



**Investigating the Collaboration between Specialist and Mainstream Teachers in
Enhancing inclusive education: A Case of two selected primary schools in
Mulanje**

By

Treza L. Muleme

MEdTE 1918

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Education in Teacher Education

At

Mzuzu University

Supervisor: Dr. Joshua Kumwenda

October, 2020

DECLARATION

I, **Treza Lucy Muleme** declare that the work, organisation and writing of this thesis is my own work and has been carried out at Mzuzu University under the supervision of Dr. Joshua Kumwenda. I further declare that this work is original and has not been, nor is it being concurrently submitted for any other degree than the degree of Master of Education (Teacher Education) of Mzuzu University. I also declare that I have acknowledged all the sources used or consulted in the course of writing this thesis.

Student: **Treza L. Muleme**

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Supervisor: **Dr. Joshua I. Kumwenda**

Signed: _____

Date: _____

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

Certify that this thesis is from Treza L. Muleme's own work and effort and find it satisfactory as a basis for the award of Degree of Master of Education in Teacher Education (MedTe).

Supervisor: **Dr. Joshua I. Kumwenda**

Signature

Date:

Programme Coordinator: **Dr. Margaret Mdolo**

Signature

Date:

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my lovely husband, Andy, my lovely late parents, Mr. and Mrs. Muleme, my lovely children, grandchildren and relatives for the financial and moral support they rendered to me throughout the duration of my studies at Mzuzu University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to convey my utmost gratitude to the following for their significant contributions that they have made for this work to come out the way it has:

My sincerely appreciation goes to the government of Malawi through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology particularly my Institution, Montfort Special Needs Education College for their support, guidance and love and also for allowing me to pursue my studies at Mzuzu University and the whole period of doing my thesis.

I also convey my great thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Joshua I. Kumwenda for his continuous supervision, love and support. He offered me quite a great deal of guidance, advice and love. Due to his insights and support, it was very easy and amusing working with him throughout the period of doing my thesis. I would be doing great injustice if I forget to also recognize the important role played by the Postgraduate Coordinator, Dr. Margaret Mdolo for her advice, patience and love throughout my studies and not forgetting all the lecturers who supported me in my entire study period at Mzuzu University.

Most of all, I would like to thank my dad and mum (both deceased) for their love and for bringing me up the way they did. Without their support, I wouldn't have reached this great height. I also convey my profound thanks to my lovely husband and relatives who assisted me to take care of my family while doing my studies at Mzuzu University and for their love, advice and very encouraging support especially during times of financial problems on my part. Without them life would have been very hard.

May God bless them all!

ABSTRACT

Collaboration in education today is seen as a legal command, best practice in teachers' mode of operation, and necessary for the inclusion of children with special education needs (SEN). Since the declaration of Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education in 1994, many countries have been striving to improve the quality of their education systems by adopting inclusive practices to achieve equality among learners with diverse needs. Teachers' collaboration has been reported as one of the most important factors in promoting inclusive education. However, the way collaboration is implemented in most countries affects learners' inclusion and their learning. The aim of this study was to understand the nature of collaborative practices between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools in Malawi. This study chose to be guided by the Community of Practice Theory as propounded by Lave and Wenger, (1991). The research used a qualitative approach through face-to-face semi-structured interviews involving seven participants of which five were specialist teachers and two were head teachers from two selected primary schools. In addition, focus group discussions involving fourteen mainstream teachers were conducted. In total, three focus group discussions of four or five participants were conducted. Furthermore, observations were also conducted whereby both sets of teachers were observed as they went about doing their day-to-day work to appreciate how they collaborated in enhancing inclusive education. The theory focuses much on social interaction and that knowledge is the result of social interaction and a shared experience rather than individual's preserve. The findings of the study indicate that collaboration between mainstream and specialist teachers was limited in scope and that the nature of collaboration was conditional, erratic and unplanned. Essentially, the findings show that only mainstream teachers consulted specialist teachers and that the consultations are done only when mainstream teachers meet problems while

assisting learners with SEN in an inclusive class. Besides, there are no activities that are planned or carried out jointly between these two sets of teachers and there are no schedules to show that the two sets of teachers work together. The results further revealed that many activities are done on individual bases rather than teamwork where these sets of teachers share ideas in order to achieve the intended goals of inclusive education. The study attributes this to lack of policy clarity and several other factors and proposes a collaboration model deemed most appropriate for the Malawian context.

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List of Abbreviations

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DEM	District Education Manager
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Act
IE	Inclusive Education
IEP	Individualized Educational Plan
ITEP	Initial Teacher Education Programmes
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MSNEC	Montfort Special Needs Education College
NRP	National Reading Program
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SNE	Special Need Education
TTC	Teachers' Training Colleges
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

List of Definition of Operational Terms

Mainstream teachers:

They are regular teachers who teach learners in mainstream classes after undergoing the initial Teacher Training and are said to have limited knowledge and skills to handle learners with special education needs because they are not trained in the Special Needs Education field.

Specialist teachers: These are teachers who have expertise in a particular field, such as special education. In this research, a specialist teacher is a teacher with expertise in working with children with special educational needs, such as learning difficulties.

Special Education Needs (SEN): Special education needs is the term used to describe children with learning problems or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age. Children have special education needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special education provision (extra help).

Inclusive Education: Inclusive education (also called inclusion) is the type of education that includes everyone, (learners with diverse needs) including those with special educational needs, learning together in mainstream schools and in other schools.

Collaboration: Collaboration is an interactive process that enables teachers with diverse expertise to work together as contemporaries and engage in shared decision making toward mutually defined goals. It is an ongoing process whereby teachers become involved in various educational phases that together facilitate the progress of the learners with special education needs.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background of the study, statement of the problem, the main research question and its supporting questions. It also provides the purpose and significance of the study, theoretical framework and delimitation of the study. In this study, the terms 'learners' and 'students' were used interchangeably. In addition, 'learners with SEN' in this study will be used to stand for only learners with disabilities and impairments who are found in the mainstream classrooms and mostly are assumed to be assisted jointly by specialist and mainstream teachers.

1.1 Background information

The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the "World Conference on Special Needs Education, (Salamanca Statement, Spain 1994) and was restated at the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal 2000)". The Statement solicits governments to give the highest priority to making education systems inclusive and adopt the principle of inclusive education as a matter of policy. The idea of inclusion is further supported by the United Nation's Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Person with Disability Proclaiming Participation and equality for all. Inclusive Education (IE) is defined as a process of addressing the diverse needs of all learners by reducing barriers to, and within the learning environment. This move means attending the age appropriate class of the child's local school, with individually tailored support (UNICEF 2007).

Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. At the Jomtien World Conference (1990) in Thailand, the goals for 'Education for All' were set and it was proclaimed that every person (child, youth and adult) shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities which would meet their basic learning needs. Inclusion is an educational approach and philosophy that provides all students greater opportunities for academic and social achievement.

Since the declaration of Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education in 1994, many countries have been striving to improve the quality of their education systems by adopting inclusive practices to achieve that equality among learners with diverse needs. Nonetheless, developing an inclusive education system requires extensive changes in education practice such as the encouragement of general (mainstream) and specialist teachers to work collaboratively (Thousand, Nevin & Villa, 2007). The Universal Declaration on Education (1994) required all countries to adopt mainstream Special Needs Education (SNE) in all schools, a move which essentially opened doors to learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in all schools to learn alongside their peers. The Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education UNESCO (1994) endorsed the idea of inclusive education and a new action framework was adopted with its guiding principles suggesting that ordinary primary schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. Suffice to say that it urged governments to accommodate all children in mainstream schools regardless of their diverse learning needs. According to UNESCO (2005) inclusive education is the process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners in mainstream classrooms or schools through increasing participation in learning and in which exclusion is eliminated within the education system. Inclusive education, therefore, involves changes and modifications in content,

approaches, structures and strategies in order to meet the needs of all learners. Nevertheless, special needs education is the provision of education which is additional to, and different from that provided to learners of the same age owing to disability, which either prevents or hinders some learners from making use of facilities of a particular kind provided for learners of the same age in schools within the locality (Westwood, 2005). Inclusive education is perhaps the opposite of special needs education since it differs from special needs education in many respects. In special needs education only experts (specialist) teachers teach learners with SEN in special schools or resource rooms by adapting and modifying the educational activities, content, methodologies and tests and examinations of the mainstream school to meet the needs of individual learners with special needs. Stubbs (2008) and Mwaura & Wanyera (2007) stipulate that learners with special education needs are those vulnerable to discrimination, marginalization, and isolation and are often excluded from education. In addition, UNESCO (2007), recognises the following types of children with special needs whom educationists should focus on: Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVCs), the physically challenged, children infected and/or affected by HIV and AIDS, those discriminated against on the basis of gender, culture and religion, out-of-school youths, children with mental disorders, street children, nomadic children and adolescent mothers. These learners with special needs are likely to benefit from additional educational services in mainstream classes such as use of different approaches to teaching, use of technology in specifically adapted teaching areas or inclusive learning environments.

For the purpose of this study, however, only those learners with disabilities who were previously taught in resource rooms or special schools under the specialist teachers but are now taught in mainstream classes are considered as “learners with SEN”. I have adopted this application of the term because in the resource room, these types of learners are easily identified, assessed, guided,

taught and promoted to mainstream classes by specialist teachers who are supposed to collaborate with mainstream teachers in assisting these learners. A specialist teacher is different from a mainstream teacher in such a way that both sets of teachers have undergone initial teacher training in different colleges in Malawi, but in addition, a specialist teacher was also trained in special needs education as a field of study. According to Montfort Special Needs Education College curriculum (2016) the Diploma in Special Needs Education Programme equips specialist teachers with additional knowledge and skills on how to teach and assist learners with special education needs at different levels in primary schools. It prepares specialist teachers to deliver quality special needs education to learners with special educational needs. However, a mainstream teacher is a regular teacher who teaches learners in mainstream classes after undergoing the initial teacher training. In this study, a mainstream teacher refers to the teacher who works in mainstream classrooms in general education and with whom the specialist teachers work. He or she has limited skills of how to teach and manage learners with different categories of impairments who need special care and special (adapted) teaching methods and resources for them to learn effectively to suit their needs. As classrooms become more and more integrated with children with disabilities, the assumption is that all teachers have relevant knowledge and skills to better accommodate and assist these children in the mainstream class. One way through which mainstream teachers can gain such relevant knowledge and skills is through collaborating with specialists who have knowledge about learners with special education needs (SEN). Hence, collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers is necessary.

1.2 The Meaning of Teacher Collaboration

Collaboration is a process of two or more parties working together hand-in-hand to achieve a common objective or goal. Collaboration is important for a reflection of practices and exchange of

knowledge (Mislán, Kosnín, and Yeo, 2009). Teacher collaboration occurs when members of a learning community work together to increase students' learning experiences and achievements (Ališauskas et al., 2011; Celestin, St. T., 2010; Arthaud et al. (2007). According to Idol, Nevin, and Paolucci-Whitcomb, (2000), collaboration between mainstream and special teachers is referred to as an interactive process that enables teachers with diverse expertise to work together as equals and engage in shared decision making toward mutually defined goals. In addition, Friend and Cook(2003) concur with the statement above by defining the term "collaboration" as the interaction of two or more people which includes some behavioral patterns such as communication, coordination and information sharing, negotiation and problem-solving strategies. Therefore, collaboration is a purposeful building of interpersonal relationships and culture of working together towards an intended goal. In this case, the need for collaboration between specialist teachers and mainstream teachers cannot be over-emphasized in order to achieve inclusive education. In this study the teachers' collaboration, awareness and practices are very important for the success of inclusive education in mainstream primary schools in Malawi. The aim of this study was to understand the nature, extent and challenges facing collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers and how well that collaboration supports inclusive education in primary schools.

1.3 Brief History of Inclusive Education in Malawi

Formal primary education in Malawi began in 1875 by missionaries. The main focus of education then was on reading, writing and arithmetic (the 3Rs). In 1926, the Department of Education was formed by the government of then Nyasaland (Malawi). According to Kadzamira et al. (2002), Special Needs Education (SNE) was not part of the curriculum that focused much on reading,

writing and counting. It was until early 1950s when the provision of special needs education was introduced by the Scottish and South African Evangelical Missionaries in Malawi. Following that introduction, learners with special education needs, especially those with Visual Impairments (VI), were educated in special schools at Chilanga and Lulwe in Kasungu and Nsanje districts respectively. The provision of SNE services began with the education of learners with visual impairments. In 1968 they added learners with hearing impairments at Montfort College in Chiradzulu District. This was done by the Fathers of Immaculate Conception (FIC) of the Roman Catholic Church. At the inception of multi-party politics, it also happened that the government of Malawi introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994 to enable all children including those with Special Education Needs (SEN) exercise their right to education regardless of their disabilities (Disability Forum, 2006). Chavuta et al. (2008) also stipulates that in 1996, the Ministry of Education introduced another SNE programme for learners with Learning Difficulties in Malawi.

Malawi as a nation is trying to implement Education for All (EFA), to respond to different national and policy frameworks which are in line with legal and policy frameworks that support education for all through Inclusive Education. Currently, although there are special schools of learners with special education needs, most of them are currently incorporated in mainstream classrooms in all public mainstream primary schools. Malawi challenges the idea that special educational needs relate only to children with disabilities. Instead it highlights the fact that a range of vulnerability, such as poverty, ethnicity or language skills affect any child's ability to learn. Suffice to say that Malawi is one of the countries that practices inclusive education. This is in line with Kiuppis (2014) who stipulates that inclusive education is considered as a way to ensure that the needs of all children are being properly accommodated in Malawi.

In order to progress in the provision of Special Needs Education services, Malawi is signatory to a number of world declarations, and has put in place policies that are aimed at providing equal

educational opportunities to all learners. Such commitments include the pledge to the Salamanca Statement (1994) which advocates for inclusion of learners with disabilities in the mainstream education. The concept of inclusive education is inseparable with quality education. Quality education can only be achieved if the needs of all learners are addressed so that each and every learner is allowed an opportunity to succeed (Pinnock & Lewis, 2008). When learners with SEN are provided with appropriate support in an inclusive setting, they are able to develop a more positive self-concept (Schmidt. & Cagran. 2008). Inclusive education practices accept learners with all levels of SEN. Farrell et.al. (2007) comment that the educational opportunities of learners with SEN are maximized when these learners receive classroom support, their teachers have the relevant skills, and funding is sufficient in order to provide appropriate teaching and learning resources.

The National Policy on Special Needs Education outlines the major constraints to effective implementation of SNE and Inclusive education services in Malawi as lack of sufficient funding, environmental barriers, attitudinal barriers, limited capacity to train SNE teachers, the institutional structure and lack of coordination and partnership on SNE issues (SNE Policy 2007). It is therefore, obvious, that in order to achieve successful inclusive education, Malawi will need to address the critical challenges affecting SNE service at the grassroots levels. Many primary schools suffer from shortage of specialist teachers and lack of knowledge about special needs education among mainstream teachers. Lack of knowledge and skills as well as shortage of teaching facilities have negatively affected the delivery of quality education to children with diverse needs including those with SEN.

Based on the current status of SNE in Malawi and the introduction of Inclusive Education, few teachers are trained to provide additional support to learners with SEN. As such, most learners with disabilities find themselves in the mainstream classrooms where they are expected to excel without much additional educational support (Chavuta et al. 2008). Specialist teachers who at first were

teaching learners with SEN in special schools and separate classrooms or resource rooms are now helping mainstream teachers in supporting inclusive education (UNESCO, 2009). It is assumed that a lot of specialist teachers become supporting teachers who give advice, demonstrate teaching strategies and assist schools and families in implementing inclusive education in mainstream schools. In its report UNICEF (2014) stipulates that while the additional support from specialist teachers can be very valuable, it needs to be planned carefully to avoid increasing the stigma towards children with disabilities and the idea that children with SEN and disabilities need special care to be delivered by experts.

Although Malawi has been training specialist teachers through Montfort SNE College and deploying them in primary schools in Malawi, reports shows that the number of specialist teachers is not enough to cater for all schools and give the support they intend to give (Kamchedzera, 2015). According to my own observations on the availability of specialist teachers in primary schools, and also my own experience working in primary school, there are few specialist teachers working and supporting inclusive education. The findings of this research also reveal that there are not more than five specialist teachers in each zone who are expected to assist mainstream teachers in more than ten schools that make a zone. Furthermore, in other zones there are two or no specialist teacher at all. These few specialist teachers are expected to collaborate with mainstream teachers in providing support to learners with SEN and ensure inclusive education in these mainstream schools (Chavuta, 2008).

Providing quality education to all students in inclusive settings is perhaps the most challenging task, though it is the most important issue in education. In spite of the teachers working in challenging circumstances like large classes, inadequate infrastructure, lack of basic teaching and learning materials, high absenteeism-, inflexible policies and curricula, low salaries, etc.), they are working hard to accommodate all learners in their schools (UNICEF, 2013). However, many learners with

SEN still lack teachers who are adequately trained on how to collaborate and be able to assist learners with SEN to meet their needs. Pavlović & Šarić (2012) comment that good collaboration is a process that brings together people, ideas, systems and communications for the benefit of all learners. Promoting inclusion means stimulating discussion, encouraging positive attitudes and improving educational and social frameworks to cope with new demands in education structures and governance. It also involves improving inputs, processes and environments through collaboration among stakeholders to foster learning of the learner in his/her learning environment.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

In spite of the existence of the inclusive education policy in many countries that has compelled specialist and mainstream teachers to work together, there are reports that children with diverse needs including those with SEN are not adequately assisted due to the nature of collaboration practiced (UNESCO, 2009). In Malawi, much as the policy exists, there are no guidelines at school level to ensure smooth and full collaboration and overall implementation of the inclusive education policy. The problem is further worsened by overstretched resources, and yet collaboration practices between specialist and mainstream teachers have not yet been thoroughly researched on, in many developing countries including Malawi {European Agency for Special Needs Education, (2016), Chataika, Kamchedzera and Chisemphere, (2017)}. It is, therefore, against this background that this study was conducted to understand the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers and explore the extent to which that kind of collaboration supports the goals of inclusive education in primary schools in Malawi.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to understand the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers and how it impacts learners with Special Education Needs in primary schools in Malawi.

1.6 Aims and objective of the study

The general aim of the study was to investigate the nature of collaboration between specialist and main stream teachers and the extent to which such kind of collaboration supports the education of learners with SEN in mainstream primary schools in Malawi. Specifically, the study was guided by the following objectives, to:

- Describe the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in primary schools
- Analyze how the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers impacts learners with special education needs (SEN)
- Examine challenges facing the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in supporting inclusive education in primary schools
- Propose the best form of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers to better support learners with SEN in Malawian primary schools.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study is significant because of the following points:

- The study will assist mainstream primary school teachers to establish a positive working relationship with specialist teachers in order to make inclusive education a success.

- The findings of the study may be an eye opener to the curriculum developers to include special strategies, resources and other areas that would support the teaching of all learners including those with special education needs in primary schools in Malawi.
- Furthermore, this study will also alert the Ministry of Education Science and Technology in Malawi about the gaps in the implementation of the inclusive education policy and highlight challenges faced by teachers participating in inclusive education in mainstream primary schools.
- The findings of this study will assist the government to train more specialist teachers as well as mainstream primary school teachers in some best forms of collaboration in order to have knowledge and skills on how best to support learners with special education needs.
- It will also assist parents and the community at large to build confidence in what teachers are doing towards the education of their children, hence, more learners to attend school and be educated.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

There are many theories that influence the collaboration of professionals that can also be applicable to this study on the collaboration of specialist and mainstream teachers in supporting inclusive education in mainstream primary schools. However, this study chose to be guided by the 'Community of Practice theory' propounded by Lave and Wenger, (1991). Lave and Wenger define Community of Practice as a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic and who come together to fulfill the goals. The theory states that when the groups of people share a concern or interest in what they do, they learn to do it better because they interact regularly. According to Wenger and Wenger – Traynor (2015), the theory believes that by

developing the three elements, 'domain, community and practice', the Community of Practice can be established. When the group shares its concern (domain), and learn how to do better (practice) as the members interact regularly (community), then a community of practice can be established.

Wenger (2004) also explains that the domain of CoP constitutes the area of knowledge that brings the community together, gives it an identity and defines issues that members need to address. The community constitutes the group of people that pursue their interest through engagement in purposeful activities and meaningful discussions that would facilitate learning from and with each other. Finally, the practice, represents a shared repertoire of resources including experiences, stories, tools and processes of addressing any stumbling blocks the group may encounter along the way.

With respect to Community of Practice, McGregor (2003) suggests that teachers develop professional communities when they engage in concrete talk about teaching, and planning, researching and evaluating as a group. He avers that learning best occurs when teachers are involved in doing things together, for example joint planning of lessons and seeking colleagues' feedback on their day-to-day teaching.

In professional learning communities, collaboration can involve a range of activities that entail teachers working together in informal (unplanned) or more formal collaboration approaches. Therefore, this theory focuses much on sharing best practices and creating new knowledge to advance a domain of professional practice. Based on the aim and nature of this study, the researcher sees that the theory of Community of Practice is applicable because it invites both set of teachers to do their collaboration through joint activities, discussions, problem solving, information sharing and relationships building in order to meet the common purpose of serving learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms.

The Community of Practice theory is a little bit similar to Vygotsky's Constructivist Theory of Social Learning and development that states that knowledge is the result of social interaction and that it is a shared experience rather than individuals preserve (Prawat and Floden, 1994). However, Constructivism Social Theory does not seem appropriate for this study as it is a cognitive development/learning theory for young learners. By its very nature, collaboration involves social interaction. The ideas underlying Community of Practice theory is to have great potential of helping teachers learn from each other. The belief in Community of Practice Theory is that a strong community fosters interaction and encourages a willingness to share ideas. The practice is the specific focus which the community develops, shares and maintains its core of collective knowledge. Wenger and Wenger-Traynor (2015) as already stated above, stipulates that it is by developing the three elements of domain, community and practice that Community of Practice (CoP) can be established.

In this theory of Community of Practice, learning is assumed to be social and situated often occurring in informal contexts such as communities through interaction, communication, taking part and gaining access to different contexts. Therefore, this study takes learning as a process because it is not a one man's show but is shared whenever two or more people with unequal expertise are jointly accomplishing a task. Hence, if specialist teachers who have knowledge and skills on how best to support learners with special education needs work jointly with mainstream teachers who have little knowledge in supporting such learners, combining their experiences and expertise would result in learning taking place. This is so because in theory, according to Cook & Friend, (2006) and Gardener et al., (2009) collaboration between mainstream and specialist teachers is grounded in the idea that each teacher has a unique knowledge base and expertise such that combining both sets of expertise would result into successful collaboration outcomes. The study was interested in using this theory rather than the other theories which are also related to this study because in this theory most

interactions through collaboration are catered for. This theory, therefore, enabled the study to examine what would occur in the collaboration of specialist teachers and mainstream teachers in supporting inclusive education to make it a success in mainstream primary schools. The Community of Practice theory, invites specialists and mainstream teachers to learn how to do things better as both set of teachers interact regularly. The knowledge and ideas shared might have a great influence on inclusive education and how to assist learners with SEN. Using this theory, we can get specific areas of collaboration and how that leads to new knowledge on the part of the teacher.

The researcher believes that using the knowledge of Community of Practice theory in collaboration between both set of teachers in inclusive schools would help teachers to solve problems that would lead to new learning for all teachers and provide explanations of their actions to enhance inclusive education in primary schools. Through this theory, teachers would be able to plan, assess, write and look for teachable moments to provide encouragement and to assist learners according to their needs. This would make children become more skillful after receiving sufficient support as a result of the collaboration between the specialist and mainstream teachers. The Communication of Practice Theory has been used in understanding how interactive the two sets of teachers work and how they share their expertise between them as the theory encourages teachers to share their expertise in order to generate new ideas, reflect, evaluate their work and identify transitional knowledge to acquire based on their needs of assisting the learners effectively and efficiently. It also compels teachers to follow Problem – Solving approaches that would help individuals to take their own unique expertise and experiences to others and find solutions to the problems. As such, the theory is relevant and was applied in all areas of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers. However, the Community of Practice Theory has some weaknesses. Firstly, it depends on the participation of its members but does not have any formal control over its members (Gronn, 2003). Hence, it is quite likely that in some groups the result of training supported by different

communities of practice would be positive, while others may not progress. The second weakness is that the learning in communities of practice or output is informal and greatly remains implicit or hidden, hence, cannot be evaluated easily. In spite of the weaknesses of the Community of Practice theory highlighted above, I still used the theory. My view is that the weaknesses of this theory do not prevent teachers from being active participants, committed partners of the collaboration process and versatile or flexible agents of change in discharging their duties.

1.9 Delimitations of the Study

The research delimited itself by choosing Mulanje District only and not any other district because:

- Mulanje was a convenient district for the researcher financially speaking as she was bound to incur fewer costs on transport, accommodation and food during the period of data collection since that is where she is based. Other reasons were:
- Availability of specialist teachers who were also trained at Montfort Special Needs Education College in addition to their initial training as teachers on how to support learners with SEN and how to involve other stakeholders in supporting learners in the inclusive education system.
- Availability of learners with special education needs (SEN) in mainstream classes
- Many primary schools in the district practice inclusive education by combining learners with special education needs and normal students in mainstream classrooms as stated in the introduction above.

This study targeted public schools only and no private primary schools were involved. This was so because in most private learning institutions there are no specialist teachers who practice special needs education (SNE).

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter has given some background information about collaboration in the Malawi education system including a brief history of inclusive education in Malawi, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, aims and objectives of the study, theoretical framework and delimitation of the study.

1.11 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters which are organized as follows:

Chapter One: Background Information

This chapter provides the introduction and background of the study, statement of the problem, the research objectives, significant of the study, the theoretical Framework and delimitation of the study. It also includes a brief history of Inclusive Education in Malawi as well as key terms which have been used in this study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The chapter focuses on the review of related literature on Inclusive Education focusing mainly on collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in other countries, the meaning and nature of collaboration and challenges facing the collaboration between the specialist and mainstream teachers to enhance inclusive education in those countries.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter discusses the research paradigm, approach, design, area of the study, target population, demographic information of the participants, sampling technique used, data collection

methods and instruments, triangulation, trustworthiness and credibility, ethical considerations as well as limitations of the study.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The data is analysed using themes that were developed from the codes transcribed from the audio tapes which were used to collect data.

Chapter Five: Summary of Findings, Implications, Conclusion and Issues for Further Study

This is the last chapter of the dissertation. It summarises the main research findings of the study, and highlights their implications, presents the conclusion of the study and identifies issues for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review provides the background to the concept and practice of collaboration as applied in inclusive education. As such it focuses on the meaning of collaboration, nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers to enhance inclusive educational contexts, how the nature of collaboration negatively impacts learners with special education needs, challenges facing the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education and efforts to overcome challenges in collaboration as discussed in textbooks, journal articles and previous research projects that have been carried out on collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in other countries.

2.2 The meaning of Collaboration

Collaboration occurs when teachers of a learning community work together to increase learners' learning and achievements. According to UNESCO (2009), collaboration means purposefully building interpersonal relationships and working towards healthy interdependence which occurs when teachers are comfortably giving and receiving help without losing responsibility. Barton-Arwood and Jolivette (2011) define collaboration as ongoing process where teachers become involved in various educational phases that together facilitate the progress of the learners with special education needs. They continue to say that collaborative schools promote cooperative and relationships not only within the school but also between schools, among teachers and the whole community. Collaboration in education is seen as a legal mandate, best practice in teachers' mode

of operation and necessary for inclusion of children with special education needs (Hernandez, 2013). He also stipulates that the heart of inclusive education practice is a joint idea aimed at producing the necessary changes, transformations, improvements and new directions, as well as the outcomes representing the benefit for all learners involved in the education system through collaboration. Carter et al.(2009) and Robinson & Buly (2007) argue that this process is not simply achieved when two people are working together or spending time on a joint activity. It requires effort, attentiveness, training and sharing of resources, decision-making and responsibility of the outcomes. Collaboration involves cooperation, effective communication, shared problem solving, planning and finding solutions. It is the process for ensuring that all learners receive free, appropriate public education mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Mastropieri and Scruggs, (2014) also recommend that the establishment of excellent partnership among all involved working with students with disabilities as well as SEN is essential for constructive collaboration. Therefore, the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers is a social interaction during which joint activities are organized, efforts are joined, action coordinated, mutual help is provided and problems are solved together. This collaboration can happen when the teachers are planning education activities together such as writing lesson plans, schemes and records of work as well as during assessment of all learners. Therefore, it is unavoidable that in order to provide quality education to students with SEN, collaboration between the specialist and mainstream teachers working in primary schools is required. These professionals should coordinate their competences and experiences so that the child can learn more by tapping on the competencies of both teachers than if they had been working separately. This idea is in agreement with the research conducted by Alisauskas et al. (2011) which points out that working in partnership in assisting learners with SEN produces good results. According to certain studies such as those by Boer, Pili and Minnaert (2011), teachers have doubts that in ordinary classrooms where there is

the presence of students with special educational needs as such learners become barriers and the teaching suffers resulting into distractions and divided attention. In their study, Boer, Pili and Minnaert (2011), argue that the majority of teachers have negative views about inclusion and do not feel competent and confident enough to teach learners with various disabilities. Therefore, if most of the teachers do not feel competent and confident enough it is doubtful if meaningful collaboration between the two teachers exists. Hence, the aim of this study was to investigate the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools.

2.3 The Nature of Collaboration

The nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers usually represents a hierarchy in which less knowledgeable teachers receive assistance from the specialist teachers who are more knowledgeable in assisting learners with SEN. Specialist teachers were trained in special needs education and have knowledge on how to teach and assist learners with SEN. According to the scholarly literature such as that by Galkiene and Dudzinskiene, (2004), collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers offers an immediate form of sharing of knowledge and skills between the two sets of teachers. It is assumed that mainstream teachers are willing to implement the plans developed through the collaborative relationship and create opportunities for successful classroom performance among learners.

Smith and Leonard (2005) also state that in order to achieve the goal of inclusive education, teachers are required to work collaboratively within inclusive settings to strengthen academic performance of children with special education needs to close the gap between high and low achieving students. According to Lingo, Barton-Arwood, & Jolivette, (2011), the goal can be achieved through different forms or models of collaboration such as collaboration consultation, co-

teaching, peer coaching and Collaborative problem solving to mention a few. The different forms of collaboration are practiced in different countries according to what they see as most applicable to them to solve a particular challenge in their education system. It is not clear from policy pronouncements what collaboration model Malawi is using as is the case in other countries. For instance, in New Zealand, Thomson (2013) reports that the problem-solving model of collaboration has been adopted in that country and has assisted schools and teachers to develop and maintain inclusive classrooms. Through this model of collaboration, mainstream teachers in New Zealand are able to learn new skills and strategies from specialist teachers, and incorporate these strategies into their teaching repertoire when consultation has faded. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education in Jordan adopted the supportive resource program model in order to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools. Within this model, the agreement of both sets of teachers was that students with special education needs receive specialized instruction for short periods of time in the resource room (pull out system) while they spend the majority of their time in mainstream classes. The resource room is part of the placement process within mainstream schools and is considered a necessary place for children with SEN who are easily distracted in the comprehensive education settings like mainstream classrooms (Idol, 2006). In this model of service delivery, ongoing collaboration between specialist teachers and mainstream teachers is essential. Idol (2006) also emphasizes that both teachers are required to collaborate throughout in order to design the content of the individualized educational program (IEP), and to ensure that special education programs support the general education program. Therefore, a suitable collaboration model can enable specialist teachers to effectively support the mainstream teachers, and is likely to help support students with SEN to learn effectively and reach their potential while learning in inclusive classroom. The supportive resource program model of collaboration is characterized by co-teaching according to Idol (2006). Co-teaching is when effective teams of teachers work together as

equal partners in interactive relationships, each of them involved in all aspects of planning, teaching, assessment and classroom management. In this team-teaching, both teachers are responsible for planning and they share the instruction of all students (*refer figure 1*). According to Friend, (2008), the intent of co-teaching is to make it possible for students with disabilities to access the general curriculum while at the same time benefiting from specialized instructional strategies necessary to nurture their learning. Both sets of teachers: specialist and mainstream teachers may role-play, debate, simulate and model. Most scholarly research as stipulated by Friend (2008)note that team-teaching (co-teaching) requires that the co-teachers are able to web their teaching styles. Furthermore, in co-teaching, both professionals coordinate and deliver effective instruction to all learners in the classroom. Specifically, they plan and use unique and high-involvement instructional strategies to engage all students in ways that are not possible when only one teacher is present.

2.3.1 Consultation model of collaboration

According to Bridges, et al. (2011) consultation model of collaboration is the type of collaboration in which one set of teachers consults the other set to seek knowledge and skills to teach and assist learners with SEN in the mainstream classroom. The mainstream teacher is the primary individual to present lessons to the students and to implement learning strategies. He or she consults regularly with other professionals like specialist teachers and other professionals and families to acquire information that facilitates the learning of students with SEN. According to the explanation, the mainstream teachers are not expected to have the specific expertise to work with all children with SEN without support. This statement is supported by Bridges, et al., (2011),(Lee, <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>) as it has been explained that knowledgeable professionals like specialist teachers and family members are readily available to assist classroom teachers (mainstream teachers) to provide consultation as needed. This is vital because collaboration has

specialized information that is essential to the success of mainstream teachers in working with learners with SEN.

2.3.2 Problem– solving Model of Collaboration

According to the Program for International Student Assessment framework(PISA) 2015, collaborative problem-solving competency is the capacity of an individual to effectively engage in a process whereby two or more agents attempt to solve a problem by sharing the understanding and effort required to come to a solution and pooling their knowledge, skills and efforts to reach that solution. Therefore, in terms of specialist and mainstream teachers, the assumption is that both sets of teachers attempt to solve challenges of learners with SEN by sharing the understanding and effort required to come to a solution and merging their knowledge, skills and efforts to reach the needs of all learners. Both sets of teachers are expected to try to solve the problems of learners with SEN by planning instructions together like writing inclusive lesson plans and schemes together, preparation of teaching and assessment materials and as well as assessing learners with SEN together (*refer fig 1*).

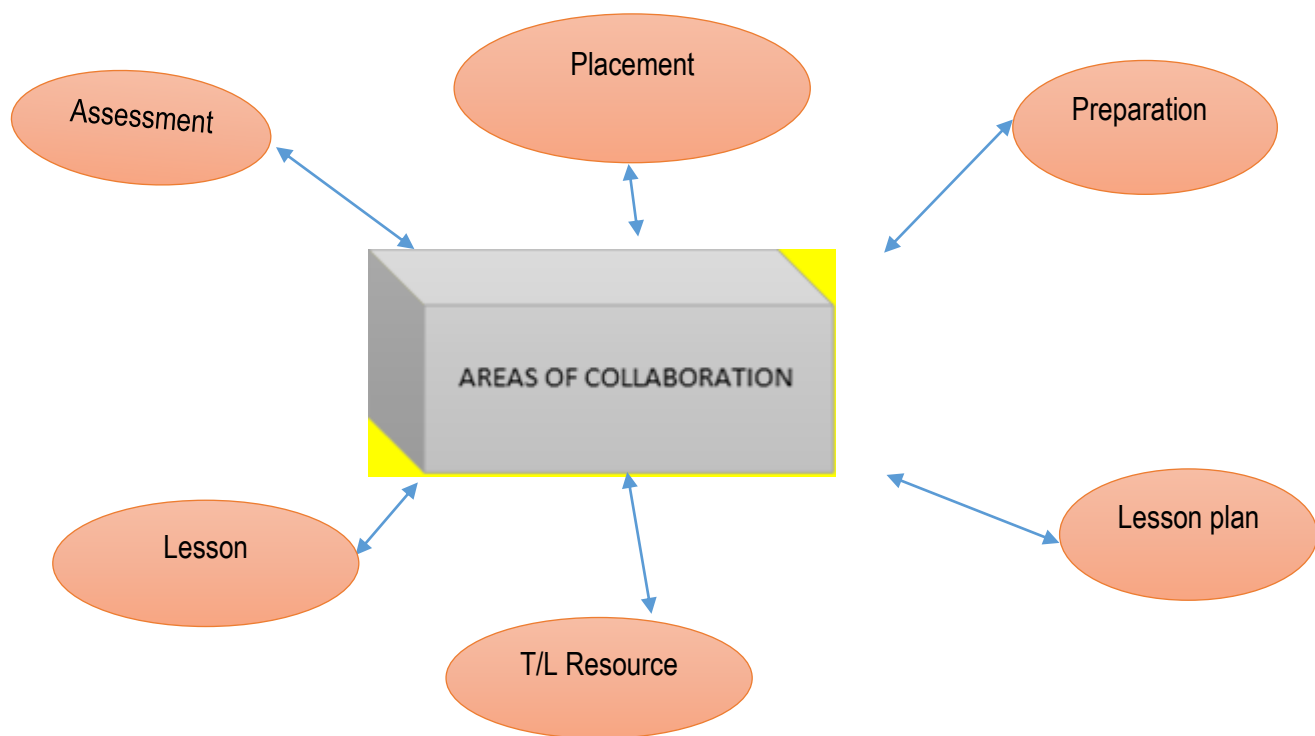


Figure 1: Areas of Collaboration. **Source:** Researcher

2.4 How the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers impacts learners with special education needs in inclusive education generally

Despite the emphasis on inclusive education, many challenges face its implementation. Studies show that teachers do not feel prepared to undertake responsibility of an inclusive classroom and often times they are not sure of what to expect socially (Nijhuis et al., 2007). The learning environment fails to support diverse categories of learners some of whom feel neglected hence they drop out from school. Nijhuis et al., (2007:196) argues that providing adequate care and education for children with disabilities in an inclusive context is necessary but it is a complex issue. Each child confronts health and education professionals with a diversity of individual problems in the physical,

psychological, social and educational domains. For example, according to the South African policy on the implementation of Inclusive Education (IE) as reported by Dobe (2010), the emphasis should be on social ecology community-based collaboration where by contextual factors and influences are investigated and taken into consideration to overcome barriers to learning. In order to provide holistic support within socio-ecological approach to inclusive education as opposed to individualistic intervention, all the influences, interactions and interrelationships are explored by players in the relevant systems working in collaborative partnerships (Swart and Pettipher, 2011). According to this research, specialist and mainstream teacher are the key players in collaboration. However, Sharpe and Hawes, (2003) argue that although there is such a partnership, there is also an increased pressure on all teachers to meet the needs of all learners in inclusive classrooms because of lack of knowledge of collaboration which negatively impacts the education of learners in inclusion.

Teachers and other education professionals support students in acquiring academic skills, as well as in developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students need to become caring and concerned citizens. As is stressed in *Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education* published by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education(2009:22), support structures that impact upon inclusive education practices are diverse and often involve a range of service professionals, approaches and working methods. According to Bagree and Lewis (2013:2) most teachers are often simply not trained or supported in collaboration and teach learners with SEN the way they see it fit and not according to the set procedures and guidelines. This makes these children among the most marginalised in terms of educational opportunity and attainment. National standards for teacher training can vary considerably between countries and are often inadequate. According to the same authors, teacher training for mainstream teachers also rarely

prepares teachers for working in diverse classrooms and in particular does not equip them with the confidence, knowledge and skills to effectively support learners with disabilities. This is possibly a key reason why so many children with disabilities remain out of school or are excluded from the learning process within the school. Bagree and Lewis (2013:4) further argue that if we are to reignite progress towards quality basic education (early childhood, primary and lower secondary schooling) for all, then regular teachers need to be prepared to meet the learning and participation needs of children with disabilities. To do this end, they need to be given appropriate initial training, ongoing training and professional development, and ongoing access to adequate high quality support and advice from specialist personnel. In agreement with the points above, Landsberg (2011) observe that educators in Swaziland simply dump the child into a regular education classroom with little support from teachers as they lack training and development while claiming that they are pursuing inclusive education. There are fears that the situation in Malawi is similar to that of Swaziland. Furthermore, other studies have revealed that although the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Singapore has introduced a weekly 1- hour time table for teachers to come together and discuss professional matters and find solutions to the challenges encountered, issues to do with inclusive education are avoided as to do so could be seen as another distraction from their core professional obligations. As a result, not much assistance is given to learners with SEN in that country, hence, impacting education of these learners negatively.

Lack of commitment to inclusive education in many countries raises questions about the required practices in inclusion. In Malawi, lack of clarity regarding how the collaboration should be done and also considering the large class sizes imply that haphazard and very little collaboration practices are followed that would otherwise help the teachers to shape the environment more suitably and support all learners to foster and sustain inclusive education in primary schools.

2.5 Challenges facing the collaboration of specialist teachers and mainstream teachers generally

The idea of collaboration is highly recognized and valued worldwide. However, reality check seems to tell a different story. According to scholarly literature, collaboration faces various challenges and constraints that limit its full implementation and leads to unsuccessful inclusive programs. Mtonga, (2012) argues that a change from teaching learners with special educational needs in special schools to teaching them together with other learners in ordinary schools presents as many opportunities as it does challenges. Having learners with special education needs in ordinary classrooms poses serious challenges regarding instructional practices as well as class management among others. In addition to what Mtonga cited above has pointed out, some of the challenges and constraints that hinder collaboration of both sets of teachers are discussed below:

2.5.1 Lack of Knowledge and Skills

The challenges teachers face in schools in supporting learners with SEN arise mainly due to lack of basic knowledge on special needs and inclusive education practices. According to Rouse (2010), most mainstream teachers in developing countries such as Botswana do not have the necessary skills and knowledge to collaborate and teach learners with SEN because they have not taken a special needs education course. Similarly, Eldar, Talmor and Wolf-Zukerman (2010) reported that well known challenges to successful inclusion practices in many countries include lack of knowledge. Therefore, the explanation above shows that the mainstream teachers demonstrate lack of knowledge about using some instructional strategies for teaching learners with SEN. Furthermore, Bagree and Lewis (2013:2) elaborate by asserting that teachers are often simply not trained or supported to teach children with SEN which makes these children among the most

marginalised in terms of educational opportunity and attainment. In the same vein, Wangari (2008) agree by saying that many teachers in mainstream schools do not feel adequately prepared to understand and cope with the multitude of demands required to handle learners with SEN because of lack of adequate and effective training.

Wangari (2008) stipulates that although national standards for teacher training can vary considerably among countries and are often inadequate, in reality, teacher training for mainstream teachers also rarely prepares them for working in diverse classroom environments and in particular does not equip them with the confidence, knowledge and skills to effectively support learners with SEN and disabilities. This is a key reason why so many children with disabilities remain out of school or are excluded from the learning process within school. Therefore, looking the explanation above in the same section, lack of teacher preparation for inclusive education and its practices is an equally pressing issue and one that will require targeting both pre-service and professional development concurrently. Wangari (2008) advises that in order for the implementation of inclusive education be successful through collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers, there is need to bridge the gaps between areas of expertise by creating collaborative exchange between both sets of teachers who have knowledge in special needs and the mainstream teachers known as syllabus teachers. However, Bagree and Lewis (2013:4) argue that if we are to reignite progress towards quality basic education for all, then mainstream teachers need to be prepared to meet the learning and participation needs of children with disabilities.

It has been observed that inclusive educational practices like collaboration may lead to more positive learning outcomes than those achieved in segregated settings (O'Rourke, 2014). Liasidou, (2015) points out in agreement that teachers with different professional specialisations play a central role in the implementation of inclusive education. To do this there is a need for teachers to be given appropriate initial training, ongoing training and professional development, and ongoing access to

adequate and high-quality support and advices from specialist personnel. Teachers need to be trained or oriented on how to collaborate and assist all learners in an inclusive classroom and define the potential of the individual learner. Idol (2006) stipulates that by participating in professional development, teachers would use wide-ranging corrective practices more effectively regardless of learner's diversity. In agreement to Idol stipulated, Weiner (2003) comment that more knowledge through professional development would also increase problem solving skills, allowing teachers to better reflect upon their practices, better imagination on accommodations and solutions, hence creating more effective collaboration. Therefore, giving both teachers the support they need (imparting knowledge), they will feel more comfortable and willing to participate in an inclusive classroom.

2.5.2 Hierarchical Relationship

The hierarchy of professionalism between specialist and mainstream teachers in the collaboration process may also become problematic in primary schools. Such barriers to productive and meaningful collaboration between both sets of teachers have been documented in literature. And one of the examples of problems to do with hierarchical relationship as a barrier to effective collaboration is when one set of the collaborators attempts to take the expert role and looks down upon the other set. In their study, Rens and Joosten (2014) found that some specialist teachers believed that they were the experts in special needs education as well as on collaboration with mainstream teachers yet they did not know much on how to collaborate. Their claim to expert status stems from the fact that they are closest to the students with SEN (Miltenienė and Venclovaite (2012). As a result, they can understand their needs best and suggest to other teachers the best teaching methods to be implemented in practice. The two scholars continue their appeal for specialist teachers to lead the collaborative teams because of their constant search for information

or educational opportunities for students with SEN and that experiences open to them naturally make them leaders among teachers in collaborative activities. On the other hand, the limited scope of experience which mainstream teachers have in teaching learners with SEN makes them apprentices hence their low status on the hierarchical relationship with expert (specialist) teachers. However, Miller and Hafner (2008) argue that no matter how experienced the collaborators are, collaboration activities are difficult and new on each occasion thereby casting the high status of expert teachers in doubt. In their explanation, they elaborated that when various partners decide to collaborate, it is always a complex and difficult process, particularly if the members are from fairly diverse parties. Nielsen et al. (2007) argue that as long as collaboration exists within a hierarchical organisational structure in which mainstream teachers are perceived to have less expertise, its success is likely to be limited. To enhance their knowledge and skills, teachers need to continually define new goals throughout their teaching life, hence they are always learning and can never claim the expert status whether as specialist or mainstream teachers. According to the Community of Practice Theory, mainstream teachers' prior experiences, passive learning and blind dependence on specialists usually hinder them from theorizing their own pedagogical knowledge and from moving up towards collaboration. Therefore, this study emphasizes that it is very important for both sets of teachers to know and understand clearly who does what and when, to understand their roles, to feel equality with other colleagues, to build on their competences and to provide flexible and considered support to learners.

In having common knowledge about and approach to the problems of their students, the collaboration between specialist teachers (experts) and mainstream teachers can help in a much more efficient way than if these teachers tackled the students' problems on their own. Differences can be turned into strength in the creative process on how to collaborate when both teachers are cooperatively focused to accomplish a particular goal. This idea is supported by Buysse, Sparkman

and Wesley (2003) as they agree that common experiences or knowledge is vital in supporting collaboration as members have a shared base of understanding of the teaching context and can focus their efforts at improving professional knowledge and student learning. The diversity and uniqueness of each individual teacher in a collaborative team result in a creative collaboration that could not be achieved by members individually. Therefore, teachers' relationships with the other teachers, their collective scope of experiences, availability of resources and other factors in collaboration process provide the pathway to successful achievement of inclusive education.

2.5.3 Teachers' large workloads / Pressure of work

Typically, the primary responsibility of mainstream teachers is to use their skills to instruct students in a curriculum dictated by the school system. On the other hand, the typical primary responsibility of specialist teachers is to provide instruction by adapting and developing materials to match the learning styles, strengths, and special education needs of each of their students. Miltenienė and Venclovaite (2012) observe that specialist teachers have expert status in the sense that they are closest to the students with SEN. As a result, they are capable of leading the collaborative teams because of their constant search for information or educational opportunities for students with SEN. Realistically, both sets of teachers have a part to play and it shows that every school day schedule is busy and fully occupied with teaching and administrative duties. This scenario does not allow allocation of time to schedule regular meetings (collaboration) between specialist teachers and mainstream teachers. Everyday both sets of teachers are loaded with teaching activities in addition to other duties like administrative tasks. Furthermore, the number of students per classroom in most schools makes the work of collaboration between both sets of teachers impossible. For example, the high number of classes allocated each day especially to specialist teachers who are few in

number in the zone, seems to be a big obstacle to effective collaboration between mainstream and specialist teachers. Mavuso (2015) highlights that overcrowded classes are a barrier to mainstream teachers to providing learning support to learners with SEN. Khan and Labal (2012) are in agreement with the statement highlighted above that overcrowded classrooms are a serious problem for teachers in that most of the mainstream teachers struggle to pay attention to each and every learner in their overcrowded classrooms. This makes it cumbersome for teachers to follow up on all the students and give the required attention to those students who need extra or individual help unless an appropriate model of collaboration is stipulated by government that takes into account all challenges associated with large class sizes and work overload of teachers. Otherwise the current scenario in most schools in developing countries makes it harder for teachers to allocate time to meet with each other and to effectively help learners with learning difficulties in schools. In addition, Gaad and Khan (2007) point out negative attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of students with SEN as the other problem in most primary schools globally. This could be related to the teachers' feeling that inclusion requires much more work in order to meet the needs of learners with SEN but with no additional monetary rewards. Therefore, there is a need for building more schools, deploying more teachers to decrease number of learners in mainstream classrooms and come up with better ways of motivating teachers in the wake of inclusive education and collaboration policy.

2.5.4 Lack of awareness of the importance of collaboration

Lack of awareness of the importance of collaboration to the specialist teachers as well as to mainstream teachers is also a great challenge. The teachers, especially the mainstream teachers, are not aware of the importance of collaboration and are unable to see how it is beneficial to the students and their progress. Vlachou, Didaskalou and Beliou, (2004) as well as Venianaki, and

Doulia (2013) in their studies note that lack of awareness of collaboration contexts between mainstream and specialist teachers is common because collaboration between mainstream and special education is not part of the teacher training curriculum. The two scholars also noted that mainstream teachers did not understand how collaborating with specialist teachers would actually help them and help the progress of their students in professional, social as well as academic development. This lack of knowledge about the benefits of collaboration was also pointed out by Yeo et al. (2014) who noted that inclusion and collaboration were quite new concepts in Singapore, hence teachers had limited knowledge about them. Increasing awareness of the importance of collaboration seems to be a pressing need in most developing countries and Malawi would be no exception.

2.6 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has provided an introduction to the issue of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in supporting inclusion in primary schools. It has explored how various scholars have navigated the area of collaboration, including the nature, benefits of and challenges to collaboration in various countries. In short, the chapter has highlighted scholarly literature from previous studies that have shed light on various aspects of collaboration and provided insights into how collaboration is done in other countries.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section focuses on the procedures which were followed when carrying out this study in order to answer the question: *'What is the nature and extent of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers and how does that support learners with SEN in mainstream primary schools?'*

A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study because such an approach is more acceptable for reflecting on the nature of the subject matter such as personal experiences of the research subjects (Diardina and Denzin, 2013). Furthermore, this chapter illustrates the research strategy, methods of collecting data and sampling methods used, trustworthiness and credibility as well as methods of data analysis. In addition, the chapter explains the delimitations of each method used.

3.2 Research paradigm

Research paradigm is an all-encompassing system of interrelated practices and it defines the nature of the enquiry. It clarifies how one views the constructs of social reality and knowledge, and gives the direction on how the researcher should go about uncovering knowledge of relationships between phenomena and social behavior (Lindsay, 2010). Mzumara (2016) defines a paradigm as a philosophical assumption or theoretical underpinnings of the research. In line with the foregoing, this study adopted the interpretive research paradigm because of its nature which is qualitative. In this regard, data was collected through social interaction with the participants in their natural

environments. Saunders et al. (2012) observe that by using that this type of paradigm, the researcher may understand issues well through interactions, observations and dialogues. Therefore, the interpretive paradigm appeared relevant to this study as it investigated experiences and views of head teachers, specialist teachers and mainstream teachers on the nature and extent of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers and how it assisted learners with SEN in primary schools.

The ontological position of interpretive paradigm is deliberated in terms of what is effective in a particular study. Effectiveness is viewed as establishing that the results work with respect to the specific problem that the researcher seeks resolution for (Mertens, 2005). It refers to what sort of things exist in the social world and assumptions about the form and nature of that social reality. Ontology is knowing the reality. It helps researchers to recognize how certain they can be about the nature and existence of objects they are researching on. In this paradigm, therefore, the objectives are considered of prime importance to find out the form and nature of social reality of the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in primary schools in enhancing inclusive education in Malawi.

Epistemology is the study of how one can prove the view point or carry out the study in order to prove one's view point which will contribute towards reality. It is concerned with the nature and knowledge and ways of knowing and learning about social reality (Interpretivism). Epistemology in the interpretive paradigm manifests in the relationship between the researcher and the participants and is determined by the methods used (Teddie and Tashakkori, 1998). The interpretive position assumes that the social world is constantly being constructed through group interactions and that social reality can be understood via social actors in meaning-making activities. Thus, the researcher in this study had a closer relationship with the participants because of the qualitative method of

research used. The adoption of interpretive paradigm therefore, helped this study to find out a lot of valuable information about the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers and how the nature and extent of that collaboration impacts learners with SEN in primary school.

3.3 Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach. A qualitative approach was selected based on the subject and environment of the study. The qualitative methodology was preferred as it is an approach that allows for the exploration of the meanings given to a problem by an individual or a group such as a collaborative group or its participants (Creswell, 2009). The study used the qualitative approach since it collected views, attitudes and opinions which could not be quantified. According to Gay and Airasian (2009) and Mugenda and Mugenda (2003:p.197), "Qualitative research is the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive, narrative and visual data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon more deeply and exhaustively"; It is the best approach in dealing with real people in real life situations which enables for the presentation of ideas more clearly than simply with abstract theories, statistics and principles. This means that the findings were not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification, but this was the kind of research that produced findings arrived at from real life settings where the phenomenon of interest sheds more light on natural and real things happening in the environment (Creswell, 2009).

3.4 The Research Design

In order for this study to produce findings from real life situations and in a natural setting, it chose to use a case study design. The research design is a plan, strategy and structure of an investigation which seeks to obtain the answers to research questions through an in-depth study or observation of the phenomenon (Kerlinger, 1986). Hepper (1992) defines a research design as a structure of an investigation which includes a set of plans and procedures that reduces errors and simultaneously

helps the researcher to obtain empirical evidence about isolated variables of interest. In other words, the design describes the procedures for conducting the study including, when, from whom, and under what conditions the data was collected. Based on the nature of the research topic, the case study design has been chosen because a case study allows the researcher to do an intensive investigation of the phenomenon within its real-life context (Patton, 1990). Ary, et al. (2002) define a case study as an in-depth study of a single unit such as an individual, organization or program. On his part, Schutt (2009) describes that a case study may be perceived as a setting of a group that the analyst treats as an integrated social unit that must be studied holistically and in its particularity. This means that a case study is a kind of research design where the researcher chooses a specific group or institution and carries out an intensive study to get more information and details as possible that is representative of all similar groups or institutions. According to Creswell (2009), a case study approach allows the researcher to identify human experiences through a small number of participants while the researcher sets aside personal experiences. The case study research design was chosen in this study to deeply understand the phenomenon that the participants had experienced, in this case, the process of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers. I as the researcher chose this design in order to arrive at a detailed and descriptive understanding of the research problem. A case study research design allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance or situation in order to identify the various interactive processes at work (Bell 1993). Further to that, a case study provides a unique example of real people in real life situations enabling the researcher to understand ideas more clearly than simply presenting them with abstract theories. Therefore, this design helped this study to get extremely detailed information which could be applied to other similar situations and groups of people in other settings of similar nature.

3.5 The Study Area

The study was conducted in Mulanje District and it was a case of two mainstream primary schools (the names withheld) in two zones and one school per zone. Mulanje District is found in the southern region of Malawi. The two schools were chosen because they have specialist teachers and are centers for learners with special education needs in particular and they practice inclusive education. The study focused on the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in supporting inclusive education so that it is a success in mainstream primary schools in Malawi.

3.6 Target Population

The target population is the total number of respondents in the total environment in the interest of the researcher (Kothari, 1993). The group to which the results of the study will apply is called a population (Ary et al., 2009). In this case, the target population comprised all specialist teachers, mainstream teachers and head teachers from the two selected primary schools. The mainstream teachers were only those who teach learners with special education needs (SEN).

3.6.1 Sample Size

According to Cohen et al. (2003) a sample is any group from which information is obtained. For the purpose of this research, 21 respondents were selected to participate in this study. The assumption was that one specialist teacher may collaborate with four mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education at a primary school. In the study, five specialist teachers were included, thus, two specialist teachers from school X and three specialist teachers from school Y. Therefore, the total number of teachers who were chosen to participate in this study were five specialist teachers and fourteen mainstream teachers who at the time of conducting this research were teaching learners with diverse needs and serving in collaborative processes with specialist teachers. These participants were selected based on their status as specialist or mainstream teachers serving in a

collaborative process and availability to be part of the study. Another criterion for selecting the participants was the position one held as an administrator (head teacher) which entailed that they were natural sources of rich information as stipulated by Merriam (2009). The head teachers were involved based on Merriam's (2009) principle since they are the overseers of the centres of learning (schools) and the assumption was that they were aware of the collaboration between the two sets of teachers at both schools. The target population consisted of both female and male teachers from different strata of the respondents who were admitted purposefully. An effort was made to include both sexes although gender was not considered as a big factor in the outcome of this study much as it may play a role.

3.6.2 Purposive Sampling Technique

The study used purposive sampling technique when choosing participants among teachers (specialist and mainstream teachers) as well as the head teachers where the research was conducted. According to Cohen, (2003), purposive sampling is a sampling method in which the researcher uses personal judgement to select a sample or participants to the study. This means that participants were selected in relation to the interest of the study. Creswell (2012) comments that purposive sampling in qualitative research means the manner in which researchers intentionally select individuals to learn from or understand a central phenomenon. Ndengu (2012) also contends that purposive technique is opted for based on the researcher's judgment of the individuals that would provide rich data but also ensures good representativeness of the population. The use of purposive sampling in this study ensured that participants with similar characteristics were picked. These are people that are information-rich on the topic. Their ability to share their experiences and perceptions on collaboration in enhancing inclusive education provided the requisite answers to the critical research question.

This kind of sampling enabled me the researcher to uphold the credibility of the data that may have been extracted from these different strata or groups of respondents. The researcher chose mainstream and specialist teachers as well as head teachers as respondents in the study based on certain issues which the study was interested in and also based on the research topic. The specialist teachers were chosen because they were trained on how to handle learners with SEN in addition to their initial training received in colleges. The researcher assumed that the specialist teachers have enough knowledge to work hand-in-hand with mainstream teachers in collaboration in enhancing inclusive education in mainstream classrooms. On their part, mainstream teachers were chosen in this study because they teach in mainstream classrooms and have been directed to teach and assist learners with SEN in the mainstream together with their peers without SEN. According to Bagree and Lewis (2013), mainstream teachers were not trained in how to teach learners with SEN, hence, have limited knowledge. Therefore, the research topic prompted the researcher to investigate their collaboration as they have different knowledge levels in assisting these learners with SEN in order to enhance inclusive education in mainstream classrooms in primary schools.

3.7 Demographic information of Respondents

The study has a sample size of 21 participants or respondents. The participants were drawn from the following population in both primary schools: head teachers, specialist teachers and mainstream teachers. The head teachers and specialist teachers were all interviewed individually according to their categories while focus group discussions were held for mainstream teachers and these were conducted in groups of four or five participants. These were backed up by observations in both schools. The table below shows the categories of respondents who were involved in this study.

Table 1: Demographic of participants

Category of participants	School A		School B		Total number of participants
	male	female	male	female	
Head teachers	1		1		2
Specialist teachers	2		1	2	5
Mainstream teachers	1	3	6	4	14
Total	4	3	8	6	21

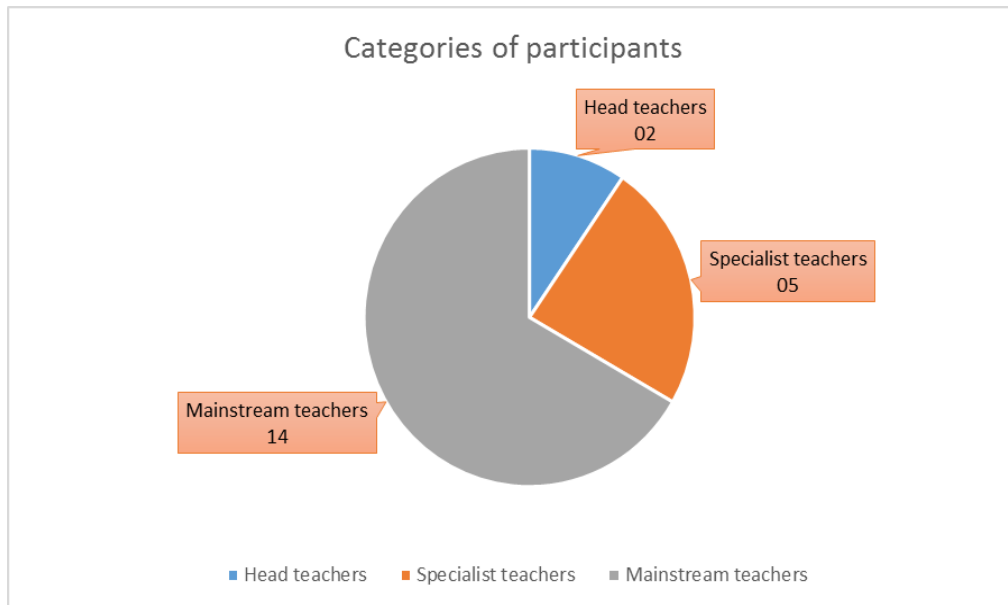


Figure 2: Categories of participants. Source: Researcher

Table 2: Participants by gender

School	Male	Female	Total
A	4	3	7
B	8	6	14
	12	9	21

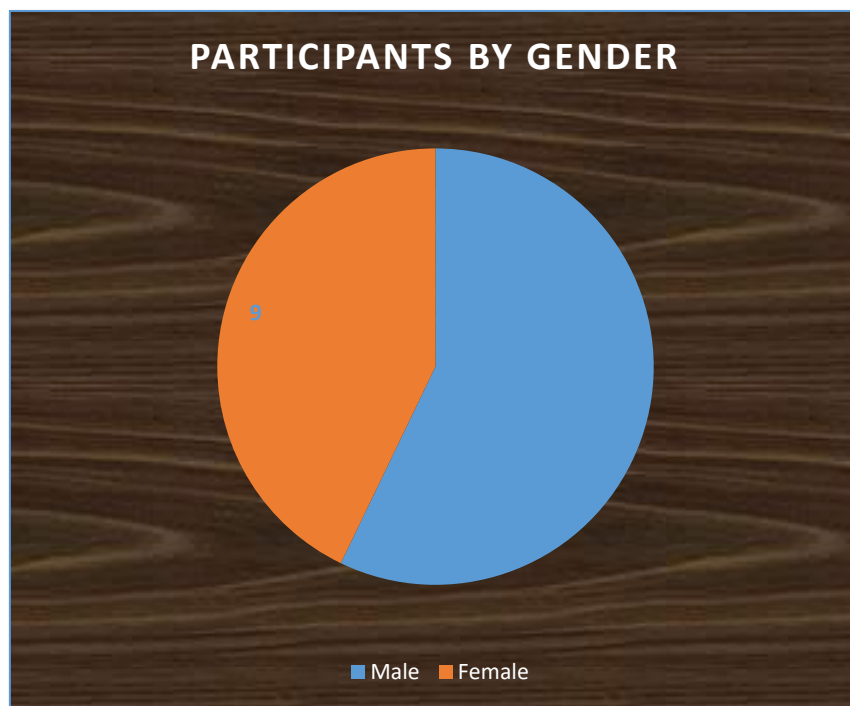


Figure 3: Participants by Gender. Source: Researcher

3.8 Data collection Methods and Instruments

The objective of this study was to investigate the nature and extent of collaboration between specialist teachers and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion were the main research methods of choice for this study. Observations were also done in order to investigate how the two sets of teachers collaborated in assisting each other in enhancing inclusion. According to Aina (2002) data collection instruments are the tools that a researcher uses to collect data for the research. For this study, the researcher used interview guide, focus group discussion guide and observation check list as instruments for gathering information during data collection for this study. These instruments which were used to gather information of this study have been further explained below:

3.8.1 Focus Group Discussion Guide

The study used a focus group discussion guide (see Appendix I) in which there were questions which were used for collecting data from the respondents. The questions were both open and close-ended to give respondents chances to answer the questions freely and express themselves to the best of their experiences. A list of possible probing questions were also asked depending on the feedback from the interviewees to further explore issues that were raised during the interview, to follow the interest of the interviewees, or to try to understand the meaning of the interviewee's statements. In addition, explanatory questions were also included in the interview as Bryman (2016) and Cohen et al. (2018) stipulate that these types of questions help to analyze the meanings expressed by the interviewees, and to give the interviewee an opportunity to confirm or disconfirm the researcher's understanding of the meanings expressed.

3.8.1.1 Focus Group Discussions

A focus group discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research method and data collection technique in which a selected group of people discuss a given topic or explores an issue in an in-depth manner (Creswell, 2014). The method aims at obtaining data from a purposively selected group of individuals and such data is mostly descriptive as it cannot be measured numerically. This study used a focus group discussion guide in which there were some questions on a piece of paper that were used to collect data from the respondents. The questions were both open and close-ended to give respondents chances to answer them freely and express themselves to the best of their experiences. Focus group discussion in this study was only used on mainstream teachers where they discussed how they collaborated with specialist teachers; the nature of the collaboration and what the common challenges encountered were. There were groups of five participants per focus group discussion but one group had four members which gave a total of three focus group discussions. The participants were encouraged to express their views and experiences freely and figure out how the challenges they were experiencing could be solved in order to enhance inclusive education in the mainstream classrooms.

3.8.2. An Interview Guide

An interview guide (see Appendix F, G and H) was used for interviewing specialist and head teachers so that the researcher would be able to best allocate and utilize the limited time to elicit the relevant information so as to keep track of the main topics and sub-topics of the study. According to Creswell, (2014) the interview guide is a series of questions written on paper which helps an interviewer to collect data from the respondents. The interview guide was structured in such a way that would feel natural for the participants because the questions were sequenced in such a way that would allow the conversation to flow naturally. The questions were both open and close-ended

to give respondents chances to express themselves freely when giving information without limitations. The focus group discussion guide was used because it is easy to collect data as the participants are free to express themselves as they discuss with other participants in their own environment. The interview guide was reviewed by my supervisor before it was used.

3.8.2.1 Interviews

According to Cohen, (2003) interviews are principal means of gathering information as they have a direct bearing on research objectives or research questions, and they involve gathering information through verbal interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Therefore, an interview is the exchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest. This study used face-to-face interviews and the interview guide (see section 3.9.1) was used as a tool for collecting data from the interviewees. The interviews were carried out at quiet, suitable places or locations free from distractions. Therefore, the use of interviews helped the researcher to compare her own observations and experiences with the answers from the respondents. At the same time, it allowed for better understanding of information since the researcher was able to probe the responses. Probing questions were also asked throughout the interviews as Creswell (2012) elaborates that it is recommended to ask participants to elaborate when they do not offer enough information, and ask them to clarify any vague responses given before. The face-to-face semi-structured interview technique was used in this study and it targeted all the specialist teachers and the head teachers from both schools. The interviews were conducted at individual bases and seven interviews were done for four days, two head teachers and five specialist teachers were interviewed and each respondent was taking at least twenty minutes per session. This method was chosen because it was one of the best ways of obtaining people's views and opinions freely. Another reason is that it allowed interaction between the researcher and the participants after having a rapport that

encouraged the participant to express his or views without a problem. The use of this method helped this study to collect detailed information from the small sample; explore more of the participant's views while interacting with the participants on a personal level (Sharp, 2012). Data that was collected in this study using interviews was from the specialist teachers and the head teachers.

3.8.3 An Observation Guide

An observation guide is a data collection instrument that states specific issues one will focus on as he or she carries out observations. It is an outline of the issues to be observed and the manner in the observer is going to go about observing the phenomenon. It is a tool that scaffolds and supports the observer to observe the practices or activities taking place in a natural setting. It allows the researcher to gather information and make judgments about what they should know in relation to the set objectives.

An observation guide helps to maintain the observer's focus and also gives the observer flexibility to reflect on the particular context associated with each issue being observed. Therefore, this observation guide helped this study to collect data when the specialist and mainstream teachers were demonstrating an activity related to the collaboration. Thus, both sets of teachers demonstrated how they collaborated in planning, assessing, lesson preparation as well as preparation of schemes of work.

3.8.3.1 Observations

An observation is a systematic data collection approach where researchers use all of their senses to examine people in their natural settings. According to Creswell (2003), one of the limitations of observation as a data collection method is that participants might act differently knowing that they are being observed, thus this could lead to lack of important information being collected as respondents act differently with the observer around. This study used a non-participant observation

approach which refers to conducting an observation without participating in the activities that one is observing (Leady and Bieber, 2011). The observation approach was used as a support method to the interviews and focus group discussion in this study with the aim of gaining clarity or understanding of the problems in detail. An observation in this study was used to document how specialist and mainstream teachers collaborated with each other in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools. The observation guide (Refer Appendix L) was used when collecting data. This method is respectable because it is the most direct means of studying people in their natural environment. Cohen et al (2011) add by saying that observation as a method of data collection offers the investigator the opportunity to gather “live data” from naturally occurring social situations. Therefore, observations were undertaken in order to get answers to the research questions by observing both sets of teachers in action in areas that may enhance inclusive education in primary schools. One of the objectives of this observation was to observe how both sets of teachers collaborate in sharing knowledge and experiences on how to plan schemes and activities, assess and teach learners with SEN in inclusive classrooms. It was therefore, relevant to use observation method in this research because the researcher had a chance to observe the behaviour of participants in the natural setting, hence, showing the trustworthiness and credibility of this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) also comment that observation method relies on a researcher's seeing and hearing things and at the same time recording these observations, rather than relying on abstracts. Therefore, through the observation approach, first-hand information on how both sets of teachers collaborate was collected. The researcher had an opportunity to see if there were barriers to their efforts to apply different collaborative strategies in enhancing inclusive education of learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms.

Piloting of data collection Instruments was not done as it was planned due to shortage of time as well as some problems that occurred beyond the control of the researcher.

3.9 Triangulation, Trustworthiness and Credibility

Creswell (2012) defines triangulation as the process of confirming the accuracy of data by using different individuals and methods of data collection. This was important because different methods and instruments collect information differently but the results needed by the researcher were the same. Therefore, for the researcher to use different methods and tools and obtain same results gives an indication that there was trustworthiness and credibility in the study. The claims made by one respondent (one teacher) or group of respondents (many teachers) was verified or disputed by data provided by the other respondent or other participants in the study. The use of different data collection methods helped the researcher to have different views from different respondents. This helped the researcher in ensuring the correctness of findings through the use of a variety of methods of data collection and samples on the same topic. Therefore, the use of interviews, focus group discussions and observations as data collection methods in this research helped me as a researcher to achieve triangulation in such a way that I had a chance of reviewing and relating the data collected from different methods to the research topic and find the truth which is on ground.

Evidence of quality of the study was presented to assure accuracy and credibility of the findings. According to Bryman (2012), Credibility addresses quality in a qualitative study and it ensures that the study measures what was actually intended to measure. In this study the main methods used to collect data were face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and observations on collaborative activities between specialists and mainstream teachers. Information regarding the teachers' perceptions contained in the interviews was compared and contrasted with information obtained from the focus group discussions and observations on collaborative activities. This provided a theme or

pattern to support the truthfulness of the data. The data derived from the observations and the focus group discussions helped to support or dispute the findings from the face-to-face interviews.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The concept of ethics in education research is increasingly becoming an important undertaking just as it is in the medical and other sensitive fields that require that an individual's privacy and rights to participate in studies are protected. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:273) observe that it may be difficult for a researcher to anticipate the potential ethical and political consequences of an interview. People today live in a highly sensitive political world where even academic studies of a nature like this one may be regarded as political suicide once one engages in it. People become sensitive and they may end up not freely participating in the study. Lindon (2015) believes that researchers in Social Sciences, Education and Psychology need to take ethics as a way of respecting research participants and therefore informed consent should be sought from all respondents.

Lindon (2015) and Mukherji & Albon (2015) stipulate that for people to be honest and provide honest answers, their willingness to participate in a study is vital. The need to explain the purpose of the study, procedures for data collection, right to withdraw, what respondents would be asked to do or not to do, who will have access to the data, are some of the important ethical considerations which Mukherji and Albon (2015) explain as features of informed consent (refer to appendices F, G and H).

In light of the above sentiments, ethical clearance was sought from Mzuzu University as well as the District Education Manager for Mulanje District prior to undertaking this study (refer appendices A and B). The participants were assured of confidentiality in the study. According to Merterns (2005), confidentiality is the protection of the privacy of the participants whereby the data is handled and reported without any personal association with the participants. This was achieved through anonymity whereby the researcher did not ask the participants to give their names. This is also the

reason why the participating schools are also being identified by labels of X and Y. Letters have also been used where specific names were not used in reporting participants' statements verbatim. Anonymity is the exclusion of any information that can uniquely identify the participants (Fraenkiel & Wallen, 2003; Mertens, 2005). Assuring participants of their anonymity is important because it makes them provide honest responses (Williman & Buckler, 2008). As a researcher I was responsible for conducting this study in a private and confidential manner and all the important ethical principles were observed. The study was responsible in making sure that ethical procedures met the highest standards to the protection of all participants who were assured that the collected information would be for academic purposes only and that a high level of confidentiality would be maintained. This is in line with Berg (2007) who states that the researcher's moral obligation of the promise of confidentiality has to be maintained to the best of his ability. To this end, all the participants were asked to sign an informed consent form after discussing it with the researcher. The consent form stated the terms of the research and stipulated measures that would be taken to protect the health and privacy of the participants and maintain the confidentiality of the data or the anonymity of its sources (refer appendices E, F and G). Furthermore, the participants were given a chance of withdrawing any time from the study if they wanted to. Lastly, the participants were informed in advance that the interviews would be voice-recorded and transcribed for analysis and were also assured that all the information obtained would be stored in a secure and protected manner for the duration of the entire study.

3.11 Limitation of the Study

The focus of the study was on two primary schools in Mulanje District. Some factors were found to limit the study. One of them was failure to include all primary schools that practice inclusion of learners with SEN in mainstream classes and have both sets of teachers. Mulanje District has more

than two schools that practice inclusion and have both sets of teachers, thus specialist and mainstream teachers who teach learners with SEN in their classrooms. Involving some specialist and mainstream teachers in other schools in addition to those involved in this study would have been ideal, but it would have required more time and resources than were available to the researcher of this study. Therefore, future research could include more participants and a larger sample.

3.12 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has discussed the research methodologies which were used to collect data in this study. The research utilized a qualitative approach with a case study design in order to better understand the phenomena. A qualitative approach is a reliable method to use because it allows a researcher to collect data while the participants are in their natural environment. Purposive sampling of participants was adopted in this study and the participants included specialist teachers, mainstream teachers and head teachers of both schools. Selection was based on the presence of learners with SEN, specialist teachers and mainstream teachers who practiced inclusive education in both primary schools. Interviews, focus group discussion and activity observation were the data collecting methods which were used.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis, Presentation and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and presentation of research findings obtained after data collection from two selected primary schools in Mulanje District. The findings were focused on answering the question: 'What is the nature and extent of collaboration between mainstream teachers and how well does it serve learners with SEN in mainstream primary schools?' The study was based on four specific objectives and these objectives were to:

- Identify the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in primary schools
- Describe how the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers impacts learners with special education needs (SEN)
- Examine challenges facing the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in supporting inclusive education in primary schools
- Propose the best form of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers to better support learners with SEN in Malawian primary schools.

4.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process for obtaining raw data and converting it into information useful for decision-making by users. Data is collected and analyzed to answer questions, test hypotheses or disprove theories. The data for this research was analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns or themes within the data

collected (Bryman, 2004). This method of thematic analysis was chosen by this study because it is flexible and a good method to unravel or loosen the surface of reality (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The first step in data analysis of this study was that audio recordings were re-played and listened to carefully before transcribing them (Ndengu, 2012). The recordings were transcribed because different authors argued that on qualitative research methodology, analysis should be done on data which is in textual form. Bryman, (2004) stipulates that transcription is a written translation of information that was recorded during interviews and focus group discussion. Then the transcripts were thoroughly compared with the recordings to ensure they were in pushbike with each other.

Secondly, data analysis of this research involved reading and re-reading the data in order to clearly understand, find the way through and make meaning of that data. This step was important in order to stay as close to the data as possible from initial collection right through to the drawing of final conclusions as observed by O'Leary (2004). During this step, data from each source (face - to - face interviews, focus group discussion and observation) was reviewed.

The next step was content analysis. This involved identifying from, or in, the data uniformities and differences in participants' responses to the research questions during all the data collection methods used in this study. All the data were exposed to the content analysis and as the consistencies and differences were being identified, codes and categories were developed.

From the content analysis, each data set was coded. Coding, according to Cohen et al. (2005) and Ndengu (2012) includes categorizing the raw data into descriptive units. That is, a descriptive code was provided to each data set. This was done by making sense of what the participant was saying. Similar data were then grouped together to form data categories. It was from these categories that themes started to emerge.

The final step involved was exposing the data to reasonable thematic analysis where common themes emerging from the categories of the data sets were arrived at. These themes were

interrelated to the categories of the data collected. These themes were compared to the research questions and therefore, those that were directly linked to the research questions formed the basis for discussions.

Therefore, from the above research objectives the themes presented below were developed. To develop these themes, the information gathered from the focus group discussion, observations and face-to-face interviews was interpreted and issues relevant to the aims of the study were extracted by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts. The themes that emerged have been outlined below:

- The nature of collaboration practiced by both sets of teachers.
- Teachers' knowledge of what collaboration entails.
- How the nature of collaboration impacts learners with SEN in the mainstream classrooms.
- Obstacles surrounding implementation of full collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers.
- Best practices that would overcome the challenges facing collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in primary schools.

The themes in this study are presented using brief extracts narrated by the participants. For the sake of anonymity, the participants' names and those for the schools that participated in this study have been omitted. The participants are presented in symbolic forms such as: "S1X" standing for "Specialist Teacher 1 School X", "M2X" means "Mainstream Teacher 2 School X", "HY" means "Head Teacher School Y" and so on and so forth.

4.3 Themes

4.3.1 The nature of collaboration practiced by both sets of teachers

The study was interested firstly to find out the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers to enhance inclusive education in both primary schools. In order to find more information and for triangulation sake, the question was posed to all the 21 respondents. In this section, three sub-questions were asked to the respondents: the first sub-question wanted the respondents to point out if there were learners with diverse needs as well as those with SEN in mainstream classrooms at the schools. The second sub-question required the respondents to specify if at all there was collaboration between the specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education at their schools. The third sub-question was asking the respondents to describe the nature of collaboration which took place between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in these schools.

Question: *Are there learners with special education needs in mainstream classrooms?*

Table 3: Availability of learners with SEN in mainstream primary school

School	Category of participants	Responses of participants				Total
		Yes	No	Not sure	No response	
X	Head teacher	1	-	-	-	1
	Specialist teachers	2	-	-	-	2
	Mainstream teachers	4	-	-	-	4
Total participants		7	-	-	-	7

Y						
	Head teacher	1	-	-	-	1
	Specialist teachers	3	-	-	-	3
	Mainstream teachers	10	-	-	-	10
Total participants		14				14
Categories of all participants and responses in the study						
School X and Y	Head teachers	2	-	-	-	2
	Specialist teachers	5	-	-	-	5
	Mainstream teachers	14	-	-	-	14
Total f participants		21				21

The researcher asked the opening questions of the study in relation to teachers' awareness of collaboration and the concept of inclusive education. This question was asked in the beginning for the purpose of establishing the connection between what participants already knew and the relationship of this knowledge to what the researcher intended to ask in later questions.

When asked whether there were learners with SEN in mainstream classroom, all the 21 participants responded confidently that there were a lot of them in mainstream classrooms. In their explanation they revealed that the learners were there in the mainstream classrooms and were taught alongside other learners without SEN. This was supported by other responses from those who participated as follows:

“Yeah, there are some learners with SEN in mainstream class if am not mistaken there are about 6 of them and others have just written their std.8 exams.” (S1X)

M2X:

“Yes, there are learners of different categories including those with Special education needs (SEN)”.

Another specialist from school Y commented:

“Yes, they are available and are taught together with other learners without SEN under mainstream teacher”.

M3Y:

“Yes, there are learners of different categories including those with Special needs”.

From their response to this question, this study confirmed that there were indeed learners with special education needs in mainstream classrooms in both schools. In addition, observations revealed that learners with SEN really existed in both schools. This assured me that the responded had provided true information about the availability of learners and also by hearing them discussing how they were assisting learners with SEN in mainstream classes among their peers without SEN. For example, I heard one mainstream teacher asking how he could write an inclusive lesson plan for all learners including those with SEN.

According to their explanations above, this study revealed that all the participant acknowledged that there were learners with special education needs in mainstream classrooms in both primary schools who were taught alongside their peers without SEN and were taught by mainstream teachers. From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that both schools are practicing what the policy of inclusive education on learners with SEN demands, that is, that primary schools should mix normal

students and those with SEN in the classroom. This can also be supported by the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education UNESCO (1994) that endorsed the idea of inclusive education and a new action framework was adopted with its guiding principles suggesting that ordinary primary schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. The conference encouraged governments to accommodate all children in mainstream schools regardless of their diverse needs (UNICEF, 2013). The sector policy on inclusive education was also developed to ensure that all learners are educated in the least restrictive education setting and in schools in their neighbourhood to the fullest extent possible. This policy paved the way for all children to learn and participate fully in the education system, particularly in the schools commonly referred to as mainstream schools. In addition, this policy aimed at creating a supporting learning environment which is accommodative and learner-centred, hence, the interest in the nature and extent of collaboration between the two sets of teachers comes in as the main focus of this study.

4.3.1.1 The Nature and Extent of Collaboration

With reference to the positive responses from all the participants in this study that there was collaboration between both sets of teachers in both schools and my own observations during data collection, this prompted me as a researcher to have a desire to know more about the nature of collaboration between both sets of teachers in primary schools. Therefore, the study was interested to find out the nature of collaboration that specialist teachers and mainstream teachers practiced at their schools in order to better assist learners with SEN in mainstream primary schools. When both sets of teachers were asked how they collaborated, almost all the participants said that collaboration was there but not enough because it was limited in scope and happened at a low level. The

information was collected from different respondents in the study through interviews, focus group discussion and observation.

When asked if at all collaboration existed between specialist and mainstream teachers to enhance inclusive education in their schools, all the 21 participants stated that there was collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers but it did not take place all the time. For triangulation sake, the question was asked to head teachers, mainstream and specialist teachers from both selected schools. The head teachers also explained that they did see mainstream teachers consulting specialist teachers to seek assistance and this shows that there was indeed collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers. The response was as outlined below:

“Aaaa! Not frequently the collaboration was done, what we do is to discuss with them on how to teach the learners and after some time when they have problems they do come and discuss with us. When there is time we do a follow up.”(S2X).

Here the participant (S2X) takes himself as the guide and expert of telling the mainstream teacher what to do not sharing expertise and do the work together to support the learners. When the participant was asked what was happening when they do a follow up, he explained that they wanted only to find out whether what they discussed with the concerned teacher could work and if not, the teacher was told to change the approach.

Looking at the responses from S2X that collaboration was not frequently done, one can conclude that the nature of collaboration which was practiced was not that of constant sharing of knowledge and skills but a situational one that depended on who had an issue to consult one another. In both schools studied in this research, it was observed that the Consultation Model of Collaboration was mostly used because mainstream teachers were not believed to have expertise to work with children with SEN without support. In addition, the study revealed that resource rooms were open and

running as the pull-out system of learning for learners with SEN was also practiced in both schools. Both sets of teachers consult each other when there is a problem that needs assistance from the other side as a result there is no constant sharing of knowledge. The study also revealed that specialist teachers take their full time in the resource room rather than doing co – teaching, sharing expertise to solve some challenges to assist learners with SEN who are found full time in mainstream classroom learning alongside with their friends as well as those who are at pull out system.

Scanty collaboration can also be confirmed through the response from one of the teachers below:

“Yes, collaboration is there but not enough because mainstream teachers only consult specialist at resource centre when there is a problem on how to assist these learners but the problem is that both specialist teachers specialized in the same field, learning difficulties.”

When the participant was asked what he was talking about by alleging that both sets of teachers specialised in the same field, the participant explained that ordinarily different specialist teachers would have specialized in teaching different categories of learners with SEN such as visual impairments, the deaf, the mentally disturbed and others but that was not the case. He further explained that the problem was that in mainstream classrooms there were learners with different categories as identified above while most specialist teachers specialised to teach learners who have learning difficulties only. As a result, specialist teachers could not assist the mainstream teachers much in order for them to assist all learners with SEN in the mainstream classrooms.

The mainstream teacher from school Y also responded:

There is collaboration because if we find a challenge on how to communicate with a learner, for example, we consult and they do assist

us by telling us to use different approaches to different learners according to type of needs of a particular learner.

Here, mainstream teachers take themselves as useless people in knowledge and skills in teaching learners with SEN in their own classrooms and rely only on consultation not sharing knowledge with specialist and working jointly with them to enhance inclusive education.

The participants were asked to explain more on how they collaborate although the teachers' areas of specialisation are different. The question was asked like this: Do you write schemes of work, prepare inclusive lesson plans as well as setting tests together? (*Refer figure 1*). In responding to this question, most of them explained that there was no such type of collaboration like writing schemes, preparing inclusive lesson plans and setting tests together. They explained that not all the time the work was done jointly among them apart from mainstream teachers consulting specialist teachers when there was a problem with learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms.

Based on the responses above, it was concluded that there was very little collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers to enhance inclusive education of learners with SEN in mainstream classroom. It was observed that the little that was done depended on conditional consultation between both sets of teachers as specialist teachers wait for mainstream teachers to come forward and seek assistance from them. On the other hand, mainstream teachers who are less knowledgeable on how to teach and assist learners with SEN consulted specialist teachers only when there was a problem. In his explanation, one teacher revealed that the specialist teachers did collaborate with mainstream teachers occasionally because they were not well trained on how to collaborate with mainstream teachers. This shows that not all mainstream teachers think that specialist teachers are champions at the mainstream school compared to themselves in assisting learners with SEN as they view them as having limited knowledge on collaboration and content. This is so because all specialist teachers are viewed as incapable of working in partnership or in

collaboration with mainstream teachers who teach different categories of learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms. The view stated above is in agreement with the study by Liphapang (2008) who pointed out that specialist teachers are competent enough to handle learners with special education needs. This means that specialist teachers have knowledge in handling and teaching learners with SEN but limited knowledge in collaboration to support inclusive education. This stresses that specialist teachers and mainstream teachers can only be competent enough when they undergo training in the relevant field of special needs education or course in collaboration and inclusive education. However, mainstream teachers also explained that specialist teachers most of the times tell them how to assist learners with SEN when problems arise and when there is a need for help. Another comment was also observed from other mainstream teachers who explained that there was collaboration because sometimes specialist teachers train them on how to teach and assist learners with SEN as well as how to communicate with learners especially those with hearing impairments as the study quoted:

“There is collaboration because sometimes specialist teachers train us on how to assist learners with SEN and how to communicate with them especially those with hearing impairment.”

The mainstream teachers here take the specialist teachers as experts in training and that they have more knowledge than them. They believe that each time they come across a challenge concerning learners with SEN the specialist teachers are the solutions to the problems. Looking at the responses above that explains that they do attend trainings conducted by specialist teachers about how to communicate and assist learners with special education needs, this means that specialist teachers train mainstream teachers once in a while. Through the findings and looking at the meaning of collaboration itself, this is incorrect because it creates a situation of teacher-pupil relationship instead of both sets of teachers working together as equal partners. In the actual sense

and according to literature, the role of specialist teachers is not to train mainstream teachers but to work jointly with them as equal partners. What is happening on the ground goes against the assumptions of Community of Practice Theory which articulates that collaboration between mainstream teachers and specialist teachers is grounded in the idea that each teacher has a unique knowledge base and expertise and that combining both sets of expertise would result into successful collaboration outcomes (Cook & Friend, 2006; Gardener et al., 2009). It also contradicts the Montfort Special Needs Education College curriculum (2016) which stipulates that the Diploma in Special Needs Education programme at Montfort Special Needs Education College prepares specialist teachers to deliver quality special needs education to learners with special educational needs. It equips them with adequate knowledge and skills to teach all students with special education needs at different levels in primary schools. This means that the specialist teachers were trained to teach learners not to train fellow teachers. When the mainstream teachers were asked how they were trained, most of them pointed out that specialist teachers just explained to them how to communicate with learners with hearing challenges and not practically working jointly with them to discuss, plan and do the activity together. This view has also been highlighted by M2Y above as he explained that both sets of teachers did not plan, assess and write or teach lessons jointly for the benefit of learners with SEN in mainstream classes. Other mainstream teachers also commented the same that they did not practically work jointly as a planned activity as M2Y explained above but through consultation.

When specialist teachers from both schools were asked to elaborate the reasons why they chose to train mainstream teachers instead of working jointly and actively with them, all of them explained that they thought that training them was one way of sharing knowledge and skills to them since both sets of teachers have no time to work jointly due to pressure of work. As a result, specialist teachers

were asked once a while to work as resource persons to train mainstream teachers during workshops in Teacher Development Centres (TDCs). Once again when the specialist teachers were asked how effective they saw the method of training mainstream teachers was, instead of working jointly with them, their explanation was that there was no much effectiveness because there was no much sharing of knowledge and skills which directed both of them to plan and assist the learners and that was the reason why mainstream teachers consulted them now and then to seek assistance from them. They also explained that this was happening because there were few specialist teachers against so many mainstream teachers at the school and the specialist teachers themselves had other workloads of teaching learners with severe and profound disabilities in the resource room who could not be much supported in mainstream classrooms because of their level of disabilities. Therefore, the statements made by M2Y and other participants in this study totally contradict the theoretical framework of this study, Community of Practice Theory by Lave and Wenger, (1991) that encourages people to work jointly and share their expertise.

Therefore, according to the findings of this study, although the mainstream teachers have limited knowledge on how to teach and assist all learners with SEN, through collaboration with the specialist teachers who know how to teach and assist learners with SEN, their knowledge would be expanded and sharpened then disseminated. Using Community of Practice Theory, in agreement with that by (Cook and Friend, (2006) and Gardener et al(2009) who have pointed out that collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers is grounded in the idea that each teacher has unique knowledge base and range of expertise such that by combining both expertise it would result in a successful process of collaboration. Therefore, schools should encourage both sets of teachers to work in partnership in order to share their expertise for the benefit of all learners including those with SEN in mainstream classrooms.

Galkiene, (2003); Miltenienė, (2005) and Mitchell, (2007) explain that collaboration process cannot be imagined without recognising equality and the importance of those who play roles in it. Without the willingness to learn from one another, and without any identification of the aims of education, without the joint planning of activities and problem solving, without assuming responsibility for the outcomes of joint activities and joint discussion of the efficiency of these activities, then collaborative effort is not possible.

Therefore, the nature of collaboration as revealed above, exposes the superior-inferior status of the two sets of actors in the course of playing their defined roles. This study therefore, managed to find out that the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers was scanty, incidental, situational and based on boss-junior relationship between specialist and mainstream teachers. Almost all the participants in the study in both schools revealed that the nature of collaboration was limited and was not conducive to adequately support learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms. In addition to what has been explained above, the findings of the study conclude that very little was planned in advance between specialist and mainstream teachers such as scheduled meetings where the two sides could carry out certain activities together in the area of writing schemes of work, lesson plan preparation, joint teaching and preparation of teaching and learning resources, and assessment. The collaboration between the two sets of teachers happens only when there is a problem. The mainstream teachers mostly consulted specialist teachers to seek assistance on how to teach and assist learners with SEN in their mainstream classes only when there was an issue to be solved while working with the children in mainstream classes. Furthermore, the study revealed that more than half of mainstream teachers did approach specialist teachers to seek advice on how to teach and assist learners with SEN. This shows that the nature of collaboration currently practiced in these schools leaves a lot of gaps which negatively impact learners with SEN.

Alisauskas (2002) argues that in scenarios of partial collaboration, mainstream teachers usually approach specialist teachers whenever they want to solve a problem pertaining to their students and their learning difficulties while in scenarios of full collaboration the two sets of teachers work together. However, when relating what is happening on the ground to the statement by Alisauskas above, the picture that emerges is that teachers do not work together in scenarios of full collaboration. What is obtaining on the ground in these schools contradicts what Ripley (2019) has asserted where he points out that collaboration is the process of merging knowledge and skills of all partners to meet the common goal and it better manifests where the people involved actually do things together. The findings also contradict the meaning of Community of Practice Theory which stipulates that knowledge is the result of social interaction and that it is a shared experience rather than individuals' preserve (Prawat and Floden, 1994). This study has found that when collaboration happens as a situational occurrence and is one-sided, such as where mainstream teachers mostly consult specialist teachers to get assisted in order to solve an issue, then meaningful collaboration cannot take place as it lacks the constant hands-on input from the other partner. What participants indicated as their form of collaboration (for example, S3Y and M3X in the same section above) was not a kind of collaboration that is needed if we are to effectively deliver inclusive education in mainstream Malawian primary schools and meaningfully assist learners with SEN. I as a researcher, I argue in this study that occasional consultations where mainstream teachers seek knowledge and skills from specialist teachers as is the case at the two sampled schools does not constitute collaboration in the real sense of the term and is not sufficient for teachers to effectively implement inclusive education in primary schools. Therefore, schools should orient, encourage and promote joint participation of both sets of teachers to ensure social, academic and emotional growth of learners with SEN in mainstream primary schools. It is further argued that both sets of teachers need to transform the aims of collaboration into learning experiences and plan and execute different

activities jointly in a real collaborative manner. The Problem-Solving Model of Collaboration can be the best strategy to enhance collaboration between both set of teachers in supporting inclusion in primary schools.

4.3.2 Teachers' Knowledge of What Collaboration Entails

The specialist teachers and mainstream teachers were asked questions that were aimed at finding out their level of awareness and knowledge about collaboration as an inclusive practice in supporting learners with SEN in mainstream class and what should be involved in its implementation. They were asked questions that focused on their knowledge regarding what collaboration practices involve in order to implement or support inclusive education of learners with special education needs in mainstream classrooms. When the teachers were asked if at all they knew what should be involved in collaboration and how they should collaborate to enhance the goals of inclusive education in their schools, their responses revealed that there was a gap in knowledge and there was a need for them to be assisted. Some responses were quoted as follows:

I don't have knowledge. Specialist teachers were trained for the learners with SEN. I was trained at TTC to teach learners who are normal so it is difficult for me to teach learners with SEN because they need special care and are difficult to understand them.

Another mainstream teacher from school Y also elaborated her concern as she lamented:

No knowledge at all on what to collaborate and how to collaborate. The government is just giving us pressure of work, why giving us learners with SEN yet they know that we were not trained for them?

Here, the mainstream teachers demonstrate that they lack knowledge of how to teach learners with SEN as well as how to collaborate with specialist teachers. These teachers described that although

the government through Ministry of Education posed that schools should incorporate learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms, they are not capable to teach and assist them effectively because they were not trained how to teach them. However, some participants stressed that it was not easy for them to collaborate with specialist teachers, teach and assist children with SEN without proper training for them to acquire knowledge and skills on how to collaborate and teach children with SEN in their classroom. In addition to what mainstream teachers elaborate that they have no knowledge in collaboration, specialist teachers as well demonstrate the same. This was observed when they answered that they did assist the mainstream teachers accordingly if at all they had problems. Here specialist teachers also demonstrated that they have limited knowledge in the collaboration with mainstream teachers because they were not trained or oriented to be together with mainstream teachers in planning, assessing, teaching as well as preparing schemes and lesson plans. Therefore, there is a need for District Education Managers as well as head teachers in both schools to organise orientation activities for both sets of teachers on how to collaborate using the recommended collaboration model like the Problem – Solving Model.

Despite the special care, special resources and being difficult to communicate with the learners in order to support their learning, the findings of this study revealed that both sets of teachers have no knowledge and skills on how to collaborate and assist learners in inclusive classes. For instance, one teacher from school X expressed himself as follows:

No knowledge on how to collaborate and most of the time I just do what the specialist teachers advised me to do, but most of the time it fails because I have more learners in my class,” (M6X).

“When they take the learners back to the resource room, our friends should assess the learners as experienced and we should also assess them using our experience too” (M2Y).

The above responses from (M6X, S3Y and M2Y) in this study revealed that the teachers were lacking specific practical skills and knowledge such as sign language in order to implement inclusive education in the regular schools. The teachers attributed their lack of skills and knowledge to the fact that they have either studied only a handful of courses at Teachers Training College or nothing at all about special education during their initial teacher training at TTCs. The study exposed limited training of mainstream teachers as well as specialist teachers on collaboration by the Ministry of Education. Adequate training is needed in order to ensure that the teachers gain knowledge about what the policy of collaboration is in relation to inclusive education of learners with SEN. Teachers struggle to implement the policy on their own which means that some strategies are not employed due to lack of knowledge and skills of the policy content. For example, specialist teachers were just trained on how to assess, adapt instructions, teach and assist learners with SEN during their Diploma course at Montfort Special Needs Education College. In addition, they were also trained on how to jointly work with parents of learners with SEN for example when developing an IEP of their children and assessing them. While mainstream teachers were trained in education methodology on how to teach learners without SEN. The element of collaboration as well as several aspects of inclusive education were not tackled hence, limited knowledge. This was observed through the responses of participants in which there was no mention of training on collaboration by both sets of teachers as captured below:

I don't have knowledge. Specialist teachers were trained for the learners with SEN. I was trained at TTC to teach learners who are normal so it is

difficult for me teach learners with SEN because they need special care and are difficult to understand them,”(M3Y).

“They sometimes tell us to consider how we mark exercises of a learner with this category by looking at the way they write and understand the meaning rather than making them to fail,” (M2X).

“We were trained how to teach and assist learners with SEN not what involved in collaboration and assist learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms”. (S2X)

Here the teachers complain that they lack knowledge on how to collaborate, teach and assist learners with SEN because during their initial training they were not trained on what and how to collaborate to enhance inclusive education and effectively assist learners with SEN. Referring to the responses above, the findings have revealed that the knowledge of both sets of teachers, (specialist and mainstream) on collaboration is limited. Through the responses from both set of teachers describing that they have limited knowledge of collaboration, it indicated that both sets of teachers did not know much about what collaboration involves and the aims of the collaboration policy. Although, it was assumed that specialist teachers are knowledgeable on how to teach and assist learners with SEN, through this study, it has been noted that these teachers do not know much on what should be involved in collaboration and how to collaborate with mainstream teachers to achieve the intended goals. These findings contradict with the view suggested by Alhassan, (2014) which stresses the fact that when teachers are educated, trained and supported in inclusive practices it helps to develop positive attitudes and behaviour toward learners with SEN. Reading from their responses and the observations made, it has been noted that some mainstream teachers

have shown some negative attitude towards assisting learners with SEN due to lack of knowledge about the goals of inclusive education. In a study conducted by Perold, Louw and Kleynhans (2010) established that there was substantial lack of knowledge among teachers in the area of collaboration and in supporting learners with SEN in an inclusive class. In that study, it was further explained that this lack of knowledge in collaboration was a matter of concern since teachers played a pivotal role in teaching learners with SEN. Here, the reflection is that the teachers lack guidance on the type of collaboration model to use. For example, specialist teachers have knowledge on how to teach and assist learners with SEN and are able to work jointly with mainstream teachers but they do not know what type of collaboration model could work in line with their situation. Through this study, it has been noted that instead of doing the activity of collaboration together in planning, writing, teaching and assessing learners as the collaboration policy requires, both sets of teachers were busy assessing each other and describing what they do when there were emerging issues and what they expected to be done after presenting the issues to the other party. In this regard, mainstream teachers described that most of the times they consulted specialist teachers and asked them what to do while specialist teachers described that since mainstream teachers had no knowledge, therefore, specialist teachers were there to train or orient them. The teachers' views and practices were in line with the findings from the study conducted by Abosi (2000) which concluded that the absence of enabling legislation on collaboration related to inclusive education remains a major obstacle impeding collaborative practices in primary schools in African countries in general. In his explanation, there was an urgent need for clear policy guidelines to harmonize efforts directed towards collaboration.

Subsequently, the findings of the study which showed that mainstream teachers as well as specialist teachers had limited knowledge in collaboration revealed that both sets of teachers did not

understand the concept and implications of collaboration as they apply to inclusive education. The study discovered that both sets of teachers misinterpreted their roles as a result they positioned themselves wrongly in the education system as trainers and trainees respectively when they were supposed to work as equal partners focusing on the same goal of ensuring a successful inclusive education to all learners under one roof regardless of their physical, social, mental and emotional condition. The teachers assumed that in collaboration, because of their differences in knowledge and skills, the role of one party was to ask questions or guidance while the other was to give answers or guidance. This thinking was noted in their responses as follows:

“We have responsibility because mainstream teachers have no knowledge to teach learners with SEN, as a result we are responsible to train them the basics of SNE for good communication with the learners, (S2X).

Specialist teachers give themselves a responsibility as trainers because they have knowledge on how to teach and assist learners with SEN. As a result, mainstream teachers rely on them as they show that they know nothing and cannot show and share what they know as professionals. This shows that there is lack of clarity of inclusive policy governing the collaboration of both sets of teachers by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. This can be seen in one of the mainstream teacher’s comment as she was quoted:

“We do collaborate when we approach them but not being together in planning, writing or teaching. They do tell us how to assist a learner when we raise a problem of a learner we encounter”.

Through my own observations as well as referring to the responses from the participants, it has been revealed that both sets of teachers lack knowledge about the real meaning of collaboration where their roles are to be clearly defined so that they should know what collaboration model to

follow, what to collaborate on and how to collaborate. Collaboration is supposed to be on everything ranging from planning to assessment whereby the two sets of teachers are supposed to sit down regularly to discuss what to do, carry out those activities, assess and share ideas on where to improve from the beginning of the school term to the end.

Miltenienė and Mauricienė (2010) as well as Eccleston (2010) emphasise that in collaboration, a very important role is played by the relationships between specialist and mainstream teachers and by the constructiveness of their interactions. Through this study, it has also been observed that the absence of clear policy guidelines has resulted in uncoordinated and disintegrated collaboration between the two sets of teachers. The specialist teachers' preparation program in Malawi appears inadequate to meet the needs of collaboration between the teachers to support inclusive education of learners with SEN in primary schools. The study as well as the observations done by the researcher on activities based on collaboration, revealed that being professional in special needs education does not mean that one is also an expert on collaboration since specialist teachers have displayed great ignorance on the matters of collaboration by acting as occasional trainers to mainstream teachers instead of working jointly with them on day-to-day basis as equal partners in the collaboration process. Eccleston (2010) as well as Florian & Rouse (2009) and Mittler, 2012) above explains clearly that all teachers, as key implementers of inclusive education policy, were supposed to have relevant skills and knowledge on how to practice collaboration if they are to address the needs of children with disability in mainstream classes. This kind of knowledge for teachers should be imparted to them during their initial teacher education before entering the teaching profession.

Accordingly, teachers in the two schools felt that they lacked the collaboration and inclusive skills and knowledge to enhance inclusive education and adequately assist learners with SEN in

mainstream classrooms. The responses from the teachers revealed that both sets of teachers have unrelated skills and knowledge to the demands of collaboration. This is in agreement with the findings of a study conducted by Watson (2009) who found that teachers had limited skills and knowledge on collaboration and consequently there were no full inclusive education practices in schools. However, the situation surrounding both sets of teachers corresponds to what Boer, Pili and Minnaert (2011) argue that the majority of mainstream teachers do not feel competent and confident enough to teach learners with various disabilities and have negative views about inclusive education. By evaluating the consultation collaboration model held by both sets of teachers, it is clear that specialist teachers feel they are there to be trainers of mainstream teachers in primary schools, and other stakeholders about special needs education. This aim contradicts with what the Diploma in Special Needs Education programme at Montfort SNE stipulates that it prepares specialist teachers to deliver quality special needs education to learners with special educational needs by equipping them with adequate knowledge and skills to teach all students with special education needs at different levels in primary schools. Therefore, the Ministry of Education does not give a mandate to specialist teachers to train mainstream teachers as part of the policy on inclusive education. What the study is suggesting is that specialist teachers are supposed to be planning, assessing, writing and teaching together in collaboration with mainstream teachers but not training them. What both sets of teachers are practicing here shows clearly that they lack awareness on what model of collaboration to follow and how to collaborate. Vickerman (2007) stipulates that it is important that educators become aware of policies that govern their work, something which seems to be lacking among both sets of teachers in the schools under study. Lack of clear government policy on collaboration, especially on collaboration is negatively affecting attainment of goals of inclusive education in these schools. As far as knowledge is concerned, it is important because it enables teachers to find ways of adjusting existing systems and practices to accommodate diversity.

Similarly, Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) comments that it is only due to existence of adequate knowledge about education policy that a significant shift in practice from isolated teaching to collaborating can be achieved so as to acknowledge students' equal rights and entitlement to mainstream education.

For the purpose of this study, in this section, participants were asked to elaborate how much collaboration was done between specialist teachers who are assumed as having knowledge in collaboration and special needs education, and mainstream teachers who are deemed as less knowledgeable in collaboration and in assisting learners with SEN. According to the findings, the table below displays how much collaboration was done at both schools where this research was conducted:

Table 4: The extent of collaboration between specialist teachers and mainstream teachers

Joint activities between specialist and mainstream teachers	School X	School Y
Preparation of schemes of work	Joint work done occasionally on schemes of work. Many mainstream teachers explained that they do such kind of collaboration through consultation.	More than half of participants responded that there was limited collaboration. Head teacher for school Y responded that the only form of collaboration he was aware of was where mainstream teachers

		occasionally consulted specialist teachers.
Preparation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment resources	No planned collaboration but it happens when mainstream teachers consult specialist teachers	No planned collaboration happens at the school. Mainstream teachers mostly consult specialist teachers when there is a problem concerning learners with SEN in mainstream classroom. <i>"No resources to accompany a learner when joining my class"</i> (M5).
Preparation of lesson plans, tests and exercises	"They tell us what to do if we consult the specialist teachers and I just do what the specialist teachers advised me to do, but most of the times it fails because I have more learners in my class." (M4)	No such type of collaboration. "What we do is to explain to mainstream teachers what to do with a learner while in mainstream class. "
Co-teaching between specialist and mainstream teachers	All mainstream teachers responded that there was no team teaching done but discuss together when the matter arise. Specialist1 1: <i>"We do team teaching but once in a while us specialist</i>	No collaboration and no team teaching is done except during consultation.

	<i>teachers teach in mainstream classroom where there are learners with SEN to demonstrate to mainstream teachers how to deliver a concept or content.”</i>	
Assessment or marking of exercises	No such type of collaboration takes place in plan but by chance	Not working together. When they take them back to resource room, our friends assess the learners as experienced and we should also assess them using our experience too.
Preparation of learners' progress reports	Specialist teachers do it for those in resource room and mainstream teachers do school reports for learners in mainstream classroom	No joint preparation of progress reports for learners with SEN as a planned activity but done through consultation.
Joint preparation of scheme of work, lesson plans and records of work	No joint preparation of schemes of work, records of work and lesson plans is done as a planned activity but through consultation.	No joint preparation of schemes of work, records of work and lesson plans is done but when mainstream teachers find problems, they do consult specialist teachers.

Here the specialist teachers and mainstream teachers do not work hand- in- hand and activities are not scheduled. In order to get more information and to show the trustworthiness of the study, the next question was posed to all the participants including the head teachers of both schools. The question was: *If there is collaboration at this school, to what extent is your collaboration? How much do you collaborate?* When all the specialist teachers were asked to elaborate the extent to which they collaborated with mainstream teachers, most of them revealed that collaboration was there but was very limited and happened to a very less extent. This means that the collaboration is done but not at the maximum level because its degree is very low. The statement is supported by the answers from some respondents quoted in this study as follows:

“Collaboration is not done at a larger scale by specialist teachers. We are not given a chance of sensitizing other teachers beyond this school like at zonal level”. (S3Y).

One of the mainstream teachers (M1X) revealed this:

“Collaboration at this school is done generally at limited pace”.

When the participants were asked if at all they collaborated though limited in some areas like writing schemes and inclusive lesson planning, conducting assessment or doing team teaching as one of collaboration practices in their schools, almost all the respondents revealed that in most of the areas which need collaboration things were done after consultation (refer to table1 above). The results on the extent of collaboration in other areas confirmed that collaboration between both groups of teachers was limited in scope and frequency. Carter et al. (2009) and Robison and Buly (2007) argue that the process of collaboration is not simply achieved when two people are working

together, linking with each other or spending time on a joint activity, it rather requires effort diligence, training, sharing, decision making and responsibility of the outcome.

This study through the findings in the table 1 above shows once again that both sets of teachers still do not understand the meaning of collaboration such as how to collaborate and also how to define the roles that each should play in that collaboration process. From the data collected in areas of collaboration, it appears that one section of the collaboration process made up of mainstream teachers is not party to the assessment process of learners with SEN which shows that it does not take responsibility of the assessment outcome of learners with SEN. In the same vein, specialist teachers are only concerned with assessment of learners with SEN and not with the rest of the activities involving students with SEN. This is very unfortunate. Moran (2007) in his study also examined the extent to which Initial Teacher Education (ITEP) Programmes contributed to the development of inclusive attitudes, values and practices. The majority of mainstream teachers in his study elaborated that they did not believe initial teacher education prepared student- teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms. Responses from most of the participants in this research were in agreement with the findings of Moran (2007) on the fact that most teachers were not trained in special needs education and on collaboration in relation to inclusive education during their initial teacher training programme at TTC. Some of the teachers explained that they were not trained in this field at Teachers Training Colleges (TTCs).As a result, there was inadequacy of responsibility on their part to assist learners with SEN.

“We have no knowledge in special needs education as well as how to collaborate. We mainstream teachers depend on consulting the specialist when a problem arises, and specialist teachers too do not do a follow-up to see how learners with SEN are performing,” (M3Y).

Here mainstream teachers show that they were the only ones consulting mainstream teachers because they lacked knowledge although follow-up was not done by specialist teachers to check learners' performance. According to the findings of this study that mainstream teachers have limited knowledge about special needs education as well as on how to collaborate, it shows that there are no inclusive education-related courses like collaboration in the initial teacher training programme in TTCs to ensure that all the teachers are aware of inclusive practices and how children with SEN are to be handled. Lack of knowledge on collaboration was noted when both sets of teachers were demonstrating their collaboration activities. It was observed that sometimes specialist teachers were diverting from the topic of discussion by accusing mainstream teachers of not including them in most workshops like National Reading Program (NRP). In other forums, mainstream teachers blamed specialist teachers for not including them in seminars and workshops on special needs education and also that the specialist teachers did not share special resources from resource rooms to mainstream classrooms. It was observed that specialist teachers were just telling mainstream teachers how they could write an inclusive lesson plan, adapt the content and teaching resources as well as teach the learners with SEN without planning and doing the work together. On the other hand, mainstream teachers were also asking specialist teachers how to assist learners with SEN after encountering a challenge without showing that they also had knowledge in other areas of planning and teaching all learners in the classroom which needed to be shared with the specialist teachers. This tendency contradicts with the findings of a study conducted by Cook & Friend, 2006; Gardener et al., 2009) that clarified that collaboration between mainstream teachers and specialist teachers is grounded in the idea that each set of teachers has a unique knowledge base and expertise such that combining both sets of expertise would result a successful collaboration outcome. It also contradicts with the study by Smith and Leonard (2005) who also commented that in order to achieve the goals of inclusive education, teachers are required to work collaboratively

within inclusive settings to strengthen academic performance of children with special education needs to close the gap between high and low achieving students.

Therefore, through the findings of this study it may be concluded that both sets of teachers need to know what should be achieved jointly and be given clear information on what can be solved collectively through collaboration. Both sets of teachers also need to be trained on how to collaborate through close sharing of knowledge for the benefit of learners with SEN.

4.3.3 How the nature of collaboration impacts learners with SEN in the mainstream classrooms

As regards this theme, the study wanted to find out how the nature of collaboration which is limited in scope and frequency affects learners with SEN. When the participants were asked, *“How does the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers negatively impact learners with Special Education Needs?”* Almost all the participants from both schools explained that this kind of collaboration negatively impacts learners with SEN at least in all areas of their learning process.

Firstly, HX pointed out:

“Their education yields poor results because there is no joint sharing of knowledge and skills between both sets of teachers which would otherwise help the mainstream teachers acquire knowledge which would help them to teach and assist learners with SEN to reach their full academic potentials,” (HX).

Lack of sharing of knowledge and skills between specialist and mainstream teachers negatively affects the learners' performance as it prevents them from benefiting from both sets of teachers.

When another teacher was asked to explain why he thought like this he explained that it was difficult for a learner to communicate effectively with the teacher who has no chance of learning new

knowledge and skills on how to collaborate, teach and assist learners with SEN. Furthermore, the researcher asked the same teacher to give more examples to back up his point. The teacher above, elaborated that there would be no recognition of a learner by the teacher, hence, no encouragement and assistance given to the learner to participate in educational activities. As a result, the learners become frustrated and that may lead to withdrawal from school.

So in short, according to the responses on how the limited collaboration impacts learners with SEN at classroom level, this particular teacher attributed the high withdrawal rate among learners with SEN to the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers. The teachers concluded with this statement below:

A learner is not interested to be taught in the environment where he or she is not accommodated and recognized by the teacher and peers of the same age and level. As a result, she or he leaves school.

Here teachers emphasize that the learners were negatively affected in such a way that they were not much recognised and assisted like their peers because of the way they were treated due to teachers' inability to work jointly, and lack of conducive environment created by mainstream teachers who have no knowledge and skills on how to assist learners with SEN. This study assumed that what was described by both sets of teachers was what was on ground and was true information since the researcher had no chance of observing lessons but other activities based on collaboration between both sets of professionals. This implies that as a result of poor collaboration, mainstream teachers approached learners as if all of them were learners without SEN. There was no real acknowledgement of the presence of learners with SEN by mainstream teachers and no adoption of special approaches when teaching learners with SEN alongside their peers who had no impairments. When the same question was also asked to other participants in this study, some of

the responses showed that there wasn't enough communication between the mainstream teacher and the learner so that there should be effective delivery of the content to the learner with SEN. As a result, the poor delivery of content affected the learner with SEN in such a way that he or she did not learn effectively as other learners did. As a result, he or she thought that he or she was deserted and marginalised. In short, the respondents attribute the marginalization of learners with SEN in mainstream classes to the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers as the study quoted:

When the nature of collaboration is not sound between both sets of teachers, learners with SEN do not receive recommended assistance from the teachers, hence, poor results in academic as well as social activities (HX).

What was obtained from this teacher's explanation above was that learners with SEN did not receive adequate assistance from teachers in the mainstream classroom due to the scanty nature of the collaboration which leads to poor results. Another teacher also echoed this idea by noting that:

"The learners are left behind academically because a mainstream teacher has limited knowledge on collaborating with the specialist teacher to get extra knowledge and assist the learner with SEN accordingly. He ignores these learners and assists other learners hence, leaving them behind as a result they do stay in the same class for many years than their peers." (M3Y).

Here it shows that the challenges encountered by the mainstream teacher such as limited knowledge on how to assist learners with SEN also affect the performance of the learner negatively because limited knowledge and, in extreme cases, no assistance is given to learners with SEN.

Based on the responses from the participants through the interviews and focus group discussion and observations done on what and how collaboration was done, it was possible to conclude that the nature of collaboration practiced by both sets of teachers negatively impacted learners with SEN. This is so because there was no time scheduled for the teachers to be together in planning schemes of work, writing inclusive lesson plans, developing teaching and learning resources, doing co-teaching and solving the problems together. This revealed that lack of togetherness by both sets of teachers in all collaborative activities was limiting the care given to learners with SEN. It was also limiting activities planned for them, hence, learners with SEN were not put at the centre of the learning and teaching process. For example, due to poor collaboration, no special teaching and learning materials were prepared for learners with SEN on regular basis which would make them understand the content easily. Besides, general ignorance on how to handle learners with SEN on the part of mainstream teachers also negatively impacted learners with SEN.

The findings of this study have revealed that lack of clarity on what collaboration model to follow, and the nature of collaboration (consultation model) practiced between specialist and mainstream teachers which was limited in scope contributed to poor academic results of learners with SEN. The study has further revealed that this was the case because teachers have limited knowledge on how to collaborate with others in enhancing inclusive education. This idea is in agreement with the findings of a study conducted by Swart and Pettipher (2011) which stipulates that collaboration is not something done to teachers but through them and with them, suggesting that teachers must be involved in collaboration and inclusive trainings and they should have the appropriate skills and knowledge to be able to make a contribution to collaboration and inclusive development. Margaritic (2010) also comments that meaningful collaboration in inclusive education is achieved by teamwork, exchange of experiences, joint teaching partnerships in schools and development of positive relationships between actors in the education process. Therefore, teachers should learn how to

work jointly by sharing their expertise and merging them to have positive outcomes in learners' performance.

4.3.4 Obstacles surrounding implementation of full collaboration between Specialist teachers and mainstream teachers

This objective tried to find out challenges that prevent full collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in primary schools. The sub- research question was: *What prevents teachers from fully collaborating in line with principles of inclusive education?* The study, through interviews, observations and focus group discussions, revealed that there are some challenges of various categories that prevented full collaboration of specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in mainstream classrooms. The views of some of the participants in this study were captured in the selected extracts below:

4.3.4.1 Lack of knowledge and skills in special needs education and in collaboration.

In order to achieve professional skills, one has to go via training. Through the findings of this study on lack of knowledge and skills in special needs and in collaboration, the majority of the main stream lamented that they were not trained in special education in preparation for inclusive education policy and its implementation in mainstream schools. However, they thought that given an opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills on collaboration and principles of inclusive education, they could make it. One participant among the mainstream teachers in a focus group discussion had this to say:

“No I don't have knowledge and skills, but am willing to be trained and to assist all learners with SEN”.

The participant here showed that although she lacked knowledge and skills, she had the willingness to assist learners with SEN hence, had a desire to be trained in order to get the required knowledge and skills in collaboration as well as teaching learners with SEN.

Despite their good will to accept inclusion of learners with special education needs in mainstream classes, mainstream teachers suffer considerably from lack of relevant knowledge and skills with which to handle such learners. Responses from most of the mainstream teachers revealed that these teachers have a problem of lack of knowledge and skills in supporting learners with SEN as a major barrier to effective implementation of the inclusive education policy. The study conducted by Ueno and Nakamwa (2011) supports the reality reported above. In their view, Japan's shortage of trained teachers in special needs education is a major challenge in the implementation of inclusive education policy in that country. The study stressed that teachers' knowledge of special needs education was found to be low although most of them showed high willingness in including learners with SEN in their classrooms. Therefore, this study understands that the challenge of lack of knowledge in special needs education among teachers in primary schools is universal. These findings resonate with those of a study by Florian and Rouse (2010) who found out that most mainstream teachers in developing countries such as Botswana do not believe that they have the skills and knowledge to teach learners with SEN because they have not taken a special needs education course. Some mainstream teachers in this study pointed out that most the times there was poor communication between them and learners with SEN. For instance, if a class had a learner with hearing impairment, the teacher tended to ignore such a learner because he or she did not have the relevant communication skills. The above information was supported through a response from one of the mainstream teachers at school X as she pointed out:

I don't have Knowledge to assist these learners with SEN and most of times we don't recognise them which is a big challenge too.

Here the respondent ignores learners with SEN because he thinks that he cannot assist them because he lacks relevant knowledge and skills. When asked if they had knowledge on how to teach and handle learners with SEN, mainstream complained that they did not know how to teach such learners in an inclusive classroom. In their explanation, they revealed that they were not trained to teach learners with SEN but those who are normal. Their concern was that during their initial teacher training the special needs education course was not included, hence, no knowledge and skills. At the moment they do not feel motivated and at ease to work with specialist teachers because the knowledge and skills gap between the two sides is very big. Scholarly literature from the Arab region by Bradshaw (2009) had similar concerns and suggested that mainstream teachers in the United Arab Emirates need pre and in- service training in order to foster collaborative practices and achieve the goals of inclusive education for students with special needs education needs. This concern was similarly expressed by a number of participants in my study as follows:

"I have no knowledge on how to teach these learners. Specialist teachers have the knowledge and skills because they were trained at Montfort College. I don't know sign language so I just include them because of the policy of inclusive education. So how do you expect me to collaborate with them when we are two different teachers in terms of our knowledge and skills of teaching?"

The sentiment above was also expressed by one of the mainstream teachers from school X. Another teacher from the same school also added his voice during the discussion:

I don't have knowledge. Specialist teachers were trained for the learners with SEN. I was trained at TTC to teach learners who are normal so it is difficult for

me to teach learners with SEN because they need special care and are difficult to understand. It is also very difficult for me to collaborate with them.

A mainstream teacher from school Y also described her concern of lack of knowledge in special needs education as a barrier to collaboration with specialist teachers as outlined below:

*I don't have knowledge. In my case the learner with SEN just climb windows in class so I only take him near me and scare him, **aaa, iwe!** for easy control. I don't take the issue to specialist teachers because we are two different sets of teachers.*

The teachers quoted above complained that due to lack of knowledge and skills on how to teach and assist learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms, not much effort was made to assist the learners. As a result, they saw no need to collaborate with the specialist teachers but scaring off the learners in order to accommodate them as the right solution. Therefore, this type of treatment and behaviour brings a challenge to the learners as they feel ignored hence, drop out from school.

Using the teachers' responses as the findings of this study that specialist have limited knowledge on collaboration, it may be concluded that although specialist teachers were trained on how to teach and assist learners with SEN, their knowledge about collaboration was limited because they were not trained on how to collaborate with mainstream teachers. This would be overcome by using the Problem-Solving Model of Collaboration which would compel them to work jointly. Therefore, this emphasizes that lack of knowledge and use of wrong model as obstacles to implementation of meaningful collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers that would lead to effective assistance rendered to learners with SEN.

When mainstream teachers were also asked if they had the skills and knowledge on how to collaborate with specialist teachers, all the fourteen from both primary schools responded that they did not have the knowledge and skills on collaboration related to the dictates of inclusive education. In their explanation, they stated that they experienced difficulties in communicating with their partners (specialist teachers) as they felt that they had limited or no knowledge on how to work with them. Therefore, this emphasizes that inadequate knowledge of collaboration is an obstacle to full implementation of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers. This is so because it has been observed that both sets of teachers were not trained on how to collaborate in relation to inclusive education. This also is in agreement with the study conducted by Vlachou, Didaskalou and Beliou, (2004) as well as Venianaki, and Doulia (2013) in which they specify that lack of awareness of collaboration context between mainstream and special education teachers is a crucial issue in the Greek education system because preparation for collaboration of mainstream and special education teachers is not part of teacher training program in colleges and collaboration does not feature on primary schools master timetables. Similarly, most of the mainstream teachers in this study lamented that they just did what the specialist teachers advised them to do on how to teach learners with SEN. On the other hand, the specialist teachers also just advised the mainstream teachers on how to teach and assist the learners without the two sides doing the work together. Therefore, the absence of joint activities reveals that there is no knowledge exchange between the two sets of teachers because there is no understanding of the meaning of collaboration hence it is a challenge to the teachers as well as learners with SEN. Furthermore, a specialist teacher from school Y explained what he thought about collaboration in relation to inclusive education of learners with SEN:

To me this inclusive education is not yet started because in my understanding, when inclusive education starts, all special schools as well as resource rooms will be closed and all learners with diverse needs as well as those with SEN will be taught in mainstream class rooms. I hope the government will introduce it in the near future.

Here the specialist teacher did not believe that there was inclusive education taking place and that he was responsible for taking a role as a collaborator in the system. He did not understand the meaning of inclusive education because he was still working with the learners with SEN in a resource room. When one specialist teacher was asked why he held that there was no collaboration taking place, he elaborated that as far as he was concerned, inclusive education had not yet started. He insisted that he was not told by officials to stop working in the resource room and instead start working hand-in-hand with mainstream teachers to enhance inclusive education. According to the statements above specialist teachers still spend most of their time in the resource room instead of closing the resource room and joining the mainstream teacher at the mainstream classroom as his or her new duty station where he or she is expected to work mutually with the mainstream teacher every working day. The specialist teacher seems to be nervous to fully collaborate with mainstream teacher by sticking to the resource room and this is a huge barrier to full collaboration. This also demonstrates that the teachers were not educated on the real meaning of collaboration and how to work with mainstream teachers in line with the inclusive education policy. In addition, the teachers were not told what would happen to the resource rooms whether to close them or not. Therefore, this reveals that there is lack of clarity on collaboration policy whether the teachers should use a collaboration model which advocates keeping the resource room open and running or other collaboration models. This study has revealed that lack of clarity of policy brings confusion in

understanding which model exactly the Malawi government has adopted to ensure the success of inclusive education in primary schools. As a result, both sets of teachers including the one quoted above have no idea regarding the model of collaboration they are following because it seems every individual is just following anything that is commended to him or her or as he or she sees fit. The resource room, according to my understanding of inclusive education of learners with SEN, is supposed to be used for remedial purposes only and not full teaching by specialist teachers (*refer 2.3, paragraph 2*), but this does not seem to be the case. The findings of this study are that specialist teachers are working full time at the resource room although they know clearly that some learners with SEN who are included in the mainstream classrooms need their assistance. For example, at school Y, there are 3 specialist teachers and the study revealed that all of them are teaching in one resource room and have no activity to share with mainstream teachers in mainstream classrooms.

This scenario highlighted above reveals that since the introduction of the inclusive education policy in primary schools in Malawi, both sets of teachers were not oriented or trained on how to work in collaboration with each other on such things as content and skill sharing, the status of the resource room, how the two could jointly support learners with SEN in planning, assessing and teaching jointly among others. Through the responses from the mainstream teacher from school Y above in the same section and my own observations, it may be concluded that the teachers did not know what was meant by collaboration and how it was related to inclusion. What the study observed was that both sets of teachers needed to be oriented on how to collaborate and on the goals and principles of inclusive education. This argument is supported by a study conducted by Yeo et al. (2014) which similarly concluded that the first pre-requisite is that both sets of teachers (the specialist and mainstream teachers) should have thorough awareness of inclusive practices like

collaboration. They argue that inclusive education is a relatively new phenomenon in developing countries such that it cannot be taken for granted that all teachers knew what it entails and what is required. Barton and Armstrong (2011) similarly insist that the success or failure of the inclusive education policy hinges on how teachers interpret and understand the concept of inclusion as that understanding affects its execution. In agreement with the statements stipulated by Yeo et al. (2014), Florian (2000) also comments that knowledge is required to effectively implement these collaboration practices as skills and ideas are required to make adaptations to meet individual needs. Therefore, through this study it was observed that lack of knowledge of the policy of inclusion and the way teachers could work collaboratively was a big factor to collaboration, hence, brings a challenge to inclusive education system.

4.3.4.2 Challenges related to teachers' behaviours and attitudes towards one another

4.3.4.2.1 Hierarchical Relationship (feelings of Superiority and inferiority) between the two sets of teachers

The study looked at how the two sets of teachers worked together in collaboration or related with each other to enhance inclusive education in primary schools. Previous studies have stipulated that specialist teachers have knowledge and skills on how to teach and assist learners with SEN and would be able to support mainstream teachers in inclusive education through collaboration (UNESCO, 2009, and UNICEF, 2014). On the other hand, mainstream teachers have been said to have limited or no knowledge and skills in teaching and assisting learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms because they were not specially trained for that. However, the Community of Practice Theory argues that collaboration between mainstream teachers and specialist teachers is grounded

in the idea that each teacher has a unique knowledge base and expertise and combining both sets of expertise would result in successful collaboration outcomes (Cook & Friend, 2006; Gardener et al., 2009). The study, therefore, wanted to find out how the two sets of teachers worked together.

When specialist teachers were asked how they collaborated and worked with mainstream teachers in supporting inclusive education in particular learners with SEN, many of them stated that they were there to train mainstream teachers on the basics of special education because they had no knowledge in this field. One of the specialist teachers from school X was quoted during the interviews as he said:

We have responsibility because mainstream teachers have no knowledge to teach learners with SEN. As a result, we are duty bound to train them on the basics of SNE for good communication with the learners.

Another specialist teacher from the same school also expressed a similar sentiment as follows:

If at all they have problems, they do come to us and we do assist them accordingly. We do assist mainstream teachers after they consult us and tell us their challenges.

At this point, specialist teachers take themselves as bosses or experts over their friends, mainstream teachers. They don't show the spirit of working jointly with mainstream teachers but waiting on mainstream teachers to consult them and they tell mainstream what to do.

On the same question on how they collaborated, some participants were quoted as follows:

"Specialist teachers have knowledge and skills because they were trained at Montfort College. I don't know why they gave me these learners," (M3X)

The teacher above (M3X) expressed inferiority complex in teaching learners with SEN because she did not go for SNE training course or orientation on how to teach them. Another mainstream teacher pointed out the problem of lack of confidence as she stated that she sometimes wished specialist teachers taught her the meanings of different gestures or sign language used to communicate with learners who are deaf. Therefore, through the findings of this study, it has been revealed that both sets of teachers define their roles in the collaboration according to their respective knowledge and experiences. It has been noted that mainstream teachers look at specialist teachers as their bosses because they were trained in special needs education, hence assuming that they know everything in the collaboration process and in supporting inclusion. This view is supported by the response quoted from one of the mainstream teachers (M4Y) during a focus group discussion as she pointed out thus:

When our friends give us a learner with SEN they must also provide resources that can attract the interest of that learner. But that issue is not there.

Conversely, specialist teachers, under-rate mainstream teachers that they have no knowledge and give themselves a big role to train them about collaboration in relation to inclusive education of learners with SEN in mainstream classes. This is contrary to the spirit of collaboration. The findings of this study (refer to the teachers' responses in the same section above) and from my own observations, it has been revealed that instead of doing the activity of collaboration together such as planning, assessing writing and teaching to assist learners with SEN, both sets of teachers were busy assessing each other and describing who did what due to differences in knowledge and skills. This behaviour is a big challenge because it undermines the spirit of togetherness among teachers. AsRens and Joosten (2014) argue, poor interpersonal relationships between the two sets of teachers can cause a lot of stress and lead to poor working conditions and results in collaboration. According to responses from the participant above (M4X and M4Y), for example, the way teachers

related with others cannot make them trust and respect each other and promote the spirit of team work. When some mainstream teachers were asked if the relationship of working as a team was there between them and specialist teachers, they disclosed that specialist teachers were not willing to share what they knew regarding how to handle learners with SEN. This was a big challenge to the collaboration process.

4.3.4.2.2 Negative attitudes towards working with specialist teachers and learners with SEN.

Negative attitude of some mainstream teachers towards specialist teachers was a big challenge to full collaboration with specialist teachers. As a result, mainstream teachers just accept learners with SEN in their classrooms because it is a government policy of inclusive education to do so but no adequate assistance is given to them. The teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education also influence successful implementation of inclusion practices like collaboration and policies (Unianu, 2012). When some respondents were asked how they worked with specialist teachers and learners with SEN in their schools, they disclosed that apart from lack of knowledge, they had negative attitudes towards working with specialist teachers and assisting learners with SEN. One of such respondents was quoted as they elaborated:

“I don't know why they gave me these learners I have more than one hundred learners already so for me to take care for these three learners with SEN, I don't do that. I just include them because of the policy of inclusive education but I cannot waste my time collaborating with specialist teachers and assisting the learners with SEN because I can't finish my syllabus.”(M1X).

Here the teacher has a concern of having many learners without SEN and on top of that he was also to teach and assist learners with SEN who were included in his classroom yet had no knowledge of inclusive education.

Teacher M1X blamed the government for implementing inclusive education policy yet knowing that the teachers have large classes and also were not trained for inclusive education. He lamented that he did not understand the reason why he was given the learners with SEN. In his explanation, he revealed that though learners with SEN were included in his class, he did not assist them accordingly as that would prevent him from finishing his syllabus. The teacher quoted above has a negative attitude towards learners with SEN, specialist teachers and the whole concept of collaboration and inclusive education. As far as he is concerned, he states that he was employed to teach students without SEN and his main priority was to cover the syllabus.

For such a teacher to appreciate learners with SEN, specialist teachers and the concept of collaboration and inclusive education, he needs to be trained on what to collaborate and how to collaborate. Blanton et al. (2005) stipulate that unfortunately there are many such teachers who expressed the negative perceptions highlighted in this study as well as in many studies. Therefore, the negative attitudes towards learners with SEN as well as failure by specialist teachers to accommodate mainstream teachers by assisting them through collaboration is a big challenge to collaboration and support of inclusive education hence, impacts the participation of learners with SEN in academic and social activities.

4.3.4.3 Challenges related to Working conditions and environment

4.3.4.3.1 Pressure of work

When mainstream teachers were asked to explain how their working conditions impeded full collaboration with specialist teachers, most of them emphasized that their school day schedule was busy and fully occupied with teaching large classes. In addition, there was also a small number of specialist teachers against a large number of mainstream teachers. This does not give room to these sets of teachers to hold regular meetings with each other. This problem was most vividly highlighted by one of the specialist teachers from school X as follows:

“As you can see we specialists are few, for example, we are only two here against 43 mainstream teachers and we cannot assist each and every mainstream teacher effectively,” (S1X).

On her part, M1Y also explained her concern as follows:

“Large classes hence difficult to manage other activities.”

Here the specialist teacher and the mainstream teacher were worried about the work load they had whereby one specialist teacher was collaborating with many mainstream teachers and mainstream teachers having large classes, hence, having some challenges to manage important activities related to collaboration.

Using the sample statements given by MIY and SIX above, it can be concluded that both sets of teachers have no scheduled time to work together through joint meetings to plan, execute and share expertise. Furthermore, it has been revealed that each one of them is too busy and works under pressure. As a result, they have no scheduled time to collaborate. This affects learners with SEN because they end up being assisted less and sometimes, they get no assistance at all. The study also revealed that teachers had high teaching loads which made it difficult for them to meet and collaborate. Inadequate specialist teachers also contribute to time limitations as a challenge because they too were engaged in supporting other learners with SEN in resource rooms rather than doing a collaboration with mainstream teachers. This engagement at the resource room by

specialist teachers makes it extremely difficult for them to collaborate fully with mainstream teachers. My observation was that due to having only one public college that offers special needs education courses in Malawi, a few specialist teachers were produced. This observation echoed the findings of a study conducted by Kapinga (2012) which also revealed that the colleges that trained teachers in special needs education were few compared to ordinary education colleges. His study found out that there were three universities that train teachers in the area of special needs education in Tanzania. However, these could not produce enough teachers to teach learners with special education needs for the entire country of Tanzania (Kapinga, 2012). Therefore, it is not surprising that when the teachers were asked to describe challenges, both sets of teachers identified pressure of work that limited time to collaborate hence a barrier to full collaboration. Other than pressure of work, one of the mainstream teachers from school Y (MT4) lamented:

Well, the first barrier to this so-called collaboration between us and specialist teachers is lack of training and clarity on how to collaborate and what model of collaboration to follow. When looking at our education system and the introduction of inclusive education policy, there is no clarification on how and when for both sets of teachers to collaborate and what model to use in collaboration in enhancing inclusive education of learners with SEN in primary schools.

Here the teachers display some willingness on the part of teachers to collaborate as they complained that lack of clarity on when and how to collaborate and also what model to use to collaborate jointly to support inclusive education. Another mainstream teacher pointed out her frustration with collaboration as outlined below:

When they take learners with SEN back to the resource room, our friends should assess the learners as experienced and we should also assess them using our experience too.

The above observation was elaborated by the teacher considering that it could be better for the two sets of teachers to do the activities independent of each other rather than jointly. This suggestion contradicts what the theoretical framework of this research states, that is, that parties should be working jointly through interaction and sharing knowledge and expertise than working alone. In addition, Lantolf, (2008) also explains that the origin of knowledge construction should not be sought in the mind but in the social interaction co-constructed between a more and a less knowledgeable individual. A similar sentiment was expressed by one of the specialist teachers who elaborated that the time she would be collaborating with mainstream teachers, it would be also within the teaching session. She continued to show her concern by explaining that it was common knowledge that they could not achieve what they intended to achieve because time was not allowing them to communicate and share experiences fully at scheduled times. The findings of this study have revealed that for some teachers there would be a conflict between time constraints and the essential value of collaboration which can result in a tension as a challenge that can be seen distracting them from actual classroom teaching. Most of the mainstream teachers preferred the spirit of working alone compared to working as a team (collaborating with specialist teachers). This, however, contradicts the meaning of collaboration as well as what the Community of Practice Theory stipulates as explained above. The spirit of working alone is a big challenge to inclusive education and its practices like collaboration because it lacks the sharing of expertise, hence, poor delivery of lessons to learners with SEN. As a result, there is no encouragement and arousal of interest in learners, hence, poor performance and high dropout rates among learners with SEN.

4.3.4.3.2 Inadequate motivation and incentives as a barrier to full collaboration

Motivation is viewed as a necessary vehicle for teacher participation in most activities. The issue of lack of training and incentives has been found to contribute to low morale of both sets of teachers to fully collaborate in the two schools where the study was conducted.

The study revealed that the majority of teachers from both sets of teachers were not eager to work in full collaboration with their counterparts because they were not trained or rewarded or due to pressure of work they have in the inclusion system. Most of them insisted that meaningful collaboration could not be possible unless they were motivated to do so. In their explanation, the teachers stressed that they were working under pressure and were not motivated to do the collaboration. The idea was expressed during focus group discussions conducted in both schools. Some of the concerns from both sets of teachers were that no motivation was rendered to them although they had other loads on top of their own work of teaching regular learners.

Another specialist teacher from school X also described lack of motivation as a big challenge to full collaboration. He stated as follows:

There is no motivation to us teachers. As a result, we have no interest. No enough salaries, trainings and workshops to sensitise us on collaboration and inclusive education. The government just introduced the system and tossed it at us without some logistics on how to work jointly.

The general perception of the participants was that they were dissatisfied with the salaries they got every month against the workload they had in primary schools. The teachers had concerns that they were not motivated by training or orienting them on how to collaborate jointly and teach as well as assist learners with SEN in an inclusive class. Their major concern was that the government just introduced inclusive systems and its associated practices and forced them on teachers without any token of appreciation, rewards, training or workshops.

When the participants were asked to elaborate what type of motivation they thought could arouse their interest in working together and assist learners with SEN, most of them explained that workshops as well as trainings on collaboration were necessary to enhance inclusive education and arouse their interest. In addition, one of the teachers elaborated that good salaries might also encourage them to work harder considering that they could then have enough money with which to support their families. One of the teachers in this study was quote:

No workshops and trainings are given to both of us concerning collaboration in relation to inclusive education and learners with SEN.

When we are trained and if possible there is a workshop, we are somehow motivated and encouraged to work effectively because we have at least gained new knowledge and have an appreciation of recognition.

Here, the teacher shows her concern that teachers are not recognised by not being trained to gain knowledge and motivate them to work in collaboration to support inclusive education in primary schools. When teachers have good salaries, frequently do trainings and workshops, they are able to work very hard and participate in all school activities without excuses. However, teachers who are poorly paid, attend no trainings and workshops have so many excuses and most of the times absent themselves from duties, hence, a challenge to learners as they are not taught and assisted adequately. Consequently, through this study I noted that it was very difficult for the specialist and mainstream teachers to work collaboratively, teach and assist learners with SEN in large classes with poor salaries. I noted that most teachers in primary schools take these trainings and workshops as incentives and motivating drives. On the same issue of motivation, the findings of this study concur with those of Cowan (2010) which also stressed the need for incentives as a motivation for full collaboration among teachers. This statement is in agreement with Mumanyire (2005) who

stipulates that the most important motivator to the teacher is money which can be in form of salaries, allowances, wages, bonuses, duty allowances and other rewards. The foregoing studies (Mumanyire, 2005; Talemwa et al, 2009; Businge, (2012) also comment that the level of teacher motivation in pre and primary schools in Uganda is very low and this scenario has significantly affected the implementation of a number of educational programs. Furthermore, they state that given the fact that the teacher is the most important and last implementer of educational programs, the current state of teachers' work points to disaster in the implementation of national educational programs. Therefore, lack of motivation on the part of teachers as implementers of inclusive education policy is a big challenge and needs to be looked into.

Using responses from teachers quoted on the issue of pressure of work, it may be concluded that mainstream teachers have a big task in teaching large classes yet they were also directed to include learners with SEN who needed special care, special content and special resources and additional time. Nothing in form of an incentive or motivating gesture accompanied this additional workload.

On their part, specialist teachers too claimed that there were few in number to work against a large number of mainstream teachers which was impossible because they already had another workload by teaching learners with SEN in resource rooms. This means that although there is a policy that all learners should be included in mainstream classes, there are still other learners who are still taught in the resource room. These are learners with extreme handicaps. This study confirmed this through observations and responses from some of the specialist teachers who stated as follows:

We specialist teachers work under pressure because we are few against many mainstream teachers. In addition, we still teach some learners in the resource room

When the specialist teacher was asked why they were also responsible for teaching learners in the resource room when there was inclusive education, the response was that the resource room is part of the placement process within mainstream schools and is considered as a necessary place for children with SEN who are easily distracted in the comprehensive education settings like mainstream classrooms. Another specialist teacher clarified that the resource rooms also supported the social needs of learners with SEN in small group settings and behaviour intervention is provided. They proceeded to elaborate that children who needed intensive one-on-one approach and are easily distracted in mainstream classrooms may be most successful in a resource room. The specialist teacher in the resource room is therefore able to concentrate on the specific area of need of a particular learner. However, it is not clear that the practice of retaining some learners in the resource room is in line with the inclusive education policy stipulated for them by the Ministry of Education Science and Technology. Specialist teachers are supposed to work hand in hand with mainstream teachers by working jointly in identifying the problem, discussing and finding the solution through Problem – solving model of collaboration.

Basing on the information given by participants, the placement of some children with SEN in the resource room is not temporary, but my view as a researcher is that the resource room ought to be used only as a remedial facility unlike how it is being used in these schools. The way it is used cannot enhance the goals of inclusive education let alone collaboration for it 'traps' specialist teachers who would otherwise be working with the mainstream teacher side-by-side at the mainstream classroom.

4.3.4.4 Challenges related to inadequate support from administration

The nature of support from the top educational officials in the education system can play a big role in the teachers' decision to work in collaboration or not. The researcher wanted to know if at all there was any support for collaboration from the administrative structure in primary schools to enhance inclusive education. Specifically, the researcher asked participants if at all there were deliberate measures to make sure that there was full collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in their schools. In response, many participants including head teachers of both schools revealed that there were no measures put in place to promote meaningful collaboration. The response tells us that even the head teachers were not sure that there should be some measures to be followed in collaboration of the key players like specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education of learners with SEN.

The other challenge related to insufficient support from the administrative structure has something to do with human and material resources whereby certain resources that ought to be made available for collaboration and inclusive education to work efficiently are conspicuously absent. Previous studies reported that the availability of relevant material resources promoted positive attitudes among teachers about the implementation of inclusive education practices and collaboration (Agbenyega(2007); Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden(2000). When participants were asked about the availability of human and material resources at their schools that promote collaboration, some participants responded as stated below:

“Insufficient funds to buy resources to support collaboration activity, conduct meetings in sensitizing mainstream teachers as you know that

nowadays meetings and workshops go together with allowances for participants was a big challenge (S2X).

“Inadequate teacher training colleges for special needs education to equip teachers with knowledge and skills on how to teach and assist learners with SEN in primary schools was a challenge,” (HX).

Here the teachers’ concern was inadequate resources including teachers who are equipped with knowledge and skills to support collaboration in schools.

The above responses from both participants describe and demonstrate that although schools have specialist teachers and mainstream teachers that should take part in collaboration to enhance inclusive education, there is a limitation of knowledge on collaboration because the teachers were not prepared and provided with the necessary resources to collaborate. Teachers lamented that there were no funds with which to introduce a new programme and train them. From the above discussion, it may be concluded that the teachers’ lack of competence in managing their inclusive classrooms is a serious problem as it makes them feel stressed and less confident. Other researchers like (Broderick 2005, Ainscow 2009, and Landsberg 2011), have highlighted that it is not practically possible to produce specialist educators to cater for all needs in overcoming barriers to learning, but there may be a way of assisting all learners to benefit from inclusive classes, that is, by empowering teachers with basic skills so that they may become competent inclusive teachers. Therefore, there is a need for the government of Malawi through the Ministry of Education to introduce a new program for training teachers on how to collaborate and teach learners with SEN in an inclusive education.

4.3.5 Best practices that would overcome the challenges facing collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in primary schools.

The findings of this study revealed that what both sets of teachers practiced in the name of collaboration did not represent the best form of collaboration hence, facing many challenges as discussed above. In order for both sets of teachers to collaborate effectively and efficiently, this research proposes the use of Problem-Solving Model of Collaboration. This research suggests this model because a problem-solving model of collaboration allows both sets of parties to share their expertise in order to find solutions to the problems of a learner. Furthermore, through problem solving model of collaboration, both sets of teachers will have ample time to share knowledge and expertise on how best to teach and assist learners with SEN, hence achieve their goals. In addition, the joint sharing of expertise will increase the desire of both sets of teachers to get new ideas hence, supporting inclusive education of learners with SEN. Below are some suggested ways, practices or forms of the Problem-Solving Model of collaboration that would overcome the challenges discussed above in order to practice full collaboration and better support inclusive education in primary schools. Indirectly or directly the study suggests the following aspects of the Problem-Solving Model:

4.3.5.1 A collaboration where there is joint sharing of expertise.

The Problem-Solving Model would bring together teachers with different experiences, knowledge and skills in order to achieve an intended goal. It would also encourage teachers to share knowledge and skills. The spirit of sharing expertise is in agreement with the Community of Practice Theory which encourages people of the same profession to work jointly and share their expertise

through collaboration. A collaboration where there is joint sharing of expertise can demand a lot from people who work together like being open minded, listening to other people's views and putting personal agendas aside to one adopt agreed upon agendas. When participants were asked how best they could overcome the problem of individuality or spirit of working in isolation in their schools, almost all the participants said that they are going to establish and maintain a shared spirit of understanding among them. They explained that they would be communicating to each other, help each other interpret elements of the problem and discuss which expertise should be applied. This can be achieved by planning together, developing schemes and inclusive lesson plan together, teaching and assessing learners with SEN together. However, in their explanation they stressed that in order for their ideas to be achieved, they should be trained on how to collaborate effectively in order to achieve the inclusive education goal. This study revealed that both sets of teachers are eager to work together but have limited knowledge and experiences on how to collaborate in a shared manner.

4.2.5.2 A collaboration where there is frequent in-service training and Continuous Professional Development programmes

When teaching learners with special education needs both sets of teachers working with the child must understand the child's specific needs. This takes a set of well-defined skills that are only well developed in teachers through continuous training. The child's needs regulate the amount of support necessary to assist him or her and the personnel involved. For some learners, the teachers may include a one-on-one approach, related service provision through referrals to other professionals such as a physical therapist, speech/language therapist, occupational therapist, or even to a specialist teacher who specialized in that particular area such as hearing impairment. The entire

collaboration should focus on solving the child's problems. When participants were asked how best they could overcome the problem of lack of knowledge and skill on how to collaborate between themselves, almost all the mainstream teachers responded that since they had no knowledge and skills on collaboration related to inclusive education, trainings and workshops should be regularly organised for them. This acknowledgement of inadequacy indicates that they visualize a collaboration arrangement where constant training is embedded in the programme in the form of scheduled workshops, courses, meetings or orientation sessions by expert personnel in the field of collaboration and inclusive education. The government is responsible for making sure that both sets of teachers are aware of what is needed or involved to implement full collaboration in order to support inclusive education and effectively support learners with SEN. For example, one of the mainstream teachers from school Y explained the suggestion she had as stated below:

We should be sensitised firstly on how to collaborate with specialist teachers and the reasons for doing the collaboration for a successful inclusive education.

The teacher above is very eager to work in collaboration but what she desires is to be trained or oriented in order to know the meaning of collaboration and the reason why they should collaborate.

In her explanation it may be perceived that the teacher believed that the introduction of special programs to train teachers as well as frequent in-service trainings and sensitizations were the best forms of improving collaboration as it would improve their knowledge and skills on how to collaborate. In her explanation she stressed that because the specialist teachers have knowledge in special needs education, they could sensitise the mainstream teachers on how to collaborate and handle learners with SEN in mainstream class room more effectively. Contrary to what this mainstream teacher suggested, I argue that specialist teachers also have limited knowledge on how

to collaborate with mainstream teachers in order to make inclusive education a success. As discussed above specialist teachers have knowledge in special needs education on how to teach, and assist learners with SEN but they too lack knowledge on collaboration. In supporting the argument, Yeo et al. (2014) pointed out that there is lack of exposure and awareness about inclusive education and its practices among most implementers of the inclusive education policy in most education systems.

In their explanation above, specialist and mainstream teachers emphasized that there was a gap in knowledge and skills which needed to be filled owing to the fact that although specialist teachers were trained about inclusive education they were mainly trained on how to teach learners with SEN in resource centres as well as in special schools and not necessarily on how to collaborate with mainstream teachers in mainstream schools. The Montfort Special needs Education College curriculum does not have a course that would help teachers to be trained on how to collaborate with mainstream teachers to enhance inclusive education. In their view, both mainstream and specialist teachers lacked knowledge and skills on how to collaborate and support inclusive education of learners with SEN in a mainstream classroom. The argument is that upon the introduction of inclusive education, there was a need to train or sensitize both sets of teachers on how to work in a collaboration context to make inclusive education in primary schools a success. This view is in agreement with Hunt et al. (2001) who similarly argued that when one person on the team shares his or her ideas, it will draw out the ideas of others thereby enhancing the creativity of all team members through these interactions. Hunt et al. (2001: 251) further argues that while sharing their expertise, teachers want to learn from each other as well as from those outside their immediate environments on how best to solve the problems learners are facing.

Another teacher also expressed his views by stating that the government trained some of the mainstream teachers who are teaching in lower grades using the National Reading Program (NRP) and now the system is registering success. It would have been the same in this programme of collaboration and inclusive education to teach both sets of teachers on how to collaborate for the sake of making inclusive education a success. In addition, he also continued to elaborate that for mainstream teachers they also need to be trained on special needs education. The idea of training teachers is in agreement with the view expressed by Forlin(2010); Horn and Little (2010) that point out that teachers' collaboration intrinsically strengthens their capacity for inclusion, both encouraging and facilitating an organic process of professional development through sustained access to and sharing of knowledge and expertise. In addition, the above response is in agreement with the findings of a study by Moran (2007) which examined the extent to which initial teacher education (ITE) programmes contributed to the development of inclusive attitudes, values and practices. In response, the majority of mainstream teachers in his study elaborated that they did not believe that initial teacher education prepared student-teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms, let alone on collaboration. Therefore, in my view, there is a need to incorporate topics or courses on inclusive practices such as collaboration in the Montfort Special Needs Education curriculum as well as in the initial teacher education curriculum. This will help to prepare the teachers in advance on what to collaborate and how to collaborate by choosing the most suitable collaboration model in the benefit of all learners including those with SEN.

4.3.5.3 A collaboration that encourages mutual trust and respect between specialist and mainstream teachers

Communicating well is a key factor in making a collaboration relationship work effectively. Frequent and meaningful communication on both sides is extremely important. In such communication, it is

believed that trust and respect between both sets of teachers could foster good interpersonal relationships in primary schools (Miltenienė and Mauricienė (2010), Eccleston (2010)). According to the findings of this study there is a need for specialist teachers to trust and respect mainstream teachers as they are going to collaborate and do a good job when transferring learners with SEN from the resource room to the mainstream classrooms. Similarly, mainstream teachers need to trust and respect specialist teachers, hence, the two sides should meet frequently, plan and discuss how best to assist learners with SEN. Through this study it has been discovered that the relationship between the two sets of teachers was conditional and that the two sides worked based on some assumptions. For example, when participants were asked to comment on the relationship between specialist and mainstream teachers, most of them stated that their relationship was not sound since the two sides looked down upon each other. They pointed out that there was always an impression that one was above or below the other in the collaboration process as well as in teaching learners with SEN. However, this study proposes the form of collaboration which is needed to make inclusive education a success. The Problem-Solving Collaboration Model could make both sets of teachers appreciate, value and respect one another as equal partners in the collaboration process as well as in helping learners with SEN. This can be achieved when both sets of the teachers have been trained on what and how to collaborate and also when there is division of responsibilities. This view is in agreement with the findings of a study conducted by Eccleston (2010) which emphasises that in collaboration, a very important role is played by the relationships between the special educator (specialist) and other teachers (mainstream) and by the constructiveness of their interaction. Therefore, education authorities like District Education Managers, (DEMs), Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) and those responsible for training should orient and sensitise both sets of teachers the respectable hierarchy of working for a successful collaboration.

4.3.5.4 A collaboration characterized by positive attitudes among both sets of teachers

According to Smith (2014) attitudes are perceptions that both sets of teachers hold about the job, the students as well as their relevance as teachers. Attitudes manifest in the way teachers think about their job and about learners. Positive attitudes promote effective relationships and commitment to getting things done while negative attitudes prevent constructive relationships and leads to low commitment and performance. The bad news is that the attitudes of specialist and mainstream teachers towards working together as partners are known to be generally negative (Smith, 2014). Therefore, a desired form of collaboration is the one where the existing attitudes are altered, modified or improved. The findings of this study have revealed that the attitudes of most mainstream teachers towards learners with SEN are not so positive, a scenario which contributes to these students' withdrawal from school. The negative attitude of some mainstream teachers towards learners with SEN was concluded to be negative when they explained that they just accepted the learners with SEN in the mainstream classes but did not offer assistance to them. They considered them as a huge burden on their teaching and capacity to complete the teaching syllabus which was the most important thing to them. When the participants were asked how they could overcome the situation since it was a big disadvantage to learners with SEN, most of the specialist teachers explained that the mainstream teachers should accept the existence of learners with SEN in their classrooms and provide the necessary assistance. Looking at their responds, my view is that both sets of teachers need to be sensitised on how to work jointly and assist each other in supporting learners with SEN. The system will promote positive relationships and a spirit of working together to make inclusive education a success. When asked the same question, most of the mainstream teachers pointed out the following:

As long as we are aware of how best to collaborate and reasons why we are doing the collaboration and understand how to teach and assist learners with SEN, we can work effectively with learners with SEN as well as specialist teachers.(M1X, M2Y, M1Y).

The point being put across that the teachers are eager to work positively but need to be oriented on why they need to collaborate and ways of collaborating. Problem-Solving Model requires positive attitude, motivation and commitment. The study observed that working constructively between the two sets of teachers goes beyond activities as it requires positive and open attitudes. The development of positive and constructive attitudes between the teachers is an important component in collaborative activities and is the responsibility of both sets of teachers to cultivate it. Therefore, there is a need to orient or train both sets of teachers how to collaborate and know their parameters in the collaboration. The Ministry of Education through responsible officers should sensitise both sets of teachers to understand their roles and to communicate and work with love and a sharing spirit. This to happen there is a need to train and orient both sets of teachers on how to work jointly, respect and trust each other. In order to change the negative attitude, there is also a need to motivating them in form of good salaries and incentives.

4.3.5.5 A collaboration in which human and material resources are available

Almost all the participants expressed their concern about lack of resources both human and material resources that would make meaningful collaboration and inclusive education possible. They explained that there was only one college for training teachers in special needs education in the country and urged the government to build more similar colleges in order to increase the number of

qualified teachers and at the same time reduce pressure of work among teachers. Some teachers in the study were quoted as saying:

“Malawi has only one college for special needs education and so the government should build another college to train more teachers in special needs education and get knowledge and skills in this field,”(HX, S2Y, S1X, and M2Y).

*“Government should introduce another program for mainstream teachers to have enough knowledge on how to collaborate with specialist teachers and on how to assist learners with SEN in an inclusive class”
(HX, HY, M5Y, M2X).*

Here the teachers show their concerns that their country has shortage of colleges offering special needs education where they would have been trained to gain knowledge on SNE to assist the learners with SEN. As a result, they are urging the government to build more colleges in the country. In short, the findings of the study have revealed that in addition to having only one public college that offers special needs education courses in Malawi, specialist teachers graduated after spending three years in college instead of two. One way of speeding up production of specialist teachers is by introducing special and inclusive education courses in all initial teacher education colleges where teachers can get knowledge about inclusive education and its practices towards learners with SEN. Another challenge which was also discussed in this study was pressure of work. Both sets of teachers expressed this concern of having inadequate time for collaboration as well as for teaching learners with SEN because of pressure of work. The concern of mainstream teachers was that of having large classes while specialist teachers pointed out that the few of them that were there were expected to work with a large number of mainstream teachers. When participants were asked to

suggest what they thought would be the solution to overcome the challenge of pressure of work and indirectly the sort of collaboration they desired, some responses were as follows:

“More specialist teachers to be trained and deployed in all primary schools to reduce pressure of work,” (HX, M3Y and S3Y).

Another way is to focus solely on joint problem-solving as issues crop up in the course of handling learners with and without SEN. Through the findings of this study it has been suggested that more human resources are needed on both sides and should be trained and deployed in all primary schools to reduce pressure of work. This study has revealed that although the policy of inclusive education has come as a directive, teachers in Malawi as in many developing countries seem to experience difficulties in collaborating and effectively supporting learners with SEN. These teachers experience a lot of pressure because they teach huge classes. The observation is supported by Oyedeji (2015) who stipulates that class size and lack of policy clarity make it difficult for teachers to collaborate effectively and support learners with SEN in an inclusive class. Respondents also proposed that policy clarity was needed which should result in training of all teachers on how to work in collaboration with one another to enhance inclusive education and better assist learners with SEN in schools.

4.3.5.6 A collaboration that has sound administrative Support

When the participants were once again asked how they could overcome the challenge of lack of support from administrative structure to do with the collaboration for the benefit of learners with SEN, one of the mainstream teachers from school X had this to say:

“Head teachers and other authorities should support both sets of teachers by providing them with in-service trainings and workshops as well as enough resources to encourage them to collaborate”.

Training both sets of teachers and encouraging them to collaborate and supervise the implementation is necessary. The issue of training, resources as well as time constraints on teachers reappear in scholarly literature on inclusion (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009; Horne and Timmons, 2009); Smith and Leonard, 2005, Talmor, Reiter and Feigin, 2005). Teachers showed their concern about lack of training, collaborative resources to carry out administrative as well as professional duties including planning, teaching as well as assessing learners with SEN. To overcome this barrier, the study has revealed that teachers imagined a collaboration in which head teachers and other administrative personnel support them with in-service trainings as well as enough materials for collaboration. For example, this suggestion of provision of relevant material resources echoes the recommendation by the head teacher at school X where he suggested the same provision of resources as well as enough time for both sets of teachers to collaborate as his expected role in the collaboration process to enhance inclusive education. He suggested that providing resources to teachers to collaborate and to see that implementation is done it would promote collaboration which could bring a success to inclusive education. A sound of administrative support will ensure that common problems which learners are facing are well documented, discussed and remedies reviewed from time to time.

The head teacher at school Y also stated the following:

“Encouraging them to work in collaboration by providing necessities that will enhance their collaboration. My attitude should show all the teachers that we are together.”

Here the participant stipulates that she was ready to support the teachers with necessary materials to support collaboration. In short, the study revealed that there should be a collaboration that is formally organised and recognised on the school timetable and is fully supported by head teachers through scheduled provision of trainings, time to collaborate and provision of material resources for both sets of teachers' use in the collaboration and in assisting learners with SEN. In addition, head teachers should provide both sets of teachers with useful information that both sets of teachers can use to improve collaboration and classroom practices to teach and assist learners with SEN. For example, offering practical information about effective collaboration practices and providing suggestions to improve instruction and inclusive classroom management.

4.3.7 Summary of the chapter

This chapter dealt with an investigation of the nature and extent of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools. The main research question was answered and the research aims and objectives were addressed under themes (refer 4.1 this chapter). Collaboration is one of the remedies for making inclusive education of learners with SEN a success. Unfortunately, collaboration in the schools under study is meeting many challenges in its implementation. The challenges need to be dealt with because they greatly disadvantage learners with SEN who are expected to be the future professionals. Despite the policy of inclusive education that directs the specialist teachers and mainstream teachers to collaborate to enhance inclusive education, the procedures that have been put in place to handle and put both teachers in collaboration are not clear. Understanding what to collaborate on, how to collaborate and with whom to collaborate would help both sets of teachers to find solutions thereby making

inclusive education a success. Chapter five will provide the summary of findings, implications of the findings, recommendations and issues for further the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary of findings, Implications, Conclusions, and issues for further research

5.1 Introduction

This study has attempted to answer the research questions through the objectives of the study using a case study design within the qualitative approach. The study used semi-structured face-to-face interviews, observations and focus group discussions. The main research question for this study was: *“How do specialist teachers collaborate with mainstream teachers in order to support inclusive education of learners with SEN in primary schools?”*

5.2 Summary of findings

The summary of findings of this research is presented using research objectives in relation to research’s main question (refer to the question in the introduction in this chapter). There were four objectives in this study. To sum up everything the study had found out that specialist and mainstream teachers from both schools who represented their fellow teachers during face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions had views and reactions as stated below:

5.2.1 Nature of collaboration

The first objective of this study aimed at finding out the nature of collaboration which are practiced between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education and assisting learners with SEN. On this objective, the researcher wanted firstly, to find out if there were learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms, secondly, if there was collaboration taking place between the two sets of teachers in supporting inclusive education.

The study revealed that learners with SEN are available in mainstream classrooms and they learn alongside their peers without SEN and in addition they are all taught together under one roof by mainstream teachers. The study also revealed that there is collaboration which is limited in scope between specialist and mainstream teachers to support learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms. This is so because the collaboration happens occasionally and by chance. Through this study, it has also been revealed that collaboration is done only when there is an issue to be resolved concerning learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms. It has been revealed that whenever mainstream teachers encounter a problem during teaching and assisting learners with SEN they do consult specialist teachers who have knowledge and skills in teaching and handling learners with SEN. On the other hand, with limited consultations to seek knowledge and skills from specialist teachers, mainstream teachers struggle to teach and effectively assist learners with SEN in their classrooms. Occasionally, as the study reveals, specialist teachers do visit mainstream teachers to assess learners and advise mainstream teachers where and how to place learners with SEN in their classrooms. Furthermore, this study has revealed that although specialist teachers have knowledge and skills to teach and handle learners with SEN, they were not trained on how to collaborate with mainstream teachers to better implement the inclusive education policy. Therefore, this study revealed that both specialist and mainstream teachers lack knowledge and skills on how to collaborate with each other and that they do not plan, teach and assess learners jointly as specialist teachers have not abandoned the resource room but still carry out some of those activities there. Looking at the nature of collaboration practiced in the two schools understudy, both schools have no specific model of collaboration because mainstream teachers regularly consult specialist teachers not in accordance with a planned model of collaboration but being stranded to teach and assist learners with SEN in mainstream classroom, hence, searching information. Specialist teachers on the other hand, carry out their full activities in resource rooms and do a pull-out system

to a small group of learners with minimal consultations with mainstream teachers for feedback. This manner of working between both sets of teachers shows that it is not clear whether guidelines on how the two sets of teachers should collaborate are available. As a result, this lack of clarity on collaboration brings confusion, hence poor collaboration.

5.2.2 How the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers impacts learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms

The second research objective aimed at finding out how the nature of collaboration practiced in both schools impacts learners with SEN. The study revealed that the nature of collaboration which is practiced by the two sets of teachers negatively affects learners with SEN in a number of ways. Usually, the most notable negative effect is that it leads to poor academic performance among learners with SEN since there is no constant sharing of ideas and skills between specialist and mainstream teachers to solve the problems which learners with SEN encounter in the mainstream classes. Again, learners with SEN are not interested to be educated in an environment where they are neither recognized nor assisted by mainstream teachers as it is the case leading to poor academic performance and rampant school dropouts. Usually, mainstream teachers who have limited knowledge and skills on how to teach and assist learners with SEN do not attend to these learners accordingly, hence, they lag behind resulting in poor academic performance, loss of interest in school and high dropout rates. It must be recognized that when there is no encouragement, support and interest from the teacher, learners with SEN do not participate in educational activities which then results in their withdrawal from school. Therefore, Mainstream teachers and specialist teachers should develop a spirit of working together as an ongoing problem - solving system in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools.

5.2.3 Major Challenges to collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers

This was the third objective where I wanted to find out if teachers encountered some challenges when collaborating in order to effectively support inclusive education of learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms. The study has revealed that specialist and mainstream teachers struggle in teaching and assisting learners with SEN in mainstream classes because there is no motivation in form of good salaries, incentives like workshops or in-service training and allowances for the additional work of collaboration they are expected to do. The other major challenge as indicated already is lack of training since both mainstream and specialist teachers were not trained or oriented on how to collaborate and work as a team to enhance inclusive education and effectively assist learners with SEN. Another challenge is lack of unity, commitment, respect and poor attitude among members of both sets of teachers towards collaboration. Generally, through my observations, there is lack of collegiality hence, no spirit of working jointly between specialist and mainstream teachers to better assist learners with SEN. Both sets of teachers should learn to work with each other and share their knowledge and expertise so that they can learn from each other. Besides, head teachers are not doing anything to promote collaborative relationships between specialist and mainstream teachers in their schools.

5.2.4 Suggested form of collaboration to overcome the challenges identified

In this last objective of the study, I was eager to find out what teachers felt would be the best form of collaboration to overcome the challenges associated with the existing collaboration and better assist learners with SEN. The idea is to have in place effective collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers. This study discovered that it was difficult for some challenges to be dealt with

by the teachers themselves but with the support from the entire administrative structure and if the whole collaboration is based on a specific model that is suitable for the Malawian context. On the overall, the study proposes a form of collaboration that is characterized by the spirit of consideration and joint sharing of knowledge and skills in a philosophical manner. In that regard, the study proposes the Problem - solving Model of Collaboration to be followed by both sets of teachers. This is chosen because this model of collaboration allows both sets of teachers to work jointly, solve the challenges or problems together and find the solutions to meet the needs of learners with SEN rather than following the Consultation Model of Collaboration that seems to be used by the teachers currently. By using the proposed model, specialist and mainstream teachers would jointly solve challenges of learners with SEN through sharing the expertise, understanding the problems and making joint efforts to come to solutions. The model encourages both sets of teachers to merge their knowledge, skills and efforts to reach the needs of all learners with SEN. In order to reach the extent of addressing the needs of all learners, both sets of teachers would need to work jointly in planning instructions, writing inclusive lesson plans and schemes, preparation of teaching and assessment materials as well as conducting assessment of learners with SEN together. In that arrangement, the resource room would serve its role of being a space for remedial lessons and to be used occasionally for helping only those with extreme disabilities. For this model to be followed successfully, administrative structures such as head teachers, PEAs and DEMs should do the following:

- Clarification of inclusive education policy and the inclusive education practices like collaboration and the chosen model of collaboration (the Problem-solving model) should be clearly modified to suit the local contexts for the teachers to know and understand what they are doing.

- Frequent in-service training and Continuous Professional Development (CPDs) should be offered to both sets of teachers aiming at training them regularly on some measures and techniques on how to collaborate meaningfully using the Problem-Solving Model of collaboration, and how to share their expertise as they work jointly. This would improve their knowledge base and help them to identify some problems displayed by all learners hence, assisting them accordingly.
- Regular meetings and workshops for teachers to plan, execute, and assess their collaborative activities so that they have enough room for sharing their expertise, carry out joint teaching and testing of learners with SEN. This is so because most respondents felt that it was necessary for the government through head teachers to put fixed times on the master timetable clearly allocated to collaboration activities between specialist and mainstream teachers.
- Deliberately motivate teachers through rewards and incentives given to both sets of teachers on top of their salaries in recognition of the additional workload of collaboration and helping learners with SEN in their classrooms.

5.3 How the critical research question was answered?

The main research question was: how did specialist and mainstream teachers collaborate to enhance inclusive education of learners with SEN in primary schools in Malawi?

The study has answered that question by exploring the various areas of collaboration between these two sets of teachers and what actually goes into that collaboration. It has also examined the scope of the collaboration taking place and tried to understand the collaborative processes and

practices within the context of models of collaboration. In answering that main research question, the following findings have been utilized:

- Most of the time, mainstream teachers consulted specialist teachers to seek knowledge and skills on how to teach and assist learners with SEN in a mainstream classroom.
- There was no much evidence that both sets of teachers worked together in planning special activities, writing schemes and inclusive lesson plans, doing assessment tasks, developing special resources and teaching lessons together in the manner of sharing expertise to make inclusive education a success.
- Specialist teachers carried out their daily duties in resource rooms rather than working together with mainstream teachers in an inclusive classroom. This shows that not much time was spent sharing knowledge with mainstream teachers
- When there was an activity to be done, specialist teachers made themselves as leaders while mainstream teachers as people to be guided, hence both sets of teachers did not share their expertise. This shows that there was no full collaboration as theoretical framework for this research stipulates.

5.4 Relationship of findings to the theoretical framework

The use of Community of Practice Theory provided a good platform on which to assess the purpose of the study. Through this study, there are a variety of challenges affecting both sets of teachers' intention to either collaborate or not. These challenges fall within the theme elaborated in this study on the obstacles surrounding implementation of full collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers. The challenges are: inadequate knowledge and skills on collaboration and

inclusive education, lack of motivation and incentives to both teacher as well as pressure of work. When the knowledge and motivation factors are not present at adequate levels, they lead to dissatisfaction and that may lead teachers to refrain or exit from collaboration activities. The Community of Practice Theory posits that collaboration does not take place incidentally but requires careful and constant planning, interactions, positive attitudes and commitment between two sets of professionals having different knowledge and skills bases. It emphasizes that there must be continuous interaction and sharing of knowledge and skills between the two sides, in this case between the two sets of teachers.

Therefore, it is important for both sets of teachers to develop a good working relationship. As the theory stipulates, it calls for collaboration between partners who have different expertise to merge their knowledge and skills in order to support inclusive education (refer chapter 2). It also calls for collaboration and support among different players in the education sector such as teachers, administrators, MoEST and NGOs as well as the community at large to take an active role to support the collaboration of specialist and mainstream teachers and make inclusive education in primary schools a success.

5.5 Implications of the study

The findings of the study have implications for practice. As the findings suggest, specialist teachers and mainstream teachers have a critical role to play in order to promote inclusive education of learners with SEN in primary schools through collaboration. In order for inclusive education be a success:

- Both sets of teachers need to be provided with aspects that may improve their job satisfaction like motivation and teacher empowerment through involving them indecision making in problem solving.

- Specialist teachers who undergo training at Montfort Special Needs Education College need to be trained or oriented on how to collaborate with other stakeholders like mainstream teachers, parents and head teachers in their respective schools on different topics including collaboration.
- Montfort Special Needs education College need to introduce Open and Distance Learning (ODL) courses for mainstream teachers from different primary school in which they should be taught special needs education courses, inclusive education courses for learners with SEN and ways of collaboration to enhance the inclusive education in mainstream classrooms.
- The Montfort Special Needs Education Curriculum needs to be revised in order to include the issue of inclusive education and its practices like collaboration rather than courses of assisting learners with special education needs (SEN) only.
- In addition, there is also a need for effective administration support in all areas of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers.

5.6 Suggested areas for Further Study

- There is a need to conduct a study to investigate cultural barriers to collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in primary schools considering that teachers come from various cultural and religious backgrounds.
- There is also a need to conduct a study to explore strategies for developing formal and informal effective channels of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers towards education of learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms

5.7 Conclusion

The underlying assumption of the inclusive education policy is that specialist and mainstream teachers work together in enhancing inclusive education practices. The framers of the policy had in mind a scenario where the two sets of teachers are working together on all aspects of the education process in order to give learners with special education needs the best education possible by tapping on the different competencies and expertise the two sets of teachers have. However, this study has revealed that there is limited collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers because both of them lack knowledge and skills on how to collaborate, a scenario which greatly disadvantages learners with SEN in the mainstream classroom. Pressure of work due to large classes and inadequate human and material resources, and lack of policy clarity are some of the challenges that act as drawbacks to collaboration in supporting inclusive education and effectively assisting learners with SEN. This study however, concludes that the government through Ministry of education should take drastic measures to achieve full collaboration between both sets of teachers as an inclusive practice to better support learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms in primary schools in Malawi. For example, the Ministry of Education could advise head teachers to adhere to the Problem-solving Model of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers as this model takes care of the various challenges these two sets of teachers meet on collaboration and in assisting learners with SEN. Since most teachers would be willing to work with learners with SEN if properly trained and motivated, these must be addressed if the nation is to benefit from their willingness to collaborate and better support learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms in Malawian primary schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: LETTER OF PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA



MZUZU UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE DEAN
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Private Bag 201
Luwingu
Mzuzu 2
M.A.L.A.W.I
Tel.: (265) 01 320 722/575
Fax: (265) 01 320 505

Ref.: MU/1/D3.0

8th May 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION TO COLLECT RESEARCH DATA

Treza Lucy Muleme is a registered Master of Education (Teacher Education) Program student at Mzuzu University. She is supposed to collect research data for a study titled *Investigating the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing Inclusive Education: The case of two mainstream primary schools in Mulanje*. The Faculty of Education at Mzuzu university has approved the research proposal.

Kindly assist her accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

Associate Professor Victor Mgonezulu
Dean, Faculty of Education.

Appendix B: LETTER TO THE DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGER

Mzuzu University, Private Bag 201,

Luwinga, Mzuzu 2

Tel. 0882729198 / 999443347

Email: trezamuleme@gmail.com

The District Education Manager

P.O. Box 43

Mulanje

Dear Sir,

REQUEST TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN TWO SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MULANJE

I am **Treza Lucy Muleme** a postgraduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education degree programme in Teacher Education. I am carrying out a study in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the award of the Master's Degree in Education.

I write to request your permission to carry out this study in two selected schools in your district where face-to-face semi-structured interviews, observations and focus group discussions, will be conducted.

Attached is an introduction letter from Mzuzu University. Your consideration to conduct the study will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Treza L. Muleme

Appendix C: INFORMATION SHEET FOR HEAD TEACHER

First of all, I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in my study titled 'Investigating the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools'. My name is Treza Lucy Muleme, a postgraduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education degree in Teacher Education. The study aims at investigating the nature and extent of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in mainstream primary schools. I would like to ask for your permission to conduct a face- to- face interview and a focus group discussion which will reflect how teachers at this school collaborate in enhancing inclusive education.

My research will benefit your school in that the responses from teachers will contribute to an understanding of their effectiveness in collaboration in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools. Furthermore, the findings will contribute knowledge to the ongoing research on collaboration and inclusive education in Malawi.

If you agree that I collect data at your school, you have the right to ask for the notes compiled by me to read them. All the data collected will be confidential and stored in a computer file secured by a password and no-one will have access to it except me and my supervisor. In addition, no real name including that of your school will be indicated. If you have any question or query, you can contact me as the researcher or my supervisor by using the cellphone numbers or email provided below.

The Researcher: Treza Lucy Muleme. Cell: 0882729198/ 0999443334/ trezamuleme@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Joshua I. Kumwenda Cell: 0886047797. Email: joshuakumwenda5@gmail.com

Appendix D: INFORMATION SHEET FOR SPECIALIST TEACHERS

Research study on Collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in mainstream primary schools.

I, **Treza Lucy Muleme**, I am conducting a research for my Master of Education degree in Teacher education at Mzuzu University. I am carrying out a study that investigates the nature of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in mainstream primary schools. I would like to conduct this research among head teachers, specialist teachers and mainstream teachers in public mainstream primary schools in Mulanje District. I would like to find out how specialist teachers collaborate with mainstream teachers and how that collaboration impacts learners with special education needs, areas of collaboration, factors that facilitate collaboration and challenges that hinder the collaboration of teachers. My research will benefit your school in that the responses from teachers will contribute to an understanding of their effectiveness in collaboration in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools. Furthermore, the findings will contribute knowledge to the ongoing research on collaboration and inclusive education in Malawi.

If you allow as a specialist teacher school to take part in my study, I would like to make it clear that your participation is entirely voluntary; no negative consequences will result from your participation, and all information will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. If you do accept to participate, please remember that you may decline to answer any question, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. In order to protect confidentiality, all names which will be used will be fictitious. I will provide you with a summary of my research findings on completion if you would like me to. Thank you.

Name: Treza Lucy Muleme(researcher)
Email: trezamuleme@gmail.com
Mzuzu University

Cell No. 0882729198/0999443347
Signature: _____

Appendix E: INFORMATION SHEET FOR MAINSTREAM TEACHERS

Research on collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in mainstream primary schools.

I, Treza Lucy Muleme, I am conducting a research for my Master of Education degree in Teacher education at Mzuzu University. I am carrying out a study that investigates the nature and extent of collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers and how it enhances inclusive education of learners with special education needs in mainstream primary schools. I would like to conduct this research among head teachers, specialist teachers and mainstream teachers in public mainstream primary schools in Mulanje District. I would like to find out how specialist teachers collaborate with mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education, areas of collaboration, impact of collaboration on learners with special education needs, factors that facilitate collaboration and challenges that hinder the collaboration of teachers in enhancing inclusive education.

My research will benefit your school in that the responses from the teachers will contribute to an understanding of their effectiveness in collaboration in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools. Furthermore, the findings will contribute knowledge to the ongoing research on collaboration and inclusive education in Malawi.

If you allow your school to take part in my study, I would like to make it clear that your participation is entirely voluntary, no negative consequences will result from your participation, and all information will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. If you do accept to participate, please remember that you may decline to answer any question, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. In order to uphold confidentiality, all names which will be used will be fictitious.

I will provide you with a summary of my research findings on completion if you would like me to.

Thank you.

Name: Treza Lucy Muleme(researcher)

Cell No. 0882729198/0999443347

Email: trezamuleme@gmail.com

Signature: _____

Mzuzu University

Appendix F: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR MAINSTREAM TEACHERS

I, _____, consent to participate in this study conducted by Treza Lucy Muleme on the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools. I realise that no negative consequences will result from my participation in this study, and that the study is being conducted for purposes of improving the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools. I give permission for the material to be used for research only.

I participate voluntarily and understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Interviews for focus group discussion

I further consent to being interviewed in a focus group as part of the study. I also understand that I have the right to review the notes or audios made out of our focus group discussion before these are used for analysis if I want to. I can delete or amend any material or retract or revise any of my remarks. Everything I say will be kept confidential by the interviewer. I will only be identified by a pseudonym in the research report. In addition, any persons I refer to in the interview and the name of the school (s) will be kept confidential.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SPECIALIST TEACHERS

I, _____, consent to participate in this study conducted by Treza Lucy Muleme on the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools. I realise that no negative consequences will result from my participation in this study, and that the study is being conducted for purposes of improving the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools. I give permission for the material to be used for research only.

I participate voluntarily and understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Interviews:

I further consent to being interviewed as part of the study. I also understand that I have the right to review the notes or audios made out of our conversations before these are used for analysis if I so choose. I can delete or amend any material or retract or revise any of my remarks. Everything I say will be kept confidential by the interviewer. I will only be identified by a pseudonym in the research report. In addition, any persons I refer to in the interview and the name of the school (s) will be kept confidential.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix H: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR HEAD TEACHERS

I, _____, consent to participate in this study conducted by Treza Lucy Muleme on the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools. I realise that no negative consequences will result from my participation in this study, and that the study is being conducted for purposes of improving the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education in primary schools. I give permission for the material to be used for research only.

I participate voluntarily and understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Interviews:

I further consent to being interviewed as part of the study. I also understand that I have the right to review the notes or audios made out of our conversations before these are used for analysis if I so choose. I can delete or amend any material or retract or revise any of my remarks. Everything I say will be kept confidential by the interviewer. I will only be identified by a pseudonym in the research report. In addition, any persons I refer to in the interview and the name of the school (s) will be kept confidential.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix I: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MAINSTREAM TEACHERS

Your responses to the interview guide shall be accorded the utmost privacy and confidentiality

Sex () Male () Female School () A () B

District Date

1. Do you teach a class where there are learners with special education needs?

() Yes () No
2. Is there any collaboration between you and specialist teachers in assisting all learners in your class?

() Yes () No
3. If yes, what areas do you collaborate in? If no why?
4. If you collaborate with specialist teachers, what was the aim for starting the collaboration relationship?
5. What is the nature of the collaboration?
6. Considering the nature of your collaboration with the specialist teacher, is there any negative impacts on the learners with SEN in your class?
7. How often do you participate in collaboration activities?
8. Is there anything lacking that would otherwise make your collaboration successful?
9. How could the collaboration be strengthened to make inclusive education a success?
10. Is there anything positive or negative that you would say about collaboration in your school?

Appendix J: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE SPECIALIST TEACHERS

Your responses to the interview guide shall be accorded the utmost privacy and confidentiality.

Sex () Male () Female School () A () B

District

Date

1. Are there learners with special education needs in mainstream classes at this school?
2. Do you work in collaboration with mainstream teachers?
 - a. At this school? () Yes () No
 - b. In other schools in the zone? () Yes () No
3. If yes, what areas do you collaborate in? If no why?
4. If you collaborate with mainstream teachers, what was the aim for starting the collaboration relationship?
5. What is the nature of collaboration between you and mainstream teachers?
6. What is your attitude towards collaborating with mainstream teachers, do you enjoy or like it?
7. When do you feel that you are most important with the collaboration?
10. In which area does collaboration take place most among the following?
 - (a) Lesson plan preparation (c) Assessment
 - (b) Lesson delivery (d) scheme and records of work activity
 - (e) Teaching and learning resources preparation
11. Is there anything that is lacking so that your collaboration should be successful?
12. How could the collaboration be strengthened to make inclusive education a success?
13. Is there anything positive or negative that you can say about the nature of collaboration you are following in your school?

Appendix K: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE HEAD TEACHERS

Your responses to the interview guide shall be accorded the utmost privacy and confidentiality.

Sex () Male () Female School () A () B

District Date

1. How many teachers are there at this school?
2. Among the mentioned number of teachers, how many specialist teachers are there?
3. Are there learners with special education in mainstream classes at this school?
() Yes () No
4. If yes, are the specialist teachers working in collaboration with the mainstream teachers to enhance inclusive education at this school?
() Yes () No
5. If yes, what areas do they collaborate in? And if no why do both sets of teachers not work in collaboration?
6. What is your role as the head teacher in this collaboration in enhancing inclusive education?
7. Is there anything that you can say about the collaboration of the teachers in relation to inclusive education?
8. What should be done to make collaboration a success at your school?

Appendix L:OBSERVATION FORM

Name of School

District

Date of observation -----

Area of collaboration

Class

COLLABORATION ACTIVITY	OBSERVATIONS	RESEARCHER'S POINTS OF INTEREST
Areas of collaboration: Lesson plan schemes of work Preparation of resources Joint teaching Assessment	-	
Teachers' willingness to work together		

Role of the mainstream teacher in the collaboration process		
Role of specialist teacher in the collaboration process		
Role of head teachers in the collaboration process		
Challenges to collaboration		