there is a gap between the administrators and general and special education teachers in the implementation of inclusive education. Therefore, managerial courses could be put in place for administrators (i.e., headteachers) to ensure smooth running of schools and implementation of inclusive education policies. On-going training, in-service courses, and workshops could be organized at the district and county level to empower teachers to identify the right strategy for each child and adjust curricular steps according to the student's level of development, needs, demands, and interests in the educational domain. With the proper knowledge and skills, teachers will have more positive attitudes toward inclusion as they will be equipped to include students with disabilities in their classrooms.

**Funding.** From this study, insufficient funding hampers the provision of special education services, and schools do not have the ability to make progress towards implementation of inclusive education. Therefore, the government of Kenya could consider reviewing allocation of funds by increasing budgetary provisions to cater to the required resources in all schools and disbursement to be done in good time. The ministry of education could develop clear policies in management, monitoring, and evaluation frameworks.

**Structural modification.** This study calls for proper modifications to be made to public schools to cater to all students with and without disabilities. The county government in conjunction with the district could work in improving and modifying the existing physical facilities.

**Teamwork.** All stakeholders could be encouraged to participate in the implementation of inclusive education. For instance, the effort towards collaborative teaching between general and special education teachers could be put in place. Teachers could make adjustments in their lesson planning, methods, and materials to accommodate all students.

**Mean standard score.** The participants found that the focus on mean standard score hindered the implementation of inclusive education. I recommend for the government to create new policies outlining alternative criteria for grading the performance of students and schools. A follow up could be conducted in schools to ensure the new rules are being followed.

### **Further Research**

Further research on perceptions towards inclusive education should be undertaken with administrators and general education teachers in the district and county. It may be significant to explore the perceptions of the district officials and coordinators of educational assessment resource center regarding their role in inclusive schools.

This research has shown that collaboration between administrators, special and general education teachers is paramount in achieving inclusive education. It would be interesting to explore the experiences of success or challenges in implementing inclusive practices after further training and teamwork have been established. Alternatively, research could be done focusing on the experiences of students with and without disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

Finally, further evaluation of the special education policy of 2009 is needed, specifically, what has been achieved and what needs to be done to fully implement inclusive education in Kenya.

**Conclusion**

This study investigated the perception of teachers in relation to the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms. The participants in this study generally had positive perceptions towards students with disabilities. It further showed that inclusive education is possible, however, it identified some of the challenges that face the full implementation of inclusion. The study also presents a challenge to the Ministry of Education and National and County governments to network and collaborate to provide necessary facilities and equipment, more training of teachers, reduce class size, provide sufficient funding, and have on-going monitoring and review to determine how policies are being implemented in public schools.

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**Appendix A: Letter to the Coordinator of the Educational Assessment Resource Centre**

UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

**Letter to the coordinator of the Educational Resource Assessment Centre**

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Dear Sir,

**Re: Research Study - An examination of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education: A case study of Thika East District, Kenya.**

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba specializing in inclusive education. As part of my program I need to complete a research study. I am interested in examining teachers' perspectives on inclusive education. Specifically, I would like to find out teachers' experiences about educating students with disabilities in regular schools, identify some of the existing challenges being encountered by schools and explore some possible interventions that can be employed to make schools more inclusive.

I am writing to you at this time to request your help in recruiting participants for my study. I plan to conduct telephone interviews with teachers who have teaching students with disabilities in a regular classroom. The interviews will take approximately one hour and will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for the participants. I will use a voice recorder to record the interviews, and will keep the transcribed data in my password protected computer at my home. Data collected and the identity of participants will be treated with confidentiality throughout this study. Only the researcher will have access to the raw data. The identities of the participants to be interviewed will

be kept confidential. The materials with the contact information of the participants will be kept separate from the anonymized data and stored in secure locations. The secured data will be destroyed after the research is reported and disseminated by December 2017.

The research study will have minimal risk. Benefits to the participants will include a better understanding of educating students with disabilities in regular schools and contributing to the research in this area. Participants will not be compensated for their participation; however, they will all have the opportunity to receive a summary of the results of the study. Participation in the study is completely voluntary, and participants are free to choose to withdraw from the research at any time or withhold any information they do not want to share. I have attached an information letter and consent form for your review. I am kindly requesting that you forward them to all the teachers in your district.

This research has been approved by the Education Nursing Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Margaret Gachocho.

## Appendix B: Protocol Approval



Research Ethics  
and Compliance

**Human Ethics**  
208-194 Dafoe Road  
Winnipeg, MB  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Phone +204-474-7122  
Email: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

### PROTOCOL APPROVAL

**TO:** Margaret Gachocho (Advisor: Charlotte Enns)  
Principal Investigator

**FROM:** Zana Lutfiyya, Chair  
Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

**Re:** Protocol #E2017:007 (HS20552)  
"An Examination of Teachers' Perspectives on Inclusive Education: A Case Study of Thika East District, Kenya"

**Effective:** March 2, 2017

**Expiry:** March 2, 2018

Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) has reviewed and approved the above research. ENREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described in the application.
2. Any modification to the research must be submitted to ENREB for approval before implementation.
3. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be submitted to ENREB as soon as possible.
4. This approval is valid for one year only and a Renewal Request must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date.
5. A Study Closure form must be submitted to ENREB when the research is complete or terminated.
6. The University of Manitoba may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

**Funded Protocols:**

- Please mail/e-mail a copy of this Approval, identifying the related UM Project Number, to the Research Grants Officer in ORS.

**Appendix C: Research Authorization**

**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,  
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

Telephone: +254-20-2213471,  
2241349, 3310571, 2219420  
Fax: +254-20-318245, 318249  
Email: dg@nacosti.go.ke  
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke  
when replying please quote

9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Utalii House  
Uhuru Highway  
P.O. Box 30623-00100  
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No: **NACOSTI/P/17/76277/16567**

Date: **4<sup>th</sup> April, 2017**

Margaret Gathoni Gachocho  
University of Manitoba  
**CANADA.**

**RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION**

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "*An examination of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education: A case study of Thika East District, Kenya,*" I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Kiambu County** for the period ending **4<sup>th</sup> April, 2018.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Kiambu County** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit **two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf** of the research report/thesis to our office.

  
**BONIFACE WANYAMA**  
**FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO**

Copy to:

The County Commissioner  
Kiambu County.

The County Director of Education  
Kiambu County.

**Appendix D: Written Permission**

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**  
**State Department of Education**

Telephone: 0202637320  
 deothikaeast12@gmail.com

When replying, please quote  
 REF NO: THK/EST/ADM/71/6

SUB-COUNTY EDUCATION OFFICE  
 THIKA EAST SUB-COUNTY  
 P.O BOX 5214 - 01002  
 MADARAKA - THIKA

10<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2017

**MARGARET GATHONI GACHOCHO**  
 UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA  
 CANADA

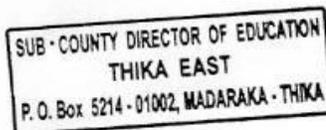
**RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION**

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "**An Examination of Teachers Perspectives on Inclusive Education: A case study of Thika East Sub County, Kenya**" and the subsequent grant of the authority by **NACOSTI** vide letter **Ref. NACOSTI/P/17/76277116567** dated **4<sup>th</sup> April 2017**, this office hereby grants you the go ahead to proceed on with data collection in the field up to the period ending **4<sup>th</sup> April 2018**.

Upon completion, submit copies of the research project to **NACOSTI Office** as directed in their communication.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rose K. Sagara'.

**ROSE K. SAGARA**  
 SUB COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION  
 THIKA EAST



**COPY TO:**

COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION  
 THIKA EAST

**Appendix E: Consent Form**

UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

**Research Project Title:** An Examination of Teachers' Perspectives on Inclusive Education:  
A case study of Thika East District, Kenya

**Principal Researcher:** Margaret Gachocho

**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Charlotte Enns

**This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and understand any accompanying information.**

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba specializing in inclusive education. As part of my program I need to complete a research study. This study will examine the teachers' perspectives on inclusive education in Thika East district. Specifically, I would like to find out about teachers' experiences educating students with disabilities in regular schools, as well as identify some of the existing challenges being encountered by schools and exploring some possible interventions that schools could employ to become more inclusive.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will conduct an interview with you that will be guided by a semi-structured questionnaire. The interview will be done via telephone at a time convenient for

you and will take approximately one hour. The information collected during the study and the findings of the research will add to the knowledge base on inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools.

The research study will have minimal risk. Data collected and your identity will be treated with confidentiality throughout this study. Your personal information, such as address or telephone numbers, will not be shared with others. Although I will be writing about this study as part of my master's thesis, I will not include your name or any identifying information in my writing. I will keep the materials with the contact information separate from the anonymized data in separate drawers in my locked room at home. Collected confidential data will be stored in a password protected personal computer at my home. Only I will have access to the raw data. I will use a voice recorder to record the interviews and will keep the transcribed data secured in my computer at home. The secured data will be destroyed after the research is reported and disseminated by December 2017.

I will disseminate the findings through the University of Manitoba libraries. I will also disseminate the findings through presentations and publications. The Sub County Director will receive a copy of the completed thesis.

You will not receive any monetary remuneration; however, you will have the opportunity to share your perspectives and experiences on inclusive education and contribute to the research in this area.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to discontinue at any time without penalty or consequences - you simply need to let me know, and none of the information provided will be used in the study. You are also free not to answer any question if you feel uncomfortable. Further, you will have the option to use your name or a pseudonym during the interview.

You will receive feedback on the results of the study shared by e-mail, after all the field notes and transcribed data have been compiled and the study is completed (by December 2017).

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

**The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way. This research has been approved by the Education Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact me. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher and/or Delegate's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to receive a copy of the results of this study, please provide your email address below:

---

(Email address)

## **Appendix F: Interview Guide**

### **Background Information**

1. Tell me about yourself, that is, a brief history about your teaching experience and career.
2. What is your present level of training.

### **Section Two**

1. Tell me about your experience working with students with disabilities in your classroom.
2. Tell me about the advantages of educating students with disabilities in a regular school.
3. Tell me about the challenges of educating students with disabilities in a regular school.
4. Tell me about the types of disabilities you consider more/ less comfortable working with in your classroom.
5. What is the best way forward towards addressing the schooling needs of students with disabilities?
6. Tell me about some of the skills required by teachers to enable them to care for and support students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom.
7. What do you think are the attitudes of teachers in your school toward inclusion of students with disabilities? (Prompts: Do teachers believe students with disabilities have a right to learn with other children? Do the students participate in valued roles? Are they welcomed, made to feel safe, and have a sense of belonging within the school community?)
8. In your opinion, do teachers have the resources to implement inclusive education? why or why not.

9. Tell me about your beliefs about working with students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom (Prompts: right to learn; sense of belonging; valued roles/participants in the classroom).
10. Any further comments in order to make the inclusive classroom more successful.