

**TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MASAKA CITY, UGANDA**

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DECLARATION

I, Imalingat Sarah, hereby attest that this dissertation written under the topic "Teachers Perspectives on the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Primary Schools in Masaka City" Uganda, was my own original work and has never been submitted to any other institution of higher learning for the award of a Master of Special Needs Education (MSNE).

Any work that is not my own has been properly cited, recognized, and referenced.

Signature **Date**

APPROVAL

This acknowledgment confirms that the disertation titled "**Teachers' Perspectives on the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Primary Schools in Masaka City, Uganda**" was produced with our help and oversight and is now prepared for submission to the Directorate of Research and Gradute Training.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my dear children: Nyinobusingye Agnes and Chemonges Johncox. I hope it will serve as motivation for them to achieve greater academic heights.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CWDs	Children with Disabilities
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EARS	Educational Assessment and Resource Services
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
FGDs	Focus Group Discussion
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IE	Inclusive Education
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NPA	National Planning Authority
NUDIPU	National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda
PES	Professional Education Studies
PTC	Primary Teacher Course
RCWSB	Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SNE	Special Needs Education
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures

TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
UN	United Nations
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISE	Uganda National Institute of Special Education
UPE	Universal Primary Education

ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is widely acknowledged in policy discussions globally. Despite the fact that the change to inclusive education has compelled mainstream teachers in Uganda to take on the duty of accommodating all learners in their classes, research indicates that a large number of teachers have different perspectives towards inclusive education. The study aimed at examining teachers' perspectives on inclusive education in Masaka City, Uganda. It was guided by three objectives: to establish teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education; to explore challenges teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education; and to examine how teachers cope with the challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education. The study used a qualitative approach for data collection and analysis using a phenomenological design. 16 teachers participated in the study. These were purposively selected from UPE schools in Kimaanya-Kabonera and Nyendo-Mukungwe Divisions, Masaka City. Data was gathered using interview and FGD guides whereas data analysis was thematic in nature. The findings of the study revealed that teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward inclusive education in UPE schools varied depending on whether they had knowledge or skills in special needs education or not. Teachers with knowledge and skills had positive perceptions and attitudes since they understood how to manage and teach learners with special needs whereas those who lacked such knowledge and skills had negative attitudes and perceptions about it. Regarding the challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education, the findings revealed that teachers had negative attitude towards the program, lacked training in special needs education, lacked the meaning of inclusive education concept, high teacher-pupil ratio, inaccessible school physical environment, lacked appropriate instructional materials and equipment, poor facilitation by the government, and lack of parental involvement in the education of learners with special needs. However, the results also revealed that teachers coped with such, and related challenges by involving in refresher courses, guidance and counseling of low-self-esteem learners with special needs, modification of the available instructional materials and resources, remedial teaching, and differentiation of learners' activities. Therefore, the study recommended for training of all teachers in special needs education across all UPE schools offering inclusive education in Masaka City through workshops, construction of more classrooms and employing more teachers to accommodate the large number of pupils that include those with special needs, providing modified teaching materials such as Braille, Braille papers, availing sign language interpreters to all UPE schools in Masaka City, and sensitizing parents to always take a key role in the education of their children with special needs through parents-teachers meetings.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 General Introduction

This study explored teachers' perspectives on the implementation of inclusive education in Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools in Masaka City. Inclusion is the most prominent movement in education that involves students with disabilities. The role of teachers in the educational system is widely recognized. But depending on who is being taught, there are obstacles to teaching in ordinary classrooms. The success in learning, socialisation, skill development, and educational opportunities for students with disabilities would all improve if teachers were more open to including pupils who have disabilities in the mainstream class. The effectiveness of inclusion in UPE schools in Uganda depends critically on informing the stakeholders in education about this complex matter in question. This is why it was critical to look at the individual perspectives in which teachers in UPE schools in Masaka City view the implementation of inclusive education. This chapter gives a background to this study, presents the problem statement, research purpose, objectives, and questions. It equally details the scope, justification, and significance of the study.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Historical Background

In the last thirty years, inclusive education (IE) strategies have been put forth and approved for use in the instruction of students with special needs across the globe (Hassanein, Alshaboul, & Ibrahim, 2021). The overarching principles of The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (Ainscow, Slee, & Best, 2019) serve as a foundation for the endorsement of this action. International, regional, and national

bodies are actively creating laws and regulations to encourage and promote the education of every child in general education classrooms. Creating an inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education system is the foundation of “SDG 4” of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that the United Nations (UN) developed for the 2030 Agenda. This goal calls for regular schools to have the resources needed to provide the best possible education to learners with disabilities (Rasooli & Karamani, 2020). Thus, inclusive education may be understood as the ideal approach for teaching children with special needs as well as a high-quality education for all (Hassanein et al., 2021). In Africa, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) passed in 1994 and allowed children with disabilities to attend regular schools, helped to further the inclusion movement (Meijer & Watkins, 2019).

This was accompanied by greater research, assistance, and regulations to guarantee that no child is excluded from full participation in school. Pather (2019), examining the development of inclusive education in Africa after The Salamanca Statement (1994), notes certain advancements in several nations. He observed a notable shift in attitudes toward disability as well as an increase in enrollment as a result of universal primary education. Since teachers’ needs in regular classroom are not as well-recognized, IE is still not being implemented effectively, Despite the fact that numerous African governments have released a framework of IE laws, their implementation in classroom settings is exceedingly difficult for a variety of reasons, including the dearth of resources and skill sets among teachers. Thus, it might be argued that the challenge with IE in many African nations is in the implementation of IE rather than the formulation of policy (World Bank, 2018). In order for teachers to successfully integrate an IE model in regular classrooms, researchers must fully acknowledge the viewpoints of teachers on IE implementation (Meijer & Watkins, 2019; Kinuthia, 2022). Uganda has been required to adopt inclusive education

approaches ever since it signed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1994) and the Salamanca Declaration (1994). As part of the *National Vision 2040*, Uganda's reform plan for disability development now centers on inclusion. Thus far, the reform strategy has placed a strong emphasis on reducing inequality among other things, enforcing the Uganda Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) Act of 2007 to guarantee that equality compliance is applied in all areas of the economy. In order to give guidance for the planning, budgeting, and oversight of harmonized disability interventions for individuals with disabilities in Uganda, the National Planning Authority (NPA) created the National Disability Inclusive Planning Guidelines (National Planning authority, 2017).

Therefore, among other things, these development plans serve as a roadmap for education sector planners as they develop and execute integrated education practices for Ugandan students with disabilities and other special needs. Teachers take this action because it allows these students to gain the most from their school experiences by learning alongside other students and receiving the help they need (Banda & Oketch, 2009). In Uganda, there are three types of schools where children with special needs can receive an education: special schools, schools that are affiliated to mainstream schools, and all-inclusive schools where students with or without disabilities can attend (World Bank, 2020). In Uganda, parents, special needs education teachers, and other key stakeholders have been engaged in a contentious debate over the viability of the inclusive education aim (Grace & Oketcho, 2022). The dispute centers on how inclusion is interpreted, which perplexes some parties, particularly teachers, because it mandates that students with special needs and disabilities attend mainstream classes regardless of their age, ability, or impairment (Chibaya et al., 2022). Teachers can be crucial to the progressive and successful implementation of inclusion if they have access to the right laws, resources, and assistance (Matundura, Bota, & Koderu, 2022). Given that today's classrooms are comprised of diverse groups of

students with a range of needs and skills, educational institutions—and teachers in particular—must be able to provide for these pupils in a way that meets their needs (Miller et al., 2022). Therefore, exploring the perspectives in which teachers view inclusive education is paramount since their perceptions of the programme can vary greatly, ultimately affecting the success of IE implementation in general primary schools.

1.1.2 Conceptual Background

Different individuals view inclusive education from different angles. According to (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2012) inclusive education is the process of integrating students with physical, developmental, or social-emotional challenges as well as those with long-term health issues into conventional classroom settings. When children with and without disabilities attend the same school, inclusive education takes place (Africa for Results Initiative, 2017). This speaks to the idea put forth by Save the Children (2016), which states that IE actively works to guarantee that every child, regardless of gender, ability, language, nationality, religion, or other distinguishing features, is supported in learning together with peers and in reaching their full potential. Therefore, the tenets of inclusive education include that disparities in aptitude are not indicators of superiority or inferiority and that diversity in a group is both desired and unavoidable. To guarantee that every pupil, regardless of disability, may engage in all classroom experiences and, to the greatest extent feasible, in the same way as everyone else, it offers whatever adaptations are required (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2012).

Conversely, perspective is a person's attitude or point of view toward something, like an occasion, a circumstance, or a person (Dignath, Rimm-Kaufman, Van Ewijk, & Kunter, 2022) , Perspective is defined as an educator's attitude or viewpoint on inclusive education (Deku & Vanderpuye, 2017). It is a specific manner of contemplating something, particularly when one's views or experiences are involved (Haug, 2017).

According to Ghadrian et al. (2017, p.2), perception can be understood as a dynamic process involving actions aimed at gathering information. This information acquisition is shaped by the environments individuals encounter. From this description, it can be inferred that perception represents an individual's feelings and sensory experiences.

The effective implementation of the inclusive education program greatly depends on the knowledge, attitudes, and abilities of teachers about inclusive education (Deku & Vanderpuye, 2017). In this sense, educators' perception of IE as ineffective underscores the prevailing apprehensions around it and provides credence to the possibility that pupils in inclusive classrooms are likely to continue being deprived of relevant and efficient learning (Nwadinobi, 2017).

1.1.3 Contextual Background

The context in which this study was carried out is the Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools in Masaka City. Located in Uganda's Central Region, Masaka City is roughly 130 km southwest of the country's capital, Kampala, and is connected to Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) via the Trans-African Highway. The center of Masaka City is located in the middle of Masaka District at latitude 0020'28.12, south, and longitude 31044.18, east. Masaka City Council has got a full section of Special Needs Education that has been operational since 1996 with the objective to sensitize the communities on education of children with disabilities and also to equip teachers with the methods of handling children with disabilities in the classroom environment. Nevertheless, the whole city of Masaka has got only one school handling children with special needs called Masaka School (SND) and yet, there is a total of 55 government-owned primary schools (Oketch, Yuwono, & Abdu, 2021). To address their educational demands, parents ought to make an attempt to enroll their children with special needs in nearby regular UPE schools. Nonetheless, one of the main barriers to the implementation of IE in regular UPE

schools may be teachers' incapacity to handle students with special needs in an inclusive classroom environment. According to the NUDIPU's (2018) "analysis of inclusiveness of teacher education policies in Uganda" report, teachers in UPE schools do not have the capacity to teach students with disabilities in an inclusive environment. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) declared its intention to hold teacher capacity building sessions on inclusive education methods as part of Uganda's commitments to the Global Disability Summit; however, these efforts are still in the planning stages and have not yet been put into action (Lule, 2022). Since teachers' opinions of the program might differ widely, it is crucial to explore how they perceive inclusive education (IE) as it will eventually impact on how well IE is implemented in regular UPE schools (Wang & Degol, 2016).

1.1.4 Theoretical Background

This study was guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) developed by Icek Ajzen in 1985 (Ajzen, 2011). The goal of the theory was to investigate how personal attitude, other people's expectations, and the sense of control over one's behavior affect one's actual behavior. It examines a person's capacity for carrying out particular actions as well as the manner in which various circumstances affect that capacity (Ajzen, 2011). Three elements influence behavior through intention to engage in a particular conduct in the TPB model: attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. An individual's attitude can be defined as their inclination to react either positively or negatively towards a psychological object (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2014). This theory looks at teachers' views and beliefs about inclusion and how those beliefs affect the way they choose to carry out inclusive teaching in the context of inclusive education. Subjective norms are the social pressures that people experience from others, usually from highly significant people like spouses, friends, and fellow employees, to do a particular action

(Freitag & Dunsmir, 2015). A teacher's willingness to implement inclusive education is influenced by the expectations and attitudes of other stakeholders when it comes to inclusive education. The viewpoints of teachers also influence one another. Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's perceptions of the behavior's complexity and their own capacity to carry it out. As per the notion of perceived behavioral control, the probability of performing a particular behavior rises when one believes they have completed it effectively (Stampoltzis & Papachristopoulous, 2018). Teachers' attitudes on how effective they are at implementing inclusive education have an impact on how well they implement it. The relationship between the perception of one's ability to carry out an action effectively and the actual behavior inside TPB may also be mediated by perceived behavioral control. The mere capacity to finish a task does not guarantee that it will be completed (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2014). According to Stampoltzis et al. (2018), this influence can be classified as indirect (I can accomplish the task) or direct (I accomplish the task). Gaining insight into this domain's extra power is crucial for understanding complex behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2014).

The TPB is pertinent to this study because it triggers impressions of a certain behavior. Understanding the interaction between these teachers' attitudes and behaviors, and how the former may impact the latter in an inclusive classroom, becomes crucial to understanding the perspectives of teachers regarding the actualization of inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka City. Furthermore, it seems appropriate to look at motivating factors using the TPB. The theory argues that there is an intention to go along with every behavior. This approach would help to explore how teachers' experiences and viewpoints on special education may affect the way they behave in the classroom.

1.2 Problem Statement

In Masaka City, the successful implementation of inclusive education in primary schools is a critical concern, as it directly impacts the quality of education and overall development of pupils. Despite the global emphasis on inclusive education, especially the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), the UNCRPD (2006) that guarantees education without discrimination, and the launch of the Universal Primary Education program by the Ugandan government in 1997 to guarantee access to high-quality education for all children in Uganda (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2008), there is a noticeable gap in the enrolment of children with special needs in regular primary schools in Uganda, particularly Masaka City. Approximately 16% of children in Uganda have disabilities, but only 5% of them have got access to education via inclusive learning and 10% via special schools (World Bank, 2020). In addition, it is indicated that 75% of children with special needs who enroll in primary one do not complete primary level of education (DiSU, 2016). Inclusive learning is a recommended approach in which pupils with disabilities attend regular schools since it promotes social engagement and awareness-raising (Wang & Degol, 2016). The complicated nature of inclusive education in this context may be exacerbated by a number of issues, such as scarce resources, insufficient training, and even resistance to change. Moreover, the absence of a thorough understanding of teachers' perspectives impedes the creation of effective strategies and interventions to improve the inclusiveness of primary education in Masaka City. Understanding different perspectives is essential to formulate focused policies, offering pertinent professional development opportunities, and cultivating a climate that is encouraging to teachers and pupils alike. Therefore, this study examined teachers' perspectives on inclusive education in Masaka City.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine teachers' perspectives on inclusive education in Masaka City in order to gain comprehensive understanding on how teachers perceive and engage with the concept of inclusive education. It aimed to explore teachers' beliefs, attitudes and experiences regarding the inclusion of learners with diverse learning needs in mainstream classrooms. By examining teachers' perspectives, the goal was to identify factors that facilitate or hinder the successful implementation of inclusive practices. Ultimately, this study sought to contribute valuable insights to educational policy and practices, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all learners.

1.4 Specific Objectives

- i. To establish teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education.
- ii. To explore challenges teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education.
- iii. To examine how teachers cope with the challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. How do teachers perceive inclusive education?
- ii. What challenges do teachers face when implementing inclusive education?
- iii. How do teachers cope with the challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education?

1.6 Scope of the Study

1.6.1 Content Scope

The study concentrated on the views of the teachers regarding the adoption of inclusive education in UPE schools. The study placed particular emphasis on teachers' knowledge of inclusive education, their perspectives on the challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education, and their strategies for overcoming these challenges when implementing inclusive education in UPE schools, notably in Masaka City.

1.6.2 Geographical Scope

The study was primarily done in UPE schools in Masaka City, in two divisions of Kimaanya-Kabonera and Nyendo-Mukugwe in line with the selection criteria in chapter three. This study area was chosen because earlier studies on inclusive education had been done in Greater Masaka, (Chemo, 2019) teachers' attitudes on inclusive education. This time the researcher wanted to carry out a qualitative study in Masaka City, to add evidence-based information.

1.6.3 Time Scope

The study was done within one year (March 2022 to April 2023). This study period included the time of writing a proposal, data collection, data analysis, report writing, and time for my supervisors comments and corrections.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study may support initiatives targeted at enhancing and advancing inclusive education in Masaka City's primary schools. The study may be helpful to elementary school instructors since it fills in gaps in the body of knowledge about inclusive education. They may benefit from understanding the justification for the inclusion. The study may serve as a foundation for the development of new special education policies. The findings of this

study may be useful to ministry of education policymakers. The study findings may be useful to future researchers in special needs education since they may expand on their understanding of teachers' attitudes on inclusion in UPE schools in Masaka City.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents literature reviewed on the state of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education in primary schools globally and Uganda in particular. It starts with the information on teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education, followed by the challenges teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education, and how teachers cope with the challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education. The identification of the knowledge gap that underpinned the study and defined its methodology is the last step taken in this chapter and it was presented in form of conclusion.

2.1 Teachers Perception and Attitudes towards Inclusive Education

Universal Primary Education (UPE) was introduced in Uganda in 1997, Every child irrespective of individual differences have got a right to study from a nearby primary government school. There has been many differences among various educational teachers over what constitutes inclusive education and inclusion (Ntare, 2018). This implies that inclusive education has been looked at as democratization of education which emphasizes providing equal opportunities to all children both ordinary and the disadvantaged irrespective of their ethnicity, sex, or location (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2013).

Inclusive education aims at providing education to all pupils studying in the same schools and same classrooms. Teachers in inclusive schools have to teach all pupils irrespective of their disabilities. They are expected to overcome segregation and stigma, and enhance social interactions between the ordinary and children with disabilities in the same class (Vaillant & Rodriguez, 2018). The goal of inclusion is to educate pupils who have

disabilities alongside the ordinary peers in a regular and general school environment. The authors add that inclusion requires respective governments to train and recruit special needs teachers, school administrators and managers to prepare classroom teachers, modify educational facilities and materials to ease movement and learning of pupils with disabilities (Chibaya et al., 2022). Teachers in UPE schools must meet all of these learners' needs while making adjustments to guarantee that learners with special educational needs accomplish to their full potential in education (Chibaya et al., 2022).

According to Khaleel et al. (2021), inclusion calls for teachers' preparedness and willingness to take on the dynamic role of inclusive educators. Teachers have to be aware that making physical and psychological provisions for learners with disabilities supports inclusive education. Implementation is greatly influenced by teachers' perspectives on inclusion and inclusive education. Teachers' positive attitudes help to include impaired pupils in regular classroom settings. While a negative attitude decreases students' morale, self-esteem, and academic ability in the classroom, a positive attitude promotes learners' academic success (Khaleel et al., 2021).

The researcher concurs with the aforementioned literature that a teacher's attitude is crucial to the implementation of inclusive education because it forms the foundation of any action a teacher must take to assist students with special needs and other disabilities. If a teacher has a negative attitude, a student with a disability will be at a disadvantage, but if the teacher has a positive perception, the teacher will always do his or her best to support the students with special needs (Dignath et al., 2022). Several teachers perceive inclusive education as an exciting task, the stresses associated with its implementation being seen as accommodating, fun and beneficial to both the disabled and ordinary children (Shani & Hebel, 2016). However, it is observed in the context of this study that children with impairment in an inclusive school experience numerous difficulties with regard to

engagement, communication, and ultimately academic performance levels. This requires a teacher with special needs knowledge and skills for effective teaching and learning (Okoro et al., 2020).

In addition to the above strategies to meet the needs of all students, Kagwiri (2017) suggested that there should be strategies to equip classroom teachers with special needs knowledge and skills like braille use, sign language and general disability management. He goes a head to say that inclusive education thrives when teachers possess the necessary skills to apply in all classroom situations. In relation to the above, Okwaput (2014) perceived that teachers in ordinary schools should possess skills in manipulating specialized equipment; to adjust the teaching methods, approaches and learning aids. To enable all learners in an inclusive classroom achieve academic progress and success. Nyoike, (2016) reaffirms that a positive perception among teachers to go for further studies in special needs education is necessary for classroom interaction and achievement in an inclusive setting. Other scholars such as Liu et al. (2016) maintains that learners with disabilities show academic progress when they receive individualized attention depending on the variations in the different modes of disabilities. In order to handle the difficulties of inclusive practice, teachers need to be creative and supportive. The idea of inclusive education is to eliminate all barriers that prevent learners with disabilities and ordinary learners from interacting socially and functionally (Nyoike, 2016; Liu et al., 2016).

The Ministry of Education and Sports (2013) reported that inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classes is seen as a sign that pupils with special educational needs have improved. According to the Ugandan Constitution of 1995, the Children's Statute of 1996, the Government White Paper of 1992 on the recommendations of the Education Policies Review Commission (1989), and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, this perception is accurate: *Children should be treated with the same dignity as*

other children, and they have the right to a fundamental education (Banda & Oketch, 2009). With this perception, many schools are now embracing inclusive education. However, the learner's level of disability may cause variation in teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. For instance, if a learner is physically handicapped, the teachers' perception of inclusion varies considerably. Teachers with little knowledge of inclusive education would appear to perceive themselves as unprepared to embrace inclusion and inclusive education because of the inappropriate training they might have received during College or University studies.

In the view of Nilhom (2021), many teachers seem to have different opinions and perceptions about inclusive education. Therefore it is crucial to discuss inclusive education's history in the literature now available to gain a thorough grasp of inclusive education. The primary school teacher needs the assistance of all system stakeholders rather than being left on their own in the fight to ensure the success of the implementation of inclusive education. Throughout their initial college and university training, they need to understand about inclusive pedagogy for sufficient experience in instructing various learners (Nilhom, 2021).

According to Avramidis and Kalyva (2017), decision making is influenced by attitudes and beliefs that are translated directly to learning experiences and actions. Regarding pupils who encounter learning obstacles, attitudes pertain to teachers perceptions both positive and negative of all the experiences they have in their classrooms. Similarly, Hutzler et al. (2019) revealed that teachers with positive attitude towards inclusive education place a high priority on implementing inclusive education. Specifically, teachers preferred learners with learning disabilities who did not require a teacher's additional management skills or instructional tools (Hutzler et al., 2019).

The researcher concurs with the above-mentioned literature that teachers in regular schools may not be able to manage profound disabilities in a mainstream setting. Based on the number of learners with profound disabilities enrolled in our schools' classrooms and the resources available to support their teaching and learning, teachers believe that these learners require a lot of attention from the more specialized teachers in special schools (Catellani, et al., 2018). This corroborates with Nutbrown et al. (2013) by demonstrating the ongoing doubt about the viability of including children with severe sensory impairments, poor cognitive function, modest intellectual disability, and hyperactivity in regular classrooms or mainstream schools. However, many academicians have concluded that emotional and behavioral issues rank among the most serious issues in ordinary schools where inclusive education is practiced. Nutbrown et al. (2013) added that teachers prefer handling learners who are physically handicapped or those with hearing impairment to learners with academic or behavioural challenges in an inclusive setting. This is an indication of a negative attitude towards inclusion and inclusive education. Despite some teachers' negative attitudes about inclusive education, special education should be provided for children with disabilities in regular classroom settings alongside typically developing students in conventional schools (Catellani, et al., 2018; Nutbrown et al., 2013).

In another aspect, Omamo (2017) revealed that the comparatively high post-intervention rates in Kenya showed that teachers acknowledged that there are other forces that affect their ability to teach students with impairments. According to Corcoran et al. (2020), programmes for teacher training and child-centred curricula lead to more positive teachers' views towards inclusion and inclusive education in general and can ameliorate teachers' concerns since it enhances teachers' self-efficacy. The effectiveness of the school significantly increases and they are better equipped to handle the difficulties of inclusive

education when they have the proper infrastructure and instructional resources for students with SEN. Sadly, some teachers stigmatize SEN students by considering them to be a burden since they need more time for remedial work (Gachago, 2018).

In another study by Domenech and Moliner (2014), it was suggested that inclusive education requires teachers to be sensitive to the teaching methods and approaches and keep on varying them accordingly to suit the educational needs of all learners. They are further required to be dynamic and flexible while using varied learner-centred teaching methods and approaches. Teachers are viewed as motivators and are crucial to the implementation of inclusive education. Therefore, it's critical to look at teachers' view points on inclusive education in traditional classrooms. Teachers' attitudes regarding including learners with impairments in the classroom have a big impact on how receptive they are to these students. According to Kurth and Forber (2017), if teachers do not have positive attitudes towards learners with special needs, the success of inclusive education may be at jeopardy. Although teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education are positive overall, many studies show that many teachers are uncomfortable managing students with special needs in regular classrooms because it takes a lot of time and many teachers lack the necessary pedagogical skills, such as sign language or knowledge of Braille (Mcwhirter et al., 2016).

Basic et al. (2020) contended that the effective implementation of inclusive education may be hampered by negative attitudes. Teachers must be part of the powerful team leading the implementation process during the teaching-learning for inclusive education to produce positive results. According to Kurth and Forber (2017), teachers are regarded as being essential to the achievement of inclusive education. They are supposed to provide a climate that is conducive to learning for all learners and to adequately, appropriately, and successfully address all educational and social concerns arising from learners' different

learning requirements where teachers are frustrated with inclusive education. This study purely focuses on the kind of training teachers get while still at College or University in special needs education which seems to be subjective. Because of this, it should be emphasized that teachers may have received enough training on inclusive education and special needs education, but there was a lack of money, particularly in government-funded programs (Ahmad, 2015).

Wong and Chik (2016) conceded that since purchasing equipment like Braille is too expensive and many schools cannot afford it, primary schools may force teachers to have unfavorable attitudes about inclusive education. If teachers lack adequate training and do not receive regular refresher training, implementing inclusive education would be challenging. The lack of funding for UPE Schools is expected to make it difficult for many elementary schools in Masaka City to adopt inclusive education. Teachers may have had good training but lack of facilitation in terms of the provision of instructional materials needed by children with disabilities may compel teachers to hold negative perceptions of inclusive education. It is important to note that teachers change their perspectives regarding inclusive education as a result of working in inclusive environments (Wong & Chik, 2016).

The concern of inclusive education is thought to be promoted by anticipated challenges that may emerge during the teaching-learning process. It has to be noted, however, that teachers' concerns about barriers to inclusive education have not been widely examined particularly in developing countries, teachers in Uganda are not proficient in sign language, which may affect teachers' perspective toward inclusive education.

2.2 Challenges Teachers Face in the Implementation of Inclusive Education

Children with disabilities are seen as different from their peers and needing care and medical attention (Clarsson & Mattsson, 2022). Any educational system's potential to succeed depends mainly on the teacher's capacity to handle the difficulties of inclusive education (Anderson, Spain, & Clarke, 2022). Teachers are crucial in ensuring that learners with special needs receive a high-quality education. Teachers in modern inclusive environments feel a lot of pressure as their roles revolve around their pedagogical teaching strategies, some teachers view inclusion as an insurmountable challenge, but others see it as a chance for professional and personal growth as they look toward the 2015 completion of the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To "provide inclusive equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all," according to Goal 4 of the SDGs. It appears that teachers' attitudes about including learners with impairments in the general educational environment are multifaceted and nuanced. Positive teacher attitudes are thought to facilitate and promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in conventional classroom settings, while negative attitudes are seen to inhibit inclusion (Engelbert, 2020). Teachers may resist inclusion and inclusive practices pointing out inadequate training and lack of enough facilities to foster inclusion in ordinary schools (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018).

According to Fish (2018), many teachers believed they lacked the necessary special needs training and were consequently ill-equipped to lead an inclusive class; however, the same study by Koss and Ntombela revealed that teachers who received formal training in special needs education held more positive opinions of inclusion and inclusive education. Although learners with special needs benefit a lot from an inclusive system of education, it has become so difficult to implement it because it has many setbacks demanding the teachers' intervention. Many educators ponder whether it is feasible and realistic to teach

both ordinary learners and learners with impairments in the same classroom (Walton, 2018).

Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018) noted that a teacher's level of education had no discernible impact on attitudes toward inclusive education. Teachers with higher levels of education had less favorable attitudes toward inclusion than those with lower levels of education (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018).

Contrary to the above, Pather (2019) found that female teachers did not significantly possess greater confidence in their capacity to teach learners with special educational needs than male teachers. Male educators had higher favorable attitudes about inclusive education. If ordinary classroom teachers have a bad attitude towards including learners with impairments, inclusive programs may not succeed. When general education teachers try to include learners with special educational needs, their negative attitudes about inclusion may become a barrier to reconcile the two opposing viewpoints presented above (Pather, 2019). If teachers accept inclusion positively, learners' academic success, sociability, skill development, and access to education would all boost their desire to learn in an inclusive environment (Ireru et al., 2020).

It has also been discovered that teachers who have a high level of self-efficacy and confidence in their capacity to inspire students even those with disabilities had an immediate impact on their academic performance and emotional wellbeing (Kakuru, 2014). Kakuru added that the most commonly voiced concerns by teachers regarding the implementation of inclusive education in Universal Primary Education schools were a perceived lack of teaching experience, teacher-centered pedagogy, commitment, and special needs educational equipment. This is the same was indicated by Markova (2018) and Adoyo and Odeny (2015) that all parties involved in education however, must

accommodate the perceived demands of primary teachers who are thought to hold different opinions about inclusion in regular courses.

This is in line with Kochung (2011) who pointed out that the goal of inclusion is to remove systemic impediments to education, such as physical obstacles to receiving a basic education. There is evidence to support the association between teachers' positive attitudes toward inclusive education and their assessments of their management skills for learners with special needs. It may be argued that the implementation of inclusive education presents the teacher with new difficulties that could stress them out at work (Adoyo & Odeny, 2015). If there are few discrepancies between the teachers' perceptions of the availability of equipment used by disabled learners and their perceived need for those resources and assistance that are seen to be vital in the effective implementation of inclusive education, it is assumed that the teachers' job-related stress will be minimized (Kochung, 2011).

Many schools in Uganda do not have enough resources necessary for speech defects and there are few teachers well versed in sign language. However, there is a need to train teachers in sign language to handle learners with hearing impairment. These teachers must possess the information necessary to modify their methods of instruction and make effective use of instructional aids. Despite the shift in thinking surrounding the adoption of inclusive education, the majority of teachers appear to have a variety of preconceived notions about how inclusive education will be successfully implemented in the general context (Ireru et al., 2020).

In order to provide a comprehensive education for children with disabilities in a normal setting, Felver et al. (2016) suggested that it is crucial to look at teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. One of the most important factors in the implementation of inclusive education is teachers attitude to inclusion (Felver et al., 2016). Since learners with special

needs and ordinary learners are both taught in inclusive schools and classes, parents of ordinary children express concern for the educational hindrance to their children yet to the contrary, parents of children with disabilities have a guarantee that their children's needs will be met by an inclusive system of education (Miguel, 2017).

The argument adjoining inclusive education may take time because its challenges cannot be overcome in a single day. Some teachers believe that learners who are physically or intellectually impaired and those suffering from autism may not benefit while studying in an inclusive setting (Baxter, 2017). They strongly believe that such children may not get the one-to-one attention they deserve or else they will lag in their education (Chaponda, 2016). Despite the developments in inclusive education, most schools in Uganda have discrepancies in management. Many schools do not have structures with ramps, Braille, wheelchairs and specialized teachers in Special Needs Education (SNE). All of the above appear to make it more difficult to execute inclusive education effectively. Numerous educators have noted that inclusive education is a bad policy that hasn't worked. Stakeholders at all levels are to blame for the failure since they are not accountable for ensuring the successful implementation of inclusive education (Wabila, 2016).

2.3 How Teachers Cope with the Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Inclusive Education

The scan through the available literature revealed that majority of children with disabilities and special needs received support in a mainstream environment, which was frequently provided by experts in particular fields, peripatetic teachers, those from expert centers, special schools, and professional consultants in the field of special needs education (Abdulrahman et al., 2021). In addition, mainstream teachers can come in when they see that a learner needs special attention. He/she takes an initiative to talk to the parent and a form is filled, where an evaluation is done and an assessment is made to check on the

learners' achievements to decide on the extra support to be given to the child and the specialist guides the teacher on how to support the child (Adigun, 2021).

It should be highlighted that inclusive education focuses on integrating learners with disabilities and other special needs into the regular classroom, Better performance will always depend on how satisfied or motivated learners with disabilities are. In this regard, Brydges and Mkandawire (2020) reported that the success of Inclusive Education in Benin was because the ordinary pupils willingly opted to offer the necessary assistance to learner with special needs.

A study done by Asongu et al. (2023) in Bostwana schools indicated that group contingencies were chosen by teachers for encouraging cooperative behavior and special needs and disabled children's positive behavior. In support of the aforementioned, when learners of all abilities participate in group activities, they develop their confidence and become more aware of social standards as they interact with their peers. In an inclusive environment, this social connection helped impaired students feel less stigmatized and had a higher self-esteem (Asongu et al., 2023). However, attitudes about children with special needs have changed negatively during the past few decades in many Ugandan populations. Many individuals anticipate having "normal" kids (Abba & Rashid, 2020). Because parents of supposedly normal children are concerned that their children might not learn as well as the impaired children in an inclusive environment, the debate over inclusion may last for a long time (Attan, 2022).

The government of the Republic of Uganda has made significant efforts to promote inclusive education through UPE programs and the decentralized Educational Assessment and Resource Services (EARS) programs, but much more needs to be done because students with physical disabilities require specialized resources and attention from teachers. Favorable coexistence, acceptance, and participation of children with disabilities

in school activities are enhanced when teachers adopt positive attitudes towards students with disabilities (Asongu et al., 2023). According to Lazaro and Anney (2016), teachers inspired disabled pupils to actively participate in co-curricular activities. The findings are in agreement with Farrant (2007) who maintains that a rich school's co-curricular programme enhances participation and interaction among learners irrespective of their physical differences.

Luwemba and Aiseta (2021) contended that the philosophical basis for inclusive education in Uganda rests on providing basic education at a free cost to all school-going age children. Free education makes education universal, accessible, and affordable. Therefore, headteachers should not charge fees in UPE schools because such charges affect the enrolment and retention of disabled children in UPE Schools (Luwemba & Aiseta, 2021). In a study by Peebles and Mendagilo (2014), it was found that special needs education training helped to allay the anxieties of pre-service teachers about inclusion. The social model of disability makes the following observation: "A person's impairment is not the cause of disability; rather, disability is the product of the way society is organized, which excludes people with impairment (Torres & Tackett, 2016). In this regard, a learner who is visually impaired can be disabled if the teacher makes him/her uncomfortable by unconsciously hindering the child from accessing the class or desk. Teachers should create columns and rows where visually impaired learners can pass to access their seats. Inconsistent education is that which does not offer equity and instead does not meet the educational needs of all learners (Cansiz & Cansiz, 2018).

As put forth by the government of Uganda, "Equitable access to social services and education is a human right" (Special Education Act, 1995). Various laws aim to ensure that disabled children have access to educational opportunities (CWDs). Everyone involved in education must take part in the implementation of inclusive education because

it is a continuous process. The stakeholders have a cardinal role in identifying and removing barriers and putting in place a conducive learning environment for all learners (Halder, 2023). Teaching students with special educational needs in an environment that welcomes everyone is difficult; teachers' creativity is essential in developing a variety of instructional methods in this situation. Teachers need to employ varied teaching methods and approaches these may include among others; cooperative learning, individualized instruction, peer support as well as remedial teaching (Kumar, 2019).

It is also argued that learner-centred lessons that require peer support are fundamental in an inclusive setting. Such approaches and methods are aimed at making education accessible, affordable and increasing learners' school achievements (Eliot, 2008). The researcher agrees with the statement that a teacher needs to be well-versed in numerous approaches for effective management of children's special educational demands in order for learning to occur. The burden to manage an inclusive class is lessened as a result, and it is clear that the average student will benefit even more from this than they would from a teacher using more conventional techniques of instruction.

In support of the above, the Primary Teacher Curriculum in Uganda emphasized Child-centred pedagogy like "Think – pair – share, cooperative learning, and role play dramatization among others (MoES – PTC Curriculum, 2012). However, the application of suitable pedagogy requires equipment like braille and tactile materials which are too expensive for both government and parents. Considering effectiveness evidence as per meta-studies conducted by UNISE and the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), the best pedagogical strategies for all students and teachers are those that teachers can utilize to teach students who are having difficulty learning. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that there are learners with autism, dyslexia, multiple disabilities, and cognitive impairment among others who may need special handling in an inclusive setting

(Okwaput, 2014). Teachers should use approaches that make learners with disabilities active in class. Ahmad (2015) suggested some approaches that help disabled children to learn more effectively. These approaches include; learning by doing, peer teaching, mediated learning, child to child and task analysis. Therefore, Teachers need to have enough exposure to handling different groups of learners with varying individual differences, sex differences, intelligence differences, personality differences as well as socio-economic status differences, with such training, teachers can promote their attitudes positive toward inclusion (Elder, 2015).

Furthermore, the government of Uganda has done much to foster inclusive education but a lot is still needed. For example, many schools have infrastructure like latrines, classrooms, and libraries among others which do not favour the movement of disabled children (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2013). It was also indicated that adequate financing greatly erases inadequacies and deficiencies in schools. The government should boost capitation grants provided to schools. For instance, Donohns and Bornman discovered that the implementation of inclusive education depends heavily on planning and engagement from all stakeholders in the field of education (Donohue & Bornman, 2015). Other studies such as Eliot (2008) has shown that teachers had reduced resistance to inclusion strategies as a result of taking professional development courses with an inclusive education component.

Moreover, Ajzen (2011) revealed that teachers who had taken inclusive education courses as part of their pre-service and in-service training demonstrated more favorable attitudes about inclusive education than teachers who had not. For inclusive education teacher training, it is vital to change the instructors' unfavorable attitudes regarding the subject matter (Ajzen, 2011). It was also proposed that teachers should be facilitated with on-the-job training on how to manage behavioural problems and identify learners' problems and

be able to provide appropriate guidance and counseling (Engelbert, 2020). The implementation of inclusive education depends heavily on teacher refresher programs for students with special needs of which also, students with disabilities need to feel accepted by their peers and teachers in order for everyone to feel comfortable, implying that a favorable environment must be created (Wang et al., 2016).

To foster a supportive learning environment, the rules and regulations of the classroom must reflect cooperation, respect, and acceptance (Wong & Chik, 2016). Every learner should be motivated to take part in all activities, both within and outside of the classroom, and their efforts should be valued. All of their students' teachers must promote respect for one another (Wong & Chik, 2016). Teachers can hardly expect to cope without special training. Many gifted children in an inclusive setting are not recognized by teachers, fellow pupils as well as parents because the characteristics they display can be so easily confused (Panizzolo & Galiana, 2016). However, a common problem arises from the fact that often, their emotional development does not match their intellectual development (Wong & Chik, 2016). Therefore, studying with challenged children makes non-disabled students more tolerant, accepting, and cognizant of the fact that a disability is not a sign of incapacity (Wabila, 2016).

As put forth by Ahmad (2015), learners with special needs grow more sensitive to the needs of other kids, feel more at ease among kids with disabilities, accept diversity, and understand that disabilities are not the result of divine judgment or ancestral curses. However, though inclusive education may prove to be a positive factor to learner without disabilities and special needs, it has to be noted that disabled children especially those who are visually impaired and those with hearing impairment tend to become backward learners when they study in an inclusive setting. Remedial instruction is a common task for

teachers. Teaching becomes tiresome and time-consuming as teachers frequently spend a lot of time giving remedial lessons (Ahmad, 2015).

In the past, it appeared that teachers who wanted to assist students with special educational needs were under stress due to the inadequate resources offered to support the teaching and learning process in the mainstream educational system (Wong & Chil, 2016). However, many nations view a lack of resources, including human and financial resources, as one of the obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education. In contrast, the population is more civilized and there are more resources in industrialized nations, which makes it possible to implement inclusive education successfully (Wong & Chil, 2016). These nations place a strong emphasis on using innovative methods to ensure that all children receive high-quality education in the regular schools located in their local communities (Gidlow et al., 2016). For a child to learn and develop effectively, parents' active participation is a crucial component. Parent's socio-economic factor affected their involvement in the general children's education (Vaillant & Rodriguez, 2018). The researcher agrees with the above scholarly literature because it has been noted that children from humble backgrounds face challenges when trying to acquire education. These challenges range from lack of scholastic material, tuition fees, poor medication, poor nutrition, lack of love, and care from the parents of which teachers need to have positive attitudes to provide psycho-social support to these learners with special needs so that they can achieve their education.

2.4 Conclusion

Different authors have revealed both positive and negative perceptions towards inclusive education. This influences the teachers' behaviour, beliefs, and perceptions in a class. However, this study focuses specifically on Ugandan teachers' attitudes and opinions about inclusive education. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to get insight

into the viewpoints of primary school teachers in Masaka City regarding the implementation of inclusive education. It is crucial to restructure traditional schools to accommodate learners with disabilities. Based on the literature analysed above, it is evident that before 1950, people with disabilities were regarded as being physically and socially unable to engage in any type of wage-earning activity (UNISE, 1997). It was after 1952 that compassionate people like Sir Andrew Cohen sought aid from the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind (RCWSB) to start special schools for the disabled, particularly the Blind in Uganda.

Despite the passage of the Children's Amendment Act (2016), UPE Guidelines (1997), and Government White Paper on Education (1992). Children with disabilities continue to face many difficulties in Uganda, including not receiving assistance at school, being called names, and mistreated by teachers, to mention but a few. These attitudes have greatly contributed to the high rate of dropout among learners with special needs and as such, since learners in an inclusive setting have special educational needs, teachers should always find it necessary to have relevant modifications when teaching to assist all children to equally gain in the teaching-learning processes at school. Inclusive education should emphasize teaching pedagogy which is learner-centred and creates opportunities for learning and acquisition of skills, values, and attitudes for life.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methods that were used in the study. It presents details on the research approach and design, study area, study population, sample size, sampling techniques, study unit, data collection tools and methodologies, research procedures, data analysis, rigor and trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and limitations and delimitations of the study.

3.1 Research Approach and Design

The study used a qualitative approach deploying a phenomenological design. A qualitative approach seeks to answer the whys and hows of the phenomenon in the question (Cresswell, 2014). A research design, according to Nwadinobi (2017) is a plan or strategy utilized to come up with solutions to an issue. Qualitative approach was deemed suitable for the current study since it evaluates real-life experiences caused by the presence of difficulties that may result in transferrable interpretation (Kaplan & Maxwell, 2015). A phenomenological design was used because it concentrates on the opinions, practices, and viewpoints of specific participants. It is well-suited for exploring and understanding the lived experiences of individuals. It also allows a researcher to delve into the subjective perceptions, meanings and interpretations that people attach to their experiences. Study participants explained their viewpoints using words rather than quantifiable numerical measurements. This led to an in-depth understanding of teachers' perspectives on the implementation of inclusive education in universal primary schools in Masaka City.

3.2 Study Area

The study was carried out in Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools in Masaka City in the two divisions of Kimaanya-Kabonera and Nyendo-Mukungwe. The study was conducted in (4) UPE schools that were in line with the study criterion. UPE schools were chosen because the government of Uganda is committed to implementing inclusive education irrespective of individual differences. In addition, majority of the pupils with special needs come from low-income families, which makes them sometimes unable to afford private as well as special education. UPE schools with more special needs pupils enabled the researcher to collect data with enriched teachers' perspectives.

3.3 Study Population

A study population is a general unit from where a sample is drawn (Kaplan & Maxwell, 2015). The population of this study included teachers in UPE schools in Masaka City in the two divisions under study. Teachers were a targeted population because they were the study center and key stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education. Since they taught in inclusive schools, teachers were expected to be having firsthand knowledge and experience to positively contribute to the study.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

3.4.1 Sample Size

A sample is a discrete segment of the population that a researcher chooses to include in the study Creswell, (2014). It serves as an exemplary of the populace (Banister et al., 2011). A total of 20 participants were purposefully selected after seeking their formal consent from the targeted population of 48 teachers in the four selected inclusive UPE schools in Masaka City. However, the response rate was 16 participants and these are the ones who were interviewed and involved in FGDs. The response rate of 16 participants

out of the targeted sample of 20 participants emerged due to the fact that the remaining four teachers who missed the study were not available in schools by the time interview and Focus Group Discussions were conducted. Among the 16 teachers who took part in the study, nine (9) were females whereas seven (7) of them were males. The females were slightly more than males because they were more interested in the study than males. The study included every interested classroom teacher at the time of the study and excluded those who were not interested. The sample size was appropriate given that it was gender inclusive.

3.4.2 Sampling Techniques

Sampling is the process of choosing study participants (Cresswell, 2014). In this study, purposive sampling was used to select the participants to take part in the study. Purposive sampling is an approach where participants are chosen because the researcher feels one is a key informant in the study (Sarantakos, 2005). The purposefully sampled teachers were those who had taught in the targeted schools for at least four years, possessed a special need education certificate or Diploma, or had taken a Special Needs Education training course in Grade 111 Certificate level as part of their Professional Education Studies (PES). Purposive sampling led to the selection of 20 class room teachers since they met the above criteria and had experience of interacting with pupils more often. Therefore, they were expected to have valid, adequate, and relevant information about the study.

3.5 Sources of Data Collection

Primary and secondary sources were used for data collection. This helped the researcher to gather both first hand information from primary teachers and what earlier researchers found out on the topic of study.

3.4.1. Primary sources

Primary data is any information that is unique and has never been recorded before (Cohen et al. 2017). In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were utilized to collect primary data from the participants and this was guided by in-depth interview and focus group discussion guides.

3.4.2 Secondary sources

This involved gathering data already collected by earlier researchers (Amin, 2010). This data is neither collected directly by the researcher nor specifically for the readers (Best et al., 1986). Secondary data was collected from diverse sources of documents like thesis, reports, texts books, and government publications as well as electronically stored information. The collection of secondary data enriched primary data from the field, together with minutes of the meetings, the teaching timetable, and departmental reports that were referred to.

3.5 Study Unit

According to Cresswell (2014), a study unit is a single entity analyzed during the study. This study unit was a classroom teacher who participated in study. This unit provided first hand information for the study.

3.6 Research Methods and Instruments

Research methods refer to the means and instruments for data collection (Ritchie et al., 2013). This study on teachers' perspectives on inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka city employed interviews and focus group discussions as data collection methods. Data collection instruments used were the interview guide and focus group discussion guide as reflected on appendix C and D, which led to the collection of primary data.

3.6 Research Methods

3.6.1 Interview

An interview is the qualitative research method that collects data by asking questions. It can involve one or more participants of whom the interviewer asks questions using an interview guide. In this study, face-to-face interviews were held with teachers. Interviewing is commonly adopted where the researcher is interested in getting a detailed and deeper exploration of a given phenomenon (Cresswell, 2014). Interviews are however conducted between few people and hence, were complemented with Focused Group Discussions. The interviews were held at selected UPE primary schools upon appointment with the teachers. The interviews took a duration of 30-40 minutes.

3.6.2 Focused group discussion

Focus Group Discussion is a qualitative research method in which a manageable group of study participants are carefully selected into a discussion. It is an interactive discussion between a moderator and discussants regarding a given topic (Namelly, 2015). Two FGDs were held at selected UPE schools each of which had four teachers including male and female participants. Responses from the participants/ discussants were noted in order to gather in-depth information. The researcher led participants in a protracted conversation that lasted for 50min to 1hour and was facilitated by a focus group discussion guide. The

research continued to elicit and document significant concerns about teachers' viewpoints on the implementation of inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka City throughout the conversation. This led to the collection of primary data. The researcher's decision to use focus group discussions was supported on two counts: first, it stimulates critical thinking and a broad understanding of teachers' viewpoints on the implementation of inclusive education and secondly, it enriches data due to the different skills, knowledge, and experiences of different individuals.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

3.7.1 In-depth interview guides

Face-to-face interviews were held with participants from the four selected schools for the study. Interview guides were prepared to facilitate the interview. Within the in-depth interview guide, open-ended questions were used to ease probing (Cresswell, 2014). This enabled the researcher to collect first-hand information over what they thought, knew or felt about teachers' perspectives on the implementation of inclusive education. The researcher started by first; creating a rapport in form of greetings and introductions. In-depth interviews were conducted individually by the researcher and each intersession lasted for about 1 hour. The researcher engaged a research assistant who took notes and made recordings since oral interviews were preferred because face expressions gave spoken responses more importance. Depending on how the interviews were progressing, the researcher kept asking probing questions to get more study relevant information. The researcher made sure the participants did not stray from the topic at hand. This led to the collection of raw data in line with the study objectives.

3.7.2 Focus group discussion guide

Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) were held with teachers in the four selected schools for the study. At each school, one FGD was held with 4 teachers. Focus Group Discussion guide was formulated to facilitate in moderating these discussions. In this study, the researcher during the discussion would make questions more clear to avoid misconceptions (Martins & Martins, 2014).

A research assistant was hired to facilitate in recording the participants' responses. FGD helped in generation of views, emotions, feelings, perceptions, and beliefs of participants during the study (Sarantakos, 2005). The FGD had three (3) themes, organized as major topics of the discussion and arranged according to study objectives.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was guided by the tools mentioned in 3.6 above and detailed in appendix section Appendix C and D as guided by the researcher. After designing and printing the instruments for data collection, a letter introducing the researcher to the proper people at the Education Department was received from the Directorate of Research and Graduate Training, Kyambogo University in order to let her undertake the study. Formal consent was sought from the selected primary schools before data collection. On the basis of booked appointment dates and days for holding interviews, and Focused Group Discussions, data was collected.

On dates/days of appointment, face-to-face interview sessions were held with each teacher at their respective schools. Self-introductions were made before every session to reduce errors in recoding and to make sure that each voice reflected its owner. The researcher requested to be allowed to record the study participants using her mobile phone for consistency purpose. During data collection, the researcher paid more attention to the

participants' oral message, facial, and body expressions. The interview guides were written in English and tested on pilot study for clarity. An interview session took 30-40 minute per participant. The pilot study of some UPE teachers with the same characteristics but not among study participants was conducted and did not get any challenge with the guides, which confirmed the guides' clarity and consistence.

The researcher also conducted Focussed Group Discussion with the participants (teachers). On appointment days, teachers were arranged into groups of four from each school. A Focus Group Discussion was held with each of the group whereby, the researcher was the moderator whereas the recorder captured the information in the discussion. A FGD guide helped to keep the discussion on truck and relavant to the objectives. Each Focused Group Discussion took 50 minutes to one hour. Data collected from teachers was transcribed, analysed thematically and finally, a report was compiled.

3.9 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of transforming and modeling data to discover meaningful information (Sultan & Yin, 2013). It is a continuous process, starting with taking field work notes involving interview transcription, coding, data reduction and interpretation of data.

The data collected was analysed thematically following the study objectives. It was processed before subjecting it to any useful analysis and errors in raw data were corrected, coded, and stored in an appropriate form. Interviews with the participants yielded primary data that the researcher carefully recorded and examined. After the interview and FGD responses were coded for consistency and variation, the data were examined. In order to evaluate and analyze the data, links within and between the themes that were created based

on the specific objectives were established. The file was prepared in form of codes for the different categories of responses.

Salient verbal responses were presented in verbatim form by either quotations or paraphrasing. The quotations and paraphrases helped the researcher to expound on some of the conclusions derived from the qualitative analyses.

3.10 Rigor and Trustworthiness

According to Cresswell (2014), rigor and trustworthiness means that the researcher has confidence and trust that his or her collected data is valid and of sufficient quality. Rigor and trustworthiness methods were used before, during and after the study as follows: Prior to the study, a pilot study of four teachers not among the study participants were used to test the data collection instruments, in case of any word or question not clear for reporting. During the study, the researcher's phone was used to record so that each voice matched its owner, and for further clarity when reporting. Serial numbers were used in the study and they were cross checked to avoid wrong or double coding.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The participants provided written informed consent and the researcher strictly followed the rules of disclosure. The fact that participation in the study was entirely voluntary, withdrawal or refusal did not have negative effects on the participants. In addition, the purpose of the study was made clear to the accessible public by the researcher and the principles of integrity, discretion, and privacy protection were upheld. The acceptable approaches and procedures were also used for participant selection and data processing. The contributions of past researchers' works were appreciated and cited and the researcher avoided committing any plagiarism. Finally, the study participants' identities were kept anonymous and the information they provided was reported in aggregate whenever the

situation called for it. On COVID-19, the researcher followed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

3.11 Limitations and Delimitations

As a qualitative study based on a small number, it was not good enough for generalization. The data that were elicited was self-reported. Therefore, the conclusions derived from the data collected for the study were as trustable as the participants who provided it. Some participants hide or exaggerated some information. Under such a case, some pertinent issues could be left out. The researcher tried to elicit data from a sizeable sample. Moreover, the study tools were designed, tested for clarity, which led to in-depth valid and reliable data on UPE teachers' perspectives on inclusive education. Therefore, this study, irrespective of its limitations, led to the indepth understanding of UPE teachers' perceptions on inclusive education in Makasa City.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study, including analysis and discussion of the findings based on the objectives of the study. The purpose of the study was to examine teachers' perspectives on inclusive education in Masaka City. The presentation starts with the demographic characteristics of the study participants and it is followed by themes as regards the study objectives: teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education, the challenges teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education, and how teachers cope with the challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education. Participants' own voices featured prominently in the presentation of the findings under themes.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Demographic characteristics were gathered regarding the participants' sex, status, employment history, and highest level of education. These characteristics portray more on participants' perspectives on inclusive education.

Table 4.1:*Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants in an interview.*

<i>Interview Participants</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Year of experience in the field</i>	<i>Level of education</i>	<i>FGD No</i>
01	A	Female	32	10yrs	Diploma	1
02	A	Male	45	23yrs	Bachelor's	1
03	A	Female	26	2yrs	G.111	1
04	A	Female	34	9yrs	Diploma	1
05	B	Female	35	13yrs	G.111	2
06	B	Male	38	17yrs	Diploma	2
07	B	Male	49	25yrs	G.111	2
08	B	Female	34	11yrs	G111	2
09	C	Female	37	15yrs	Diploma	3
10	C	Male	25	4yrs	G111	3
11	C	Male	23	2yrs	G.111	3
12	C	Female	58	34yrs	Bachelor's	3
13	D	Female	32	9yrs	Diploma	4
14	D	Male	46	22yrs	Diploma	4
15	D	Male	39	18yrs	G.111	4
16	D	Female	34	12yrs	G.111	4

Source: Primary Data

Table 4:1 show that both females and males participated in the study, female making up the majority. The inclusion of both sexes is justified by the widespread belief that men and

women perceive things differently. Male and female participants thoughts and opinions were recorded. This made it easier for the researcher to gather diverse opinions from teachers about how inclusive education is seen in UPE schools in Masaka City. The decision to use both sexes was also justified by the need to prevent prejudices and bias from developing if only one sex was chosen for the study. Regarding age of the participants, the results in Table 4.1 show that nine participants, forming the majority, were in their age of thirties at the time of study, three participants were in their twenties, three participants in their forties and one participant was in fifties. The rationale behind considering the participants' age was that someone's age can influence his or her perception of inclusive education.

The findings in the table also show that the participants were of varying teaching experiences. The majority of participants (seven) had taught for a period of 10-19 years whereas five had a working experience of 0-9 years, three had 20-29 years' experience, and only one had worked for over thirty years. To do with the level of education, the results in the table show that eight participants had acquired a Grade 111 certificate, six had Diploma, two had Bachelor's degree, and none of the participants was trained in PGDE, Master's degree nor had attained a PhD. The implication here is that people tend to perceive things differently based on their academic qualifications. Therefore, the conclusions of the study could be confidentially drawn from the variations in participants' level of education.

4.2 Theme one: Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education (IE)

Teachers' perceptions toward inclusive education varies. The findings revealed that teachers had both positive and negative perceptions as well as attitudes towards inclusive education in government schools in Masaka City. Teachers believed that learners with

special needs develop self-esteem among themselves and get peer support from ordinary learners. It was also revealed that learners with special educational needs face stigma in addition to the fact that inclusive education worsens the child's learning problems, consumes a lot of time, and that learners with special needs receive inappropriate support as explained in the sub-themes that follow:

4.2.1 Positive attitudes

Sub-theme 1: Development of self-esteem among learners with special needs:

Responses from the teachers during interviews showed that some of them had positive attitudes towards inclusive education. In this regard, teachers were of the opinion that inclusive education is needed since it helps in the development of self-esteem of learners with special needs. This is revealed in the following verbal quotes that reflect teachers' views in relation to development of self esteem among learners.

In an interview, Participant 06 in school "C" said;

"Learners with special needs freely interact with the ordinary learners when in an inclusive setting. They play, eat, learn together in the same environment that helps them identify their potentials and they start to believe in themselves hence promoting their self esteem."

In addition, Participant 13 in school "D" also said;

"Inclusive education reduces the social gap between the disabled and the so-called 'normal children. As learners with special needs interact with the ordinary learners they gain confidence and they come to discover their strength and weaknesses."

"Teachers have become more accomodative to inclusion as a result of receiving training in the subject of special needs education at colleges,

which dispels many common myths and prejudices about disability”

(Participant 13 in school “D”).

The above narratives indicate that some teachers had positive perceptions towards inclusive education due to their belief that children with special needs would develop self-esteem when included in the mainstream school. Teachers do believe that inclusive education promotes confidence among learners with special needs and in a long run, this helps them to develop their potentials and achieve educational goals. The findings concur with Khaleel et al. (2021) who found that teachers' positive attitudes help to include impaired pupils in regular classroom settings whereas a negative attitude decreases students' morale, self-esteem, and academic ability in the classroom, a positive attitude promotes learners' academic success.

Sub-theme 2: Learners with special needs receive peer support from ordinary learners:

The study established that learners with special educational needs would receive peer support from ordinary learners. Indeed, inclusive education promotes peer support where ordinary learners are encouraged to interact and support their counterparts with special educational needs. In support of this view, Focused Group 3, Participant 09 in school “C” had this to said;

“ Children with special needs receive support from their peer (ordinary learners) when they are in an inclusive setting. In this school we have a child with a wheel chair who is always supported by the peer when playing and when in class most especially when the wheel chair gets stack”

In addition, Focused Group 4, Participant 16 in school “D” said;

“In my class, I have a learner with hearing impairment and during the teaching and learning process, the ordinary learners help her clarify the point that she has not heard clearly.”

Similarly, Participant 04 in school “A” during an interview supported the above views and had this to say;

“Learners discuss together and they help each other to work out specific tasks correctly through groupwork. They cooperate among themselves that is; between learners with special needs and the ordinary learners.”

The forementioned quotes confirm that teachers are aware that inclusive education is a good idea for all learner to study in same environment and they believe that it promotes peer support among ordinary learners and learners with special needs. It was also observed that when learners with special needs are given opportunities to interact with ordinary learners, it increases their self confidence as well as their ability to succeed in school and post-school adjustment. The findings are consistent with Shani and Hebel (2016) who established that several teachers perceive inclusive education as an exciting task, the stresses associated with its implementation being seen as accommodating, fun and beneficial to both the disabled and ordinary children.

4.2.2 Negative attitudes

Sub- theme 1: Stigmatization of learners with special educational needs:

The study also revealed that inclusive education promotes stigmatization of learners with special educational needs in UPE schools, Masaka City. In this regard, it was revealed that learners with special needs were stigmatized by ordinary learners as reported by majority of teachers who took part in the study. According to these teachers, ordinary learners see learners with special educational needs as unable to join their activities both academically

and socially. For example, they do not involve them during time for play, group work, meals to mention but a few. This makes learners with special needs feel out of place, self-denial and limited participation in all areas of life.

In an interview, Participant 01 in school “A” said;

[...]Some ordinary pupils in an inclusive class tease learners with special needs by taking away their assistive devices like crutches, hind their brail machines, nike name them in like Mulema, kuruba. Some students go a head to chanse from their play group. This stigmatizes special needs pupils and some even lodge some classes and hide in toilets[...]

Besides the above, the findings of the study also revealed that learners with special needs in inclusive UPE schools in Masaka City got stigmatized by some of their own teachers.

This is exemplified by Participant 08 in school “B”, Focused Group 2 who said that:

[...]Some teachers do not appreciate learner’s differences, they see them as slow learners, disadivantaged and do not give them the required support, making them get stigmatized[...]

What is noteworthy in the above narratives is that learners with special needs are stigmatized by both teachers and fellow learners (ordinary learners). This affects their participation in school activities and can also lead to school drop out. These findings are consistent with Gachago (2018), whi found that some teachers stigmatize SEN students by considering them to be a burden since they need more time for remedial work. This is in agreement with Domenech and Moliner (2014) who suggested that inclusive education requires teachers to be sensitive to the teaching methods and approaches and keep on varying them accordingly to suit the educational needs of all learners.

Sub- theme 2: Worsens the child’s learning problem:

Responses from the teachers’ interviews showed that most teachers believe that inclusive education worsens the child’s learning problem because the learning conditions in mainstream schools are not favourable to accommodate learners with special needs. In this regard, Focused Group 3, Participant 09 in school “C” said;

"It is not entirely appropriate to teach learners with special needs in the same classroom with ordinary learners, because teachers may not consider the needs of learners with special needs in an inclusive classroom as opposed to when they are in special schools where they are given special attention based on their abilities."

This was supported by Participant 16 in school “D” in an interview who reported that;

“The unfavourable conditions in government schools can not allow learners with special needs to participate and interact with others freely and this affects their learning.”

The above statements indicate that teachers had negative perceptions about the learning conditions of learners with special needs in inclusive UPE schools and they believed that managing learners with special needs in an inclusive classroom is not appropriate. Teachers expressed that its extremely not possible to have learners with special needs and the ordinary ones being managed in the mainstream class. They added that teachers may not consider the learning abilities of pupils with special needs in mainstream classes as it would have been the case in the Special schools. This is in agreement with Basic et al. (2020), who found that the effective implementation of inclusive education may be hampered by negative attitudes. Similarly, the findings concede with Nutbrown et al.

(2013), who found that emotional and behavioral issues rank among the most serious issues in ordinary schools where inclusive education is practiced.

Sub-theme 3: Consumes a lot of time trying to help learners with special needs catch up:

Another teachers' negative attitude towards inclusive education that was realized during the study was the consumption of too much time trying to help learners with special needs catch up. Most of the teachers viewed inclusive education as time consuming as the teacher tries to help learners with special needs catch up with the content being delivered. Teachers and ordinary learners saw learners with special needs and disabilities as time consumers when engaged in an activity. For example, they frequently ask for pardon and physical assistance among others. For instance, Participant 02 in school "A" expressed that:

"Some teachers perceived inclusive education negatively because it consumes a lot of time and calls for continuous remedial lessons in order to help special needs children catch up with other children."

Similarly, the findings revealed that teachers worry about the high demand from the head teacher concerning good grades and yet, the time that is left may not be enough to provide extra support to learners with special needs in the mainstream classroom. Focused Group 1, Participant 04 in school "A" narrated that:

"Learners with special needs require a lot of time which teachers don't have. It becomes worse when the head teacher is demanding for good grades from the teacher at the end of the year. When learners perform poorly, the teacher is penalized for poor performance so we tend to move with the fast learners."

The implication of the aforesaid results is that practicing teachers with negative perceptions on inclusive education appear to be faced with the challenge of limited time for teaching. This is due to the fact that they have to use most of their time to help learners with special needs catch up with the rests of the learners in an inclusive classroom. Teachers complained that learners with special needs in mainstream classes need extra support from the teacher and the peers, which requires a lot of time that may not be available and thus, learners are affected in their learning process. The findings are in agreement with Mcwhirter et al. (2016), who found that although teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education are positive overall, many teachers are uncomfortable managing students with special needs in regular classrooms because it takes a lot of time and many teachers lack the necessary pedagogical skills, such as sign language or knowledge of Braille.

Sub-theme 6: Inappropriate academic support for learners with special needs:

Although it was not frequently mentioned, the findings from the interviews also showed that learners with special needs enrolled in inclusive UPE schools in Masaka City ran the danger of obtaining inappropriate academic support. In this regard, one of the study participants, a teacher, stated that teachers usually had concerns about whether learners with special needs would receive the necessary support for their learning in inclusive schools. She said that, generally speaking, teachers believed that, depending on the severity of their students' unique needs or disabilities, they could attend regular classrooms or special schools. In her own statement, Participant 08 in school “B” during an interview had this to say;

“Parents of learners with special needs should make a decision on where they would like their children to study from depending on their ability.”

Children need to go to schools where they can be given appropriate support.”

The above narrative indicates that some teachers in inclusive UPE schools in Masaka City have little to no possibility of offering suitable learning support to learners with special needs. In this aspect, teachers anticipate that learners with special needs, based on the severity of their individual needs, would attend inclusive schools or else, it would be better if they attended special schools. The findings are in agreement with Ahmad (2015), who found that because purchasing equipment like Braille is too expensive and many schools cannot afford it, primary schools may force teachers to have unfavorable attitudes about inclusive education. In addition, the findings are in agreement with the idea of Wong and Chik (2016), who conceded that it is important to note that teachers change their perspectives regarding inclusive education as a result of working in inclusive environments.

In conclusion, the researcher found that practicing teachers older than 40 and with a minimum of 15 years of experience in teaching were more positive toward inclusion education than those with fewer than ten years' experience. However, the qualifying analysis revealed that the viewpoints of teachers—whether positive or negative—had an impact on the adoption of inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka City. Based on the findings of interviews and focused group discussions, the researcher concluded that the main reason behind teachers' negative perceptions of inclusive education may be their ignorance about inclusive education and preconceived notions about it.

4.3 Theme Two: Challenges teachers face when implementing inclusive education

This theme outlines the challenges teachers face when implementing inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka City. The findings revealed that the implementation of inclusive

education by teachers faced challenges at four different levels. Eight sub-themes were identified under these levels: Individual (negative attitudes towards inclusive education, lack of training in special needs education for teachers, misunderstanding of inclusive education concept), school (high teacher-pupil ratio, inaccessible environment), government (lack of appropriate instructional materials and equipment, poor facilitation by the government), and parents (lack of parental involvement in inclusive education).

4.3.1 Individual-based challenges

Sub-theme 1: Negative attitudes towards inclusive education:

The study found that the biggest challenge that teachers faced when implementing inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka City was negative attitudes towards inclusive education. The majority of participants admitted that it was challenging to teach learners with special needs in an inclusive classroom, citing issues with increased workload and the need to apply a variety of teaching techniques and skills, some of which most of the teachers did not have. In this account, Participant 05 in school “B” during an interview said;

“Including learners with special needs in the main stream classes increases the workload to the teachers. It will require the teacher to use various methods and skills, and make individualized education plans for children with special needs.”

Similarly, the idea that it would be challenging for them to recognize their needs contributed to the negative attitude that teachers had toward teaching learners with special needs in inclusive settings. For example, Participant 11 in school “C” during Focused Group Discussion 3, said;

“Most teachers struggle to identify learners with special needs because they think they are just being difficult, hence, learners with special needs might not get the right kind of help during the teaching and learning process in an inclusive setting as compared to when they attend a Special school.

The findings above suggest that teachers have a negative attitude regarding inclusive education, which makes it difficult for them to openly and completely embrace learners with special needs in inclusive classes. In addition to the possibility that learners with special needs and disabilities may not benefit from inclusion in a mainstream class, teachers reported discomfort about placing learners with special needs in a mainstream class because it overwhelms them with work. There were difficulties implementing inclusive education because teachers ignored learners with disabilities due to fear of their behavior, difficulty regulating them, and concern that they would not learn well in an inclusive environment. The above-presented findings are in agreement with Stampoltzis and Papachristopoulous (2018) who suggested that teachers' attitudes on how effective they are at implementing inclusive education have an impact on how well they implement it. They added that only teachers with positive attitude have full capacity to teaching children with special education and the ordinary ones in an inclusive classroom.

Sub-theme 2: Lack of training in special needs education for teachers:

The study also highlighted lack of training in special needs education among the challenges that teachers faced when implementing inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka City. Most of the teachers noted that they lacked training in special needs education to address the learners' needs in an inclusive class, and they were, therefore, unable to provide sufficient support to learners with special needs. The following are the

verbal quotes that reflected teachers' concerns about lack of training in special needs education to address learners' needs in the mainstream class. Focused Group 2, Participant 07 in school “B” in said;

“Teachers are unable to provide inclusive education, particularly when it comes to the education of blind, deaf, and mentally retarded students since these children require highly qualified, teachers who specialize in special needs education.

In another development, in an interview, Participant 02 in school “A” supported the above view saying that;

“Training has helped, however, the school administration has a long way to go to organise refresher courses to update us on what is supposed to be done. There is a need for refresher courses to be done regularly.”

Focused Group 1, Participant 01 in school “A” said;

“To be precised I have never had a chance to trained to teach children with special need, so it becomes aburden for me.”

One participant voiced concerns about his lack of special education training and asked for extra training in order to improve his capacity to work with learners with special needs. In his own statement, Participant 06 in school “B” during an interview, supported the above quotes and said;

“In my own view, I think I need further training. To be able to manage learners with special needs in my class. I feel overwhelmed with the demand of inclusive education.”

The above narratives made it clear that teachers in UPE schools in Masaka City were willing to own up to the fact that they were underprepared to handle learners with special

needs in an inclusive classroom. Teachers felt overburdened and lacked the confidence and skills necessary to teach learners with special needs and disabilities in an inclusive classroom as the training was not regularly conducted to enable them have the capacity to do so. To be able to handle the educational needs of learners with special needs in an inclusive classroom, the majority of teachers said that they required additional and ongoing training in the form of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses. These findings concur with those of Okoro et al. (2020) who found that many teachers lack sufficient special needs education background knowledge and are ill-equipped to work with students who have impairments. Similarly, the results match with NUDIPU's (2018) "analysis of inclusiveness of teacher education policies in Uganda" report in which it was stated that teachers in UPE schools in Uganda do not have the capacity to teach students with disabilities in an inclusive environment. Moreover, the findings are consistent with earlier findings by Fish (2018), who discovered that inadequate teacher training and teachers' poor methods of identifying children with disabilities are the main obstacles that teachers face when managing special needs children.

Sub-theme 3: Misunderstanding of inclusive education concept:

The study also revealed that in trying to implement inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka City, teachers also faced a challenge of misunderstanding of the inclusive education concept. More than half of the study participants said that many teachers were unaware of what inclusive education meant. For instance, they claimed that teachers were unaware of the main justification for inclusive education. It was also clear from their responses that these teachers believed inclusive education was primarily focused on the needs of pupils with disabilities. In this regard, Participant 13 in school "D" during an interview expressed that:

“Most teachers are clueless about what inclusive education entails. According to their definition, inclusive education is the Department of Education's endeavor of closing special schools by integrating pupils who have disabilities into mainstream classrooms”

In a similar vein, the findings of the study revealed that teachers lack sufficient knowledge of the inclusion policy based on the definitions provided by the participants. Teachers hold false beliefs about it. This is clear from the response given by Participant 02 in school “A” who expressed that:

“What can I say, hmm? To me, inclusive education implies that pupils with disabilities shouldn't be in the same classroom as "normal" pupils, if you get what I mean? Since special schools exist to serve pupils with disabilities, inclusive education is more commonly linked to this population of children.”

The aforementioned misunderstandings expressed by teachers regarding inclusive education impede its successful implementation. It simply means that most teachers in UPE schools in Masaka City are not sufficiently trained to incorporate inclusive education into normal classrooms. Such results imply that the implementation of inclusive education will be difficult because there are issues with its definition. This is in agreement with Kakuru (2014) who revealed that teachers who have a high level of self-efficacy and confidence in their capacity to inspire students even those with disabilities had an immediate impact on their academic performance and emotional wellbeing. However, the findings are inconsistent with Basic et al. (2020) who contended that teachers must be part of the powerful team leading the implementation process during the teaching-learning for inclusive education to produce positive results.

4.3.2 School-based challenges

Sub- theme 4: High teacher-pupil ratio

The study established that teachers' effort to implement inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka City is challenged by high teacher-pupil ratio. In this regard, one of the teachers mentioned in an interview that they struggled to manage inclusive classrooms because of the large number of pupils in their classes. As a result, they were unable to give learners with special needs and disabilities the support they needed in their classes. In her own statement, Participant 13 in school "D" during an interview expressed that:

“Most Universal Primary Education (UPE) classrooms are overcrowded and the teacher-pupil is 1:80. Inclusive education cannot flourish in overcrowded classrooms, an example is when I am to handle guidance and counselling, it will be very difficult because I have a class of 200 learners with different needs, so this may take longer to reach all learners.”

The expression above suggests that teachers struggled to manage learners with special needs as well as ordinary learners in an inclusive classroom because of the huge number of pupils in class. Teachers were irritated by the large number of pupils in their classrooms and this had an impact on learners with special needs since they required additional support and time to catch up with other pupils and yet, such support and time may not always be available. As a result, this presented a significant challenge for teachers in UPE schools in Masaka City to trying to implement inclusive education. These findings are consistent with Fish (2018), who found that crowded classrooms is among the main obstacles that teachers face when managing children with special needs in an inclusive setting. The findings are also in agreement with Mfuthwana and Dreyer (2018), who agreed that teachers may resist

inclusion and inclusive practices pointing out inadequate training and lack of enough facilities to foster inclusion in ordinary schools.

Sub-theme 5: Inaccessible environment

A few participants of the study revealed that the physical environment did not meet the needs of children with special needs, especially those with physical impairment or wheelchair users. On this account, Participant 05 in school “B” during an interview said: *“Regarding the physical arrangement, a pupil in a wheelchair, for instance, could wish to visit the library, but they are unable to do so; this also holds true for certain classrooms.”*

This highlights the difficulties in movements that pupils with physical impairment face. In defense of this sub-theme of inaccessible environment, Participant 07 in school “B”, Focused Group 2 said: *“...there are no restrooms designated for pupils with impairments, nor are there accommodations for those with disabilities to move freely throughout the classroom and library.”*

What is noteworthy in the above responses is that the physical setting of various UPE schools in Masaka City revealed the shortcomings of the infrastructure in terms of efficient inclusive education. Occasionally, pupils choose not to enroll because they are unable to make accommodations due to unavailability of classrooms, libraries, and facilities. These findings resonate well with Mfuthwana and Dreyer (2018), who found that teachers may resist inclusion and inclusive practices pointing out lack of enough facilities to foster inclusion in ordinary schools. However, the results above disagree with Nutbrown et al. (2013) who found that teachers prefer handling learners who are physically handicapped or those with hearing impairment to learners with academic or behavioural challenges in an inclusive setting.

4.3.3 Government-based challenges

Sub-theme 6: Lack of appropriate instructional materials and equipment:

Some teachers indicated that they did not have appropriate instructional materials to support learners with special needs in an inclusive classroom. It was further discovered that a shortage of special education resources hindered inclusive education. According to the study participants, children with special needs require specialized instructional materials and equipment which are in short supply in many government-aided primary schools across Masaka City. Buli-Holmberg and Jeyaprabhan (2016) reported that the education system has failed to meet the needs of learners with disabilities and special needs by not equipping them with appropriate learning materials. If learners with special needs and disabilities do not have appropriate materials they might be unable to learn (Okongo et al., 2015). The following are the verbal quotes reflecting teacher's views.

Focused Group 4, Participant 15 in school “D” said;

“Inclusive education is good but none of the schools has braille materials which can be used by the blind...How do you expect the blind child to learn in an inclusive setting?”

In the same way, Participant 03 in a school “A” during an interview expressed that:

“Lack of appropriate materials or learning resources is one of the challenges. These materials are not there in most of the schools in our Masaka City, more especially in mainstream schools. We just improvise in order to meet the needs of learners with special needs. For example, the teaching-learning process is complicated and teaching blind or deaf learners in an inclusive environment where braille materials and hearing aids are not available.”

The findings above suggest that teachers encounter the challenge of restricted availability of appropriate learning materials and tools to support the teaching process for learners with special needs in an inclusive setting. Of the four schools that were the subject of the study, none had any special teaching materials and as a result, teachers frequently had to improvise and make their own resources in an effort to meet the educational needs of learners with disabilities or special needs. They did, however, confirm that, given the limited UPE funding of 35 percent allotted to instructional materials along with other school requirements, they would not be able to improvise certain advanced materials and tools since they were either difficult to source or too expensive. Despite inclusive education being in place, learners with disabilities are not benefiting from it due to the severe shortage of instructional materials and the high expense of such materials. These findings of the study are related to Sauchez et al., (2019), who found that learners with special needs experienced barriers to learning in Spain did not have access to appropriate learning materials and this in turn, created more barriers as learners were unable to participate in activities with their peers.

Sub theme 7: Poor facilitation by the government:

A teacher reported that they did not receive enough facilitation from the government in order to help learners with special needs achieve academic success. According to the participant, schools do not have enough resources to facilitate the teaching and learning process of pupils with special needs in the mainstream class due to the fact that government has failed to provide adequate learning resources. Consequently, teachers felt extremely frustrated as they did not feel that they were sufficiently supported by the government thus, they experienced challenges in effective implementation of inclusive education in their classrooms. The following verbal quote reflects teacher's concern regarding the poor facilitation by the government.

Focused Group 2, Participant 07 in school “B” said;

“Inclusive Education is a good failed policy. It would be beneficial if the government could devote sufficient finances to it, but the capitation grants are meager and the government delays sending it to schools. Funds should be increased for salary and Universal Primary Education (UPE). Salary given to teachers can not sustain a teacher’s needs, given high costs of living.”

The aforementioned findings suggest that teachers felt their needs were not being met by the support they were receiving from government, which had a detrimental impact on their perceptions and the way inclusive education was implemented in their classrooms. The findings show that learners with special needs are not given the full attention they need from teachers during the learning process and this equally has a negative impact on their academic performance. The reason is that teachers do not receive the necessary support from the government. The findings are consistent with Asongu et al. (2023) who opined that the government of Uganda has made significant efforts to promote inclusive education through UPE programs and the decentralized Educational Assessment and Resource Services (EARS) programs, but much more needs to be done because students with physical disabilities require specialized resources and attention from teachers. The findings are also in line with Anderson et al. (2022), who found that without the ministry's funding, school administrators would find it impossible to carry out inclusive education.

4.3.4 Parents-based challenges

Sub-theme 8: Lack of parental involvement in inclusive education:

The study further highlighted lack of parental involvement in inclusive education implementation by teachers in UPE schools. Half of the teachers who took part in the study

viewed parents as not sufficiently involved in the education of their children with special needs. The learning process for learners attending inclusive schools becomes challenging when parents don't take the initiative to get involved in areas like identifying their children's needs and how to address them. This is because parental involvement is a critical component in promoting the effective implementation of inclusive education practices.. The verbal quotes below reflect the teachers' opinions about parental involvement.

Focused Group 3, Participant 12 in school "C" said;

" Parents are not involved in the education of their children. To make matters worse, they do not support me because they do not have any attention to the daily school attendance of their children. They even say "ooh it rained too much and that is why Did not come to school, we did not wash his clothes, he will come tomorrow." It is like they are not bothered at all about the education of their children."

In an interview, Participant 05 in school "B" supported the above quote and said;

"Few parents of children with disabilities involve themselves in educating their children. They say that they are busy and normally do not come to school to discuss about the progress of their children. Before COVID 19 pandemic, they were involved but now, with the effect of the pandemic, they are less involved."

Focused Group 3, Participant 10 in school "C" said;

"Some parents are so poor to the extent that they cannot provide their children with the necessary requirements to be used at school and above all, they think that children with special needs and disabilities cannot do anything better."

What is noteworthy in the above narratives is that parents of learners with special needs and disabilities were often not involved in the education of their children. Teachers believed that learners' academic performance would improve if parents took a more active role in their education. In addition, teachers have observed that while the school regularly hosts Teacher-Parent meetings, few parents show up and majority believe the meetings serve no use in their children's education. Furthermore, because the study was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers noticed that pupils' attendance was irregular and that parents' involvement in their children's education was lower than it was prior to the pandemic. Therefore, the implementation of inclusive education by teachers in UPE schools in Masaka City is challenged by lack of parental involvement and support, particularly when it comes to children with special needs and disabilities. The findings are inconsistent with Nilhom (2021) who suggested that primary school teachers need the assistance of all system stakeholders rather than being left on their own in the fight to ensure the success of the implementation of inclusive education. However, the findings are consistent with Afolabi's (2012) observation that parents of learners with disabilities did not think that placing their children in an inclusive environment would have any major effects on their children.

The findings clearly show that inclusive education would be a very desirable policy because it reduces stigma and helps learners with special needs feel like they belong. However, the policy's effective implementation is hampered by the challenges as presented above.

4.4. Theme 3: How teachers cope with the challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education.

This theme outlines teachers views on the coping strategies teachers employ to support learners with special needs in mainstream class. Five sub-themes were identified: a) conducting refresher courses for teachers, b) guidance and counselling low self esteemed learners with special educational needs, c) modification of the available instructional materials, d) sensitizing the community on inclusive education.

Sub-theme 1: Conducting refresher courses for teachers:

Across all interviews and FGDs, the study participants reported that teachers' refresher courses were conducted to enable them successfully implement inclusive education. All participants conceded that refresher courses would work better for teachers to acquire skills to effectively manage learners with special needs and disabilities in the mainstream class. For instance, Participant 14 in school "D" during an interview said;

"The headteacher sometimes organizes training and invites a specialist to support teachers on basic knowledge and skills to manage learners in a mainstream setting."

Similarly, during Focused Group 2, Participant 07 in school "B" said;

"To facilitate the learning of all students, teachers get training in inclusive pedagogy as part of their basic training at Primary Teachers' College (PTC), and the education department of Masaka City organizes refresher courses for teachers."

In relation to the above, another participant established that some training was organized by the inspector of school with the intention to equip teachers with the necessary skills in

handling learners with special needs. However, it seem not to be enough as many teachers still lack that experience in UPE schools in Masaka City. In his own statement, Participant 02 in school “A” during an interview narrated that:

“The Inspector of school in charge of special needs education organizes refresher courses, to equip the teachers with new experiences and skills of managing learners with special needs, since there are much more trends which need more attention when dealing with learners with special educational needs.”

The gist of the aforementioned findings is that teachers cope with the challenge of lack of skills training in management of learners with special needs in inclusive setting through refresher courses. Teachers received refresher courses to enable them manage learners with special educational needs in their mainstream classrooms and therefore, it is crucial that the Ministry of Education and Sports and schools offer training to teachers on inclusive education in order to respond to the diverse needs of learners in the mainstream classroom. Failure to do so may have a negative impact on the academic performance of these learners as they may not receive the support needed to reach their potential. The results are consistent with Chibaya et al. (2022) who suggested that the government is required to train and recruit special needs teachers, school administrators and managers to prepare classroom teachers, modify educational facilities and materials to ease movement and learning of pupils with disabilities. Teachers in UPE schools must meet all of these learners' needs while making adjustments to guarantee that learners with special educational needs accomplish to their full potential in education (Chibaya et al., 2022).

Sub-theme 2: Guidance and counselling of low self-esteem learners with special educational needs:

The study also revealed that guidance and counseling was the other way for teachers to cope with low self-esteem learners with special needs in UPE schools in Masaka City. Four participants noted that teachers used guidance and counseling in their classes to help them manage learners with low self-esteem as they would most of the times be mocked by the ordinary learners, which had an emotional impact on them and it would eventually kill their self-esteem. The verbal quotes below substantiate that teachers use guidance and counselling as a coping strategy for inclusive education.

Focused Group 3, Participant 10 in school “C” said;

“I have a role to play in this regard: guiding and counseling the ordinary learners not to despise those who are disabled and at the same time counsel those stigmatized to have hope.”

In support of the above verbatim quote, a male teacher 06 in school “B” in an interview said;

“I do a lot of guidance and counselling to avoid learners with special needs being stigmatized by the ordinary learners because they like calling them funny names which affects learners with special needs in an inclusive class.”

This was also expressed during the Focused Group Discussion 4 where Participant 12 in school “D” narrated that:

“Guidance and counselling is crucial when supporting learners with disabilities to gain the confidence to participate in class activities and interact with others. By the time they report to school they feel isolated but

I bring them closer to me and by the end of the term these learners with special educational needs are free to interact with their peers and the teacher as well.”

The findings above show that guidance and counseling are used by teachers in UPE schools in Masaka City to assist learners with special needs who are enrolled in regular classes. Teachers stated that in order for children with special needs to reach their maximum potential, there must be regular guidance and counseling sessions for both learners with special needs and ordinary learners to accommodate one another. If not, learners with special needs may feel excluded from school, stop participating in activities, and eventually drop out. This is in agreement with Brydges and Mkandawire (2020) who reported that the success of Inclusive Education in Benin was because the ordinary pupils willingly opted to offer the necessary assistance to learner with special needs. In a similar manner, the aforementioned results are consistent with Vaillant and Rodriguez (2018) who recommended that for teachers in inclusive schools are expected to overcome segregation and stigma, and enhance social interactions between the ordinary and children with disabilities in the same class.

Theme 3: Modification of the available instructional materials:

The study further highlighted that teachers also coped with lack of appropriate instructional materials and equipment by modifying the readily available instructional materials. Most of the teachers reported during interviews that they modified instructional materials to suit the needs of learners with special needs during the learning process. For example, a certain teacher revealed that she wrote bold letters on charts for a visually impaired learner who could not see small letters. Modification of the available instructional materials was done to help learners with special needs catch up with others

during inclusive class lessons. The following expressions reflect teachers' views on modification of instructional materials.

In an interview, Participant 06 in school "B" said;

"It is necessary to modify the learning aids for learners with special needs. I always write bold letters on charts because I have a pupil in my class who cannot see small letters. But when the chart is clearly written and bold enough, the learner can read."

In a similar manner, Participant 03 in school "A" during Focused Group 1 said;

"Where real objects are applicable for teaching learners, I provide them to my learners for effective teaching and make sure that the materials are appropriate because these learners have unique needs."

The above expressions therefore demonstrated how teachers coped with lack of appropriate instructional materials and equipment. It emerged that teachers were dedicated to ensuring learners with special needs benefit from an inclusive environment. For example, they would alter the available teaching materials to better meet the needs of pupils with visual impairments, such as by writing large, bold letters on charts. Teachers were well aware of the significance of providing learners with special needs with suitable teaching and learning resources. These findings are consistent with Ileri et al. (2020) who suggested that teachers must possess the information necessary to modify their methods of instruction and make effective use of instructional aids. In addition, the results are in line with Matundura et al. (2022) who contended that teachers can be crucial to the progressive and successful implementation of inclusion if they have access to the right laws, resources, and assistance. The findings are further in agreement with Halder (2023) who suggested that everyone involved in education must take part in the implementation

of inclusive education because it is a continuous process, and that teachers as atekholders have a cardinal role to identify barriers and put in place a conducive learning environment for all learners.

Sub-theme 4: Remedial teaching:

The other coping strategy reported during the study was remedial teaching. In this regard, a few teachers mentioned that they provided remedial teaching for learners with special needs to catch up with the lost content during class hours since they do not learn at the same pace as the ordinary learners. The teachers mentioned that remedial teaching was mainly conducted after general classes so ensure that learners with special needs do not lag behind their ordinary counterparts. The following verbal quote represents the teachers' views on Remedial teaching.

In an interview, Participant 09 in school "C" said;

"In my class, learners with special needs tend to lag behind during the teaching and learning process, so I organize for them remedial lessons after classes to bridge the gap."

The main takeaway from the aforementioned findings is that remedial teaching is delivered by teachers in UPE schools in Masaka City when pupils do not have enough time to understand the content in an inclusive classroom. In order to make up for missed time during inclusive class lessons, teachers would devote additional time to teaching students with special needs in addition to the regular class time. This is in disagreement with Miguel (2017) who contended that since learners with special needs and ordinary learners are both taught in inclusive schools and classes, parents of ordinary children express concern for the educational hindrance to their children. However, the findings are in agreement with Kurth and Forber (2017), who conceded that teachers are essential to the achievement of

inclusive education and that they are supposed to provide a climate that is conducive to learning for all learners and to adequately, appropriately, and successfully address all educational and social concerns arising from learners' different learning requirements.

Theme 5: Differentiation of learners' activities:

The study also established that there was differentiation of learners' activities as another coping strategy used by teachers to address issues such as slow learning and limited ability to perform certain activities by learners with special needs. A few participants showed in their views that differentiated approach was used by some teachers to teach learners with special educational needs in order to enable them equally benefit from an inclusive education. Specifically, teaching tasks and activities that needed to be differentiated depending on the learners' ability and interest were differentiated with the aim to keep the learners with special needs on the same learning pace like the ordinary ones. The following quotes reflect teachers' views on differentiation of learners' activities.

Focused Group 2, Participant 06 in school "B" said;

"I always give different tasks and activities to different categories of learners so as to benefit slow learners."

Also, Participant 12 in school "C" in Focused Group 3 said;

"I have to plan and give different activities and tasks for my learners because they have different abilities. Some of them can not produce the same work like the ordinary learner, so i need to give tasks according to their ability."

As per the aforepresented study results, certain teachers employed differentiated teaching activities to assist learners with special needs in an inclusive classroom. Teachers explained that they differentiated the learning tasks and activities following the learners'

ability and interest in order to support learners who struggle to meet the learning objectives. When learning tasks and activities are differentiated in this way, it helps learners of all skill levels. The findings are in relation to Lazaro and Anney (2016), who found that teachers inspired disabled pupils to actively participate in co-curricular activities in addition to the fact that Farrant (2007) also maintained that a rich school's co-curricular programme enhances participation and interaction among learners irrespective of their physical differences.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This last chapter builds on the study findings presented in the previous chapter four to bring out a summary of the study. It also provides the conclusions and recommendations of the study and concludes with suggestions for further research.

5.1 Summary

The following section brings out a summary of the major findings derived from the study and it follows the study objectives.

5.1.1 Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education

The study established that teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education varied widely in UPE schools in Masaka City. Majority of study participants expressed negative opinions of inclusive education. In this regard, teachers firmly thought that inclusive education did not assist learners with special needs whereas some of them had positive opinions but one of the teachers had conflicting feelings about inclusive education.

The study also showed that teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education were influenced by their teaching experience and academic background. Teachers with more than 15 years of experience were more likely to support inclusive education than those with less than 10 years of experience. Those who had taken courses or other training in special needs education displayed positive attitudes toward inclusive education and were more at ease managing learners with special needs in an inclusive environment.

The study further showed that majority of teachers were familiar with the idea of inclusive education only that they had conflicting believes on inclusive educationl. As it was praised

to develop self-esteem and promote peer support among learners with special needs, with their ordinarily counterparts, inclusive education was also perceived by teachers as an agent of stigmatization among these learners, worsens the child's learning problem, consumes a lot of time in an attempt to help learners with special needs as well as making them receive inappropriate academic support.

5.1.2 Challenges teachers face when implementing inclusive education

The study established that in the implementation of inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka City, teachers faced numerous challenges at individual, school, government, and parents levels. In regard to individual level challenges, the study found that teachers had negative attitudes towards inclusive education that stemmed from the fear of increased workload and the need to apply a variety of teaching techniques and skills some of which most of the teachers did not have. The findings also indicated that teachers at individual level also lacked training in special needs education in addition to that misunderstanding of the policy of inclusive education itself. This led to their inability to provide sufficient support to learners with special needs.

At school level, the findings of the study indicated that there was high teacher-pupil ratio that also affected teachers' implementation of inclusive education since they were left with no time to provide extra support to learners with special needs and disabilities. This is besides the inaccessible physical environment at some UPE schools in Masaka City whereby, some pupils chose not to enroll because the physical environment did not meet their needs, especially those with physical impairment or wheelchair users.

In regard to the government level challenges, the findings of the study further revealed that teachers' found it challenging to implement inclusive education due to the fact that they did not have appropriate instructional materials and resources to support learners with

special needs in an inclusive classroom. In addition, the study also revealed that teachers lacked enough facilitation from government to help learners with special needs and as such, teachers felt extremely frustrated as they could not help the learners adequately.

Lastly, the findings of the study regarding Parents based challenges indicated that there was also lack of parental involvement in inclusive education implementation by teachers in UPE schools. In this aspect, many parents did not take the initiative to get involved in areas like identifying their children's special needs and how to address them, providing their children with scholastic material and above all their welfare at school was not well attended to.

5.1.3 How teachers cope with the challenges of inclusive education

The study established that teachers' refresher courses were conducted to enable them successfully implement inclusive education. The reason to enroll for refresher courses by teachers was to acquire skills to effectively manage learners with special needs and disabilities in the mainstream class.

The study also established that guidance and counseling was another way for teachers to cope with low self-esteem learners with special needs who most of the times were being mocked by the ordinary learners and would kill their self-esteem.

In addition, the findings of the study revealed that teachers coped with lack of appropriate instructional materials and equipment by modifying the readily available instructional materials. In this aspect, the modification of the materials was intended to make them suite the needs of learners with special needs during the learning process.

Moreover, the study revealed that remedial teaching was equally used by some teachers to help learners with special needs catch up with their ordinary counterparts by covering the lost content during the general class hours.

Finally, the findings of the study indicated that teachers also coped with issues of slow learning and limited ability to perform certain activities by learners with special needs through differentiation of learners' activities. The teaching tasks and activities that needed to be differentiated depending on the learners' ability and interest were differentiated with the aim to keep the learners with special needs on the same learning pace like the ordinary ones.

5.2 Conclusions

Basing on the objectives and analysis of the findings, the following conclusions were made:

5.2.1 Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education

Following the first objective of the study that was intended to establish teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education, the findings led to a conclusion that teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka City varied depending on whether they had knowledge or skills in special needs education or not. Those who had the knowledge and skills in special needs education had positive attitudes toward inclusive education because they understood how to manage and teach learners with special needs, and they even thought that inclusive education could help these learners develop their sense of self-worth and get peer support. On the other hand, teachers who lacked inclusive education knowledge and skills had negative attitudes and perceptions about it. They said that it would cause stigma for the learners, exacerbate their learning difficulties, require a lot of time to implement, and ultimately result in learners receiving inappropriate academic support.

5.2.2 Challenges teachers face during the implementation of inclusive education

Regarding the second objective of the study that aimed to explore challenges teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education, the study led to the conclusion that teachers effort to implement inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka City faced numerous challenges that included at individual level; negative attitudes towards it. This is in addition to lack of awareness on special needs learners, the concept of inclusive education, and their respective roles as teachers to support learners with special needs in an inclusive setting. Other challenges have surfaced at school level that included the high teacher-to-pupil ratio, which left teachers unable to provide extra support to this category of learners and the inaccessible physical environment at school for pupils with physical impairment. Moreover, the government is also blamed for UPE schools not having appropriate teaching materials/ resources like; braille, reflective mirrors, and sign language interpreters as well as frustrating teachers with inadequate facilitation in terms of finances. The parents were also not involved in the education of their children with special needs thereby making it hard for teachers to successfully implement inclusive education in UPE schools.

5.2.3 How teachers cope with the challenges of inclusive education

Thirdly, the study aimed to examine how teachers cope with the challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education and thus, it was concluded that conducting refresher courses among teachers is paramount to equip them with the skills, knowledge, and competence to manage an inclusive class. This is besides guidance and counselling of low-self esteemed learners to compliment the residual ability, promote cooperation and understanding of each learner's abilities. In addition, modification of the readily available instructional materials by teachers, remedial teaching, and differentiation of learning tasks and activities are coping mechanisms used by teachers to redeem the plight of learners with special needs in an inclusive setting in government primary schools in Masaka City.

Therefore, to enable the successful implementation of inclusive education, teachers' preparedness is perceived as the most necessity because they are the first implimators.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions reached in accordance with the study objectives, the researcher enumerates several other feasible recommendations that could invariably help to facilitate the effective implementation of inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka City in particular and Uganda at large.

1. The findings of the study showed that some teachers with no knowledge and skills in special needs education in UPE schools found in Masaka City had negative attitudes towards inclusive education. Therefore, the study recommends that the Ministry of Education and Sports educates and trains teachers on special needs education, with emphasis on disability awareness and management, sign language, and use of assistive devices like braille and hearing aids.
2. In addition to the above, the study also recommends that the government should sponsor workshops for teachers on special needs education across all UPE schools offering inclusive education in Masaka City and the rest of Uganda.
3. The study also established that the teacher-pupil ratio is very high in UPE schools in Masaka City (1:80) that a classroom teacher cannot control and deliver effectively in an inclusive class. In this regard, the government should construct more classrooms to accommodate the large number of pupils. In addition, the government should also employ more professional teachers to reduce on the teacher-pupil ratio so that teachers can be relieved of the workload and be able to spare sometime to provide extra support to learners with special needs.

4. The findings of the study also indicated that teachers lacked modified instructional materials and resources to help learners with special needs in an inclusive setting. Therefore, the study recommends that the government should provide modified teaching materials such as Braille, Braille papers, and sign language interpreters to all UPE schools in Masaka City to enable teachers execute their role of teaching learners with special needs with ease.
5. To do with the challenge of limited involvement of parents in the academic endeavours of their children with special needs, the study recommends that parents should be sensitized to always take a key role in the education of their children with special needs so that they can improve on their academic performance. This can be done through parents-teachers meetings held at school to discuss pupils' academic progress.

5.4 Suggested area for further research

While not included in this study because of the subject matter, certain areas had similar significance. In light of this, the researcher suggests the following concerns for further research:

- This study looked at teachers' perspectives on inclusive Education yet, its implementation involves many stakeholders. Therefore, further research on the related area is suggested on perceptions of parents, pupils, school administrators, community and district education officers to get a wider perspective.
- In addition, the current study focused on teachers' perspectives on inclusive education in UPE schools in Masaka City. Therefore, other studies could be set for UPE schools in other parts of Uganda. It could also be extended for privately owned primary schools in the country.

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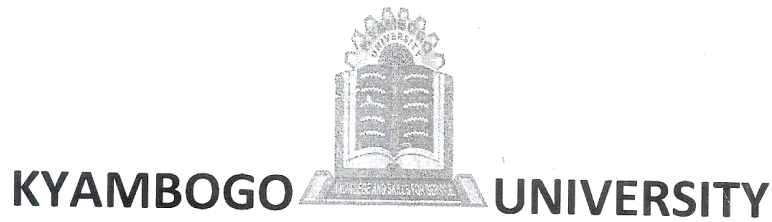
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Introductory Letter



P. O. BOX 1, KAMPALA
FACULTY OF SPECIAL NEEDS & REHABILITATION
Tel: 0414-286237/285001/2 Fax: 0414-220464
DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDIES

15th June, 2022

The DEO/DIS/Head teacher/Teacher/Community/Opinion Leader/Church Leader

MASAKA CITY
P.O BOX 201, MASAKA.

Dear Sir/Madam,

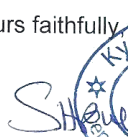

RE: INTRODUCTION OF RESEARCH STUDENT ON DATA COLLECTION

This is to introduce the bearer Rev/Dr/Sr/Mr/Mrs./Ms... IMALUNGATI SARAH
Reg.No: 19/4/GMSN/18.7.7/PD... who is a bonafide student of Kyambogo University in the Faculty of Special Needs and Rehabilitation, Department of Special Needs Studies. As partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Diploma/Degree/Masters, he/she is required to undertake a research on the approved area of study.

The purpose of this letter is to request you to allow him/her have access to information from your office, school or area of operation necessary for the study.

Kyambogo University will be grateful for any assistance rendered to the student.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. Okwaput Stackus
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Appendix B: Consent Form

KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY

P O Box 1,

KYAMBOGO - KAMPALA.

Dear Respondent,

You have been chosen to participate in a study to look into:

“Teachers’ Perspectives on the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Primary Schools in Masaka City Uganda.”

You are expected to take part in the research on the subject. The data analysis will make use of the information you supply. The results of the analysis of your opinions will be published as a text in a research thesis. The researcher will be able to obtain a Master of Special Needs Education from Kyambogo University thanks to the findings, which will be utilized to recommend strategies for implementing inclusive education at UPE schools.

You have the choice to participate in the study or not. Your privacy will never be violated, and your opinions will remain private.

Yours faithfully,

Consent by ticking approximately where

applicable

I will be able to participate

.....

I will not be able

IMALINGAT SARAH

Contact of respondent

.....

Appendix C: Interview Guide to Teachers

1. How many years is your teaching experience?
2. Have you ever had any training in special needs education?
3. If yes, what is your area of specialization in special needs education and what is the training level?
4. What categories of special educational needs do you have in your class?
5. How should an inclusive classroom look like?
6. As a teacher, what is your view on the inclusion of learners with special needs in the mainstream setting?
8. What is your view on the challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education in the mainstream classroom?
9. As a teacher, what do you do to cope with the challenges when handling children with special educational needs in the mainstream classroom?
10. What can be done to enhance and streamline the implementation of inclusive education?

End

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix D: Focused Group Discussion Guide to Teachers

The topic of Discussion 1: Views of teachers regarding the implementation of inclusive education.

The researcher moderates a discussion on the way teachers view the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream primary schools. Teachers give their views as regards their teaching of learners with special needs in mainstream classroom.

The topic of Discussion 2: Challenges faced when implementing Inclusive education.

The researcher moderates a discussion on whether Inclusive Education has during the implementation. Teachers give challenges experienced when implementing Inclusive Education.

The topic of Discussion 3: How teachers cope with the challenges

The researcher moderates a discussion and asks teachers to mention how they cope with the challenges faced during the implementation of Inclusive Education.

Topic of Discussion 4. Strategies of implementing Inclusive Education.

The researcher moderates and asks teachers to suggest ideas on how Inclusive Education can be streamlined for effective implementation of Inclusive Education.

End

Thank you for your cooperation

