AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CHALLENGES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN
INSTITUTIONS OF
HIGHER EDUCATION IN MALAWI

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Abstract

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CHALLENGES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN MALAWI

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Inclusive education started to receive increased attention following its affirmation from the
1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education held at Salamanca in Spain. The inclusion of
learners in mainstream school fulfils the Declaration of the Universal Human Rights which
encompasses the rights of children and the World Declaration of Education for All. Therefore,
equal access and participation to all are strategic to the provision of the basic right to education
through inclusive education. Inclusive education is central to the achievement of Malawi's 2063
vision of "*an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant nation*". However, studies indicated that learners
with disabilities are persistently affected by multiple challenges leading to exclusion or school
drop out. Previous studies focused on primary and secondary school sectors hence, this study aims
at investigating challenges of inclusive education in institutions of higher education in Malawi.

Following a pragmatic philosophical approach, this mixed study used an exploratory
research design. A survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews were used in complementary to
collect quantitative and qualitative data from 125 participants in the categories of learners,
lecturers, and administrators from ten institutions.

Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data was done using the SPSS computer application
and content scrutiny correspondingly. The study established low enrolment of learners with
disabilities in institutions of higher learning. Findings also indicated disparities in views on the
effectiveness of inclusive education and accommodation of the types and degrees of disabilities.
The study also revealed that challenges contribute to low effectiveness of inclusive education
namely lack of relevant technical expertise, resources, disability friendly infrastructure and policy.

Implications include systematic discrimination leading to intellectual inequalities and
increased social gaps; need for capacity building; and lack of awareness on inclusive education
issues among stakeholders. The study demonstrated that intellectual inequalities contradict human
rights; proposed a modification of medical disability model for positive inclusion and documented

the gaps to inform policy. Further study to assess performance and evaluate current strategies.

Keywords: inclusive education, learners with a disability, institutions of higher learning, human right, Malawi

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

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Abbreviations

CRC	Convention of Child Rights
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DP	Disability Program
DPO	Disabled People Organization
EFA	Education for All
ESIP	Education Sector Implementation Plan
ESPR	Education Sector Plan Report
GABLE	Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MPRS	Malawi Poverty Alleviation Strategy
NACODI	National Advisory and Coordinating Committee of Disability Issues
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
NESP	National Education Sector Plan
NESTED	National Strategy for Teacher Education and Developments
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SNE	Special Needs Education

UNDP	United Nations Development Programs
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organizations
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Individuals with disabilities encounter multiple challenges in the course of their studies; and the persistent exclusion of learners with disabilities is argued to have long-term effects on the social placement of those excluded especially from higher education institutions (United Nations Educational, Scientific Organization (UNESCO), 2019). Although the Malawi government through the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology promotes inclusiveness in all sectors of life including in the education sector (National Planning Commission, 2020) the enrollment challenges of learners with disabilities are glaring especially among the tertiary level (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Malawi (UNICEF Malawi),2020). It is based on this background that this study was conducted to investigate the challenges of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning in Malawi.

Inclusive education in recent years has received increased focus in educational debates following its adoption in Jomtien in 1990 and its affirmation at the 1994 Salamanca Conference in Spain (United Nations Developmental Programme (UNDP), 2015). Inclusive education is a contentious term that draws different perceptions and definitions. According to Artiles, Caballeros, Canto, Charlie, Engelbrecht, Hummel, Menéndez, Moyo, Perdomo, Rothe, Sontay, and Werning (2015), inclusive education worldwide is regarded as a practice that takes into consideration the diverse learning needs of children, young people, and adults to promote effective and meaningful learning experiences. However, Artiles et al., point out that in Malawi the term "inclusive education" is used sparingly and carefully to refer to Special Needs Education (SNE). They indicate that there is no clear demarcation between the reference to inclusive education and Special Needs Education (SNE). Artiel et al. also draw attention to the seeming conflict that arose when the Special Needs Education module—rather than the inclusive

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education module—was introduced as a required course for teachers in training as evidence of the double reference. While Artiel et al. 's definition focuses on meeting the diverse learning needs of learners, on the contrary,Mbewe, Kamchedzera, and Kunkwenzu's (2021) definition indicates that inclusive education is an educational strategy that aims at improving the capability of the organization of education to provide educational access to all learners, giving focus to institutional capacity building. Artiel et al's definition focus on processes of learning while Mbewe et al's definition focus on the systems that provide inclusive education.

However, in this study inclusive education will be defined based on the definition provided by the Ministry of Education Science and Technology's (MoEst) (2017) reference in the National Strategy on Inclusive Education that considers it "as a process of reforming the education system, cultures, policies, and practices to address and respond to diverse needs of all learners" (Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), 2017, p.15). This definition encompasses both institutional capacity building and meeting the diverse learning needs of learners. It combines the changes that are required to take place in both the processes and the systems that provide inclusion services. According to Malawi's National Strategy on Inclusive Education, initially, inclusive education in Malawi was associated with learners with Special Education Needs and those with disabilities however the strategy brought a perspective that included 20 categories of children that are excluded from requiring inclusion (Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), 2017). Nevertheless, this study will use the initial reference that is limited to individuals who have Special Education Needs and disabilities in the provision of inclusive education.

The provision of inclusive education has its basis on the premise that education is one of the basic human rights for all and it is a basis for the creation of an equal and just society. Initiatives

in the provision of inclusive education started with countries including Malawi adopting inclusion. According to a report on *Sustainable Development Goals*, the use of Education for All Goals (EFA) as a strategy was implemented in an attempt to provide educational opportunities for varied groups of people. To the advantage of every member of society, the Education For All (EFA) project was launched in 1990. Education For All (EFA) focuses on secondary and tertiary education in addition to improving comprehensive care and education with an emphasis on early childhood and adult literacy. It also highlights the common standards, equality, and opportunity provided to people with disabilities. Goal number four of the Sustainable Development Goals, which encourages inclusive education, is related to ensuring that education is high-quality, and equitable and fosters lifelong learning opportunities (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2015; United Nations, 2019). The promotion of inclusive education was enhanced with its endorsement.

The World Conference on Special Needs Education, which was held in Salamanca, Spain in 1994, is where the shift toward inclusive education was officially endorsed, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Over 300 people attended the meeting, 92 of which were from governments and 25 from international organizations. The Salamanca Statement, which established the principles, policy, and practice in special needs education and a framework for action through legislation, was endorsed by member states, including Malawi. By respecting individual diversity, this statement supports the participation of students in regular classrooms as a means of upholding both the World Declaration of Education for All and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which includes children's rights. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was given the mandate to coordinate international efforts toward Education For All (EFA) (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 1994; United Nations, 2019).

Based on the United Nations perspective, the resolutions made at the Salamanca conference indicated the necessity for reforms in the mainstream schools to improve the provision of Special Needs Education (SNE). The decision to have reforms take place was intended to pave way for the inclusion of learners having special needs and prevent discrimination by creating an inclusive society that fosters the attainment of education for all individuals. During a review forum for inclusive education that took place in the year 2000 in Dakar, a declaration was made for education to take into consideration the needs of the individuals living in poverty and those disadvantaged including those having disabilities and special learning requirements(United Nations Development Programme(UNDP, 2015;United Nations, 2019). Hence, inclusive education is considered a strategy to be used to address the diverse needs of individuals in learning institutions. Its practice contains adjustments in the curriculum, teaching and learning strategies, and structures to appeal to the learning requirements of all individual learners. Following this, the mainstream education structure is responsible for the provision of inclusive education in a context that is convenient to all learners including those with disability. The state of having a disability may have multiple references.

Disability

The term disability has no specific definition as it is defined based on the context it is used. According to Oxford Dictionary, a disability is a condition that may be physical or mental that creates limitations in an individual's movements, senses, or activities. It is different from a disorder, as a disorder refers to a medical condition that may or may not lead to disability depending on its severity hence not every disorder may lead to disability. On the other hand, an impairment can be referred to as a disability as defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary as an act of being imperfect or in a weakened condition or state such as reduced function or ability.

Therefore, in this study disability will be used as synonymous with impairment but not with the disorder.

The World Health Organization (2021) defines disability as "an umbrella for impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)". The Canadian Society of International Professionals in Disability Management (2022) described disability as "the product of the interplay between people with a health condition (such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, or depression) and personal and environmental variables" (e.g., unfavorable attitudes, inaccessible public transit and buildings, and restricted social supports) (p.10). The Disability Act of 2012 defines disability as a long-term impairment that can be mental, physical, sensory, or intellectual and prevents a person from interacting normally with a variety of entities, impeding their full and active participation in society in comparison to people who can do so (Malawi Government, 2012).However, this study will define disability based on Banks and Zuurmond (2015) definition that was used by the Malawi National Statistics office to define a 2.4% population of individuals with disability in Malawi. Hence, disability will be defined as having a hearing impairment, visual impairment, reduced mobility, and speaking difficulties but not explicitly referring to other types of disabilities.

The Indian Act 2016 on the rights of persons with disabilities describes 21 types of disabilities that include Thalassemia, a blood disorder that is genetically inherited that leads to the production of less or abnormal hemoglobin; Parkinson's disease (PD) which is a Central Nervous System disorder that affects the movement of an individual and is characterized by tremors and stiffness; Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) which is a neurological and developmental disorder that affects an individual's communication and behavior and is sometimes called a developmental

disorder; specific learning disabilities which are a group of disability conditions that hinders individual's capability to think, speak, listen, spell or calculate mathematical problems; hearing impairment which might be deafness in case of complete loss of hearing and hard of hearing in case of partial hearing; visual impairment which might be blindness in case of the state of being sightless or low vision when there is limitation of the field of vision; and locomotor disability which is also referred to as physical disability whereby an individual has problems in movement from one place to another (Rights for People With Disabilities (RPWD), 2016).

However, disability types in the context of Malawi are limited to other disabilities excluding those from genetic dispositions because these are not prevalent in the Malawian context due to diagnostic challenges. For instance, in a study that was conducted by Tataryn, Chokotho, Mulwafu, Kayange, Polack, Lavy, and Kuper (2014) in "*The Malawi key informant child disability project*", six types of disabilities were identified as hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical impairment, intellectual impairment, and epilepsy. In this study the focus will be on five types of disabilities namely visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical disability, intellectual disability, and speech impairment.

Chikasamba (2022, as cited in National Statistics Office, 2019) indicates the persistent growth in the population of persons with disability in Malawi. Chikasamba cites the trend from 1997 to 2018 based on the Malawi Population and Housing Censuses indicating a population of 190,000 persons with disabilities between the years 1997 to 2005 constituting 2.9% of the total Malawian population; that grew to 498,122 persons with disabilities occupying a total of 3.8% of Malawi's total population; and it rose to 1,734,250 persons with disabilities making a total of 11.6% of the 17,563,749 total population of Malawi. Chikasmba lamented the scarcity of clear and official disability statistics hence the use of estimates. Nevertheless, the trend represents the

alarming growth of the number of persons with disabilities in Malawi taking up a portion that cannot be ignored.

Development of Inclusive Education in Malawi

The call for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities has led to learners with diverse disabilities increasingly getting access to universities and colleges in both developed and developing countries the world over. Despite a record of no enrollment of learners having disabilities in institutions providing higher learning in research that was conducted by Mkandawire, Maphale, and Tseeke (2016) in Malawi, studies have indicated access to higher education through the inclusion process in countries like Botswana, Kenya, South Africa, United Kingdom and Malawi (Cleophas 2019, Shonhe, 2019; McDuff, Huges, Tatam, Morrow, and Ross, 2020). According to the *"Situation Analysis for Children with Disabilities in Malawi,"* 99 percent of the learners having disabilities do not have admittance to higher education (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Malawi (UNICEF Malawi), 2020).The level of enrollment depicts a continued under-representation and deficiency of support for learners who have disabilities in institutions of higher learning which leads to poor academic performance. The challenge that universities and colleges are confronted with is to take up the responsibility to work on the provision of support for the improvement of the teaching and learning for these learners to promote a positive influence academically and eventual economic independence (Bell &Swart, 2018).Malawi embarked on various initiatives to promote inclusive education.

Malawi used several initiatives and made several efforts to support the establishment and ongoing delivery of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning. The Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), 2020) created Malawi's National Strategy on Inclusive Education (2017–2021) as one of the initiatives for inclusive

education. Its goals were to ensure that all children received high-quality education and to protect their right to an education. To further the national agenda, Malawi also ratified international agreements like the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG). Apart from signing international accords, Malawi has also passed several national laws to support efforts to promote inclusive education, including the National Education Sector Plan, the Disability Act of 2012, and Malawi's Growth and Development Strategy III (2017–2022). (2008- 2017).To advance its inclusion agenda, the Ministry of Education integrated plans into its operations to include gender, health, and the agendas of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), organizations for disabled people (DPOs), and disability programs (DPs) (United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 2018). Because enrolment in higher education institutions is already competitive due to capacity constraints, inclusive education is offered to learners with disabilities to promote access and equality. Mainstreaming special needs components in institutions of higher learning comes in to create a platform where individuals with disabilities are accorded a chance to be empowered for self-sustenance and positive contributions to society hence narrowing the social gap between those that are able and those that are disabled (Walker and Wilson-Strydom, 2017 and Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), 2020). The need for access and participation in higher education can never be underestimated since universities are critical players in grooming individuals.

Consequently, an enrollment rate of one percent of learners with disabilities in higher learning institutions points to challenges encountered in the process of providing inclusive education in this sector (Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), 2020). Walker

and Wilson-Strydom (2017) argue that the low enrollment of learners with disabilities in higher learning institutions presents that there is an exclusion of the majority of the learners in this category from accessing tertiary education which is considered to be a catalyst to the empowerment of individuals for their contribution and placement in the society. Walker and Wilson-Strydom also indicate that as the provision of quality education at universities is essential in the development of ethical graduates, equipped with skills, knowledge, and values that enable them to responsibly contribute to societies; the need for inclusion at this level can never be underestimated. They affirm that the education that is provided in tertiary education institutions is considered to be inclusive of the technical, as it provides hands-on and conceptual skills; moral, as it trains individuals on humane behavioral considerations that enable them to fit and be relevant to the society; ethical, as it enables individuals to make considerations about the right course of actions; and rational elements, as it empowers individuals with logical thinking. They also point out that the elements embedded in the process of teaching and learning, curriculum, and knowledge are essential for all individuals. Hence affirm that the inclusion or exclusion of groupings from tertiary education creates a social gap between those included or excluded as it either empowers or denies them the necessary empowerment for the positive influence on their personality and the society to which they belong (Walker and Wilson-Strydom, 2017).

William Marsh Rice University (2021) posits that universities have the mandate to teach, conduct research and do community outreach. The fulfillment of the mandate includes making higher education accessible by considering learners with challenges in learning due to different disabilities through the provision of inclusive education. This constitutes that all learners attend and are welcomed in mainstream schools; this involves the consideration of the design of the school, classroom, programs, and activities that enable students' participation and learning. Access

for all learners, regardless of ability or inability, supports the call for high-quality inclusive education as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal Number 4. All social groups are taken into account in the provision of high-quality education for all. Therefore, even though they frequently experience exclusion from education, people with disabilities are part of the population that should be included (United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2019).As such inclusive education in higher learning institutions is part of the mandate for colleges and universities as it promotes the provision of equal opportunities to diverse learners. The 1998 Amendment to the Act of 1965 of Higher Education in the United States (2003) defined institutions of higher education as educational institutions that admit regular students with secondary school certificates or the recognized equivalent. An institution is expected to have legal authorization to be given legal access to the provision of tertiary education, at a bachelor's degree or certificate level, and should be accredited by a recognized accrediting agency. The accreditation process is a prerequisite to the provision of educational services in tertiary educational institutions. The Act of parliament established National Council for Higher Education in Malawi (NCHE, 2015) for the same purpose as the United States education department, that is, to register, accredit and regulate the standards of the universities providing tertiary education in Malawi. Established under the Act of Parliament, National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) assesses the provision of equal inclusive opportunities in education institutions.

Ministry of Education in its national report of Malawi (2008) referred to the three mandates to be fulfilled by higher education institutions namely, governance and management which includes access, and equity. One of the items included in the mandate is to incorporate special needs education in all programs, and train special needs teachers leading to the establishment, and monitoring. National Council for Higher Education (NCHE, 2015) publication on minimum

standards stipulates requirements for universities to have admission policies that do not discriminate against applicants on account of disability, gender, age, ethnicity, and nationality. Regardless of these policies, inclusive education needs to be explored. Therefore, institutions providing higher education are expected to uphold standards on tertiary education one of which is providing admission to all learners regardless of ability or disability.

Research by Illie and Rose (2016), however, found that students from wealthy families make up the majority of Malawi's 2% access rate to higher education. Illie and Rose stated that eliminating the disparities that prevent the underprivileged, women, and people of color, including those with disabilities, from accessing higher education, will enable us to attain the 2030 global goal of equal access for men and women. They hinted that access issues for those who are disadvantaged, such as people with disabilities, arise from the small number of people who enroll in higher education, which is dominated by the wealthy.

To scale up access for learners who have disabilities into institutions that provide higher learning, the Ministry of Education(Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), 2020) developed strategies for improving Malawian education from Early Childhood, primary, secondary to tertiary education as stipulated in the National Education Sector Plan. The 2018/19 Education Sector Performance Report (ESPR) indicated increased admittance to higher education as one strategy among priorities. One strategy to achieve increased access to higher education institutions was to double the enrolment into institutions that provide higher learning by the year 2020 which led to a 10.3 percent growth rate in the enrolment as it increased from 30, 975 to 34,164 learners in 2018/2019 academic year. However, the increase in higher education did not match up with the double increase in secondary education. Despite the increase in enrollment, the harmonized selection process for public universities facilitated by National Council for Higher

Education (NCHE) at that time revealed that out of the 23,775 eligible candidates, 5,925 were selected for the four public universities in Malawi. The statistics translate to a 25% selection rate with a bias in enrollment in males than females. Among those who were not selected, 10,608 secured admissions in various private schools however others did not afford private school education due to the high cost of fees. To guarantee equity and inclusion, a total of 117 learners who have special needs were enrolled in both public and private institutions that provide higher education in Malawi. Enrollment indicated that learners with special needs that were enrolled had diverse disabilities like albinism, total blindness, low vision, physical impairment, hearing impairment, health conditions, and speech impairment. The Ministry of Education report further indicates that most institutions providing higher learning had mainstreamed special needs modules into the teaching programs. Teacher training institutions also streamlined special needs modules as a core foundation course for pre-service teacher training (Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), 2020).

The 2018/19 Education Sector Performance Report (ESPR) (Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), 2020) stipulates strides made towards inclusive education namely: the mainstreaming of Special Needs Education programmes in public teacher training institutions; the improvement of infrastructure to accommodate learners with disabilities; the establishment of Special Needs Unit and resource centers at Chancellor College (which is renamed University of Malawi (UNIMA)), Nalikule and Domasi Colleges of Education; apart from deliberate admission policies that provide for the admission of learners with disabilities. The report alludes tithe implementation of inclusive education in institutions that provide higher learning. However, the National Strategy for Inclusive Education (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), 2017) highlights the continued limited access to education for learners with diverse

needs at all levels of education namely primary, secondary and tertiary education. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) also argued that the exclusion of learners with diverse needs, including disabilities is evident within and outside education institutions. The evidence of the exclusion stipulated in the National Strategy on Inclusive Education makes reference to multiple challenges that include the following: infrastructure that is inaccessible, lack of counseling and psychosocial services, negative attitudes, inequalities in the provision of social support like bursaries, and lack of technical expertise for teachers. The strategy presents negative experiences for learners with diverse needs, one of the group being those with disabilities, which the Ministry of Education in Malawi intends to address.

History of Inclusive Education

This section discusses the national and international agendas on inclusive education to analyze the development of the agendas in favor of the implementation of the inclusion of learners who have disabilities and those without disabilities in mainstream schools. To appreciate the efforts that have been done in the previous years, and understand the basis of challenges in the field of inclusive education, the history of inclusive education is necessary for defining how inclusive education has been shaped in Malawi. Lessons learned from history would inform the direction of the study. Therefore, the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 1990 World Declaration of the Universal Human Rights, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), Salamanca Statement, National Education Sector Plan (NESP), Education Sector Implementation Plan, and National Strategy on Inclusive Education among others have been discussed to inform the study on the background, processes and underlying principles of inclusive education.

The role of International and national agendas

The promotion of inclusive education at all points reflects the fundamental goals of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD) of 2006 as stipulated in Article 24 (Kiuppis, 2016). According to Kiuppis, the initiative was developed as a cutting-edge method of including students with disabilities in regular classroom settings by Special Needs Education (SNE). According to Kiuppis, inclusive education promotes the idea that all learners can learn in inclusive settings without any segregation, with an emphasis on underprivileged learners whose educational needs are prioritized. In contrast to Special Needs Education, an inclusive approach, according to Kiuppis, does not isolate students with disabilities from special education. Consequently, inclusive education is focused on having the fundamental standards that support learning for all types of learners with individual diversity, which may be classified in terms of ethnicity, religion, or disability. Gauthier (2018) defines inclusive education as learning that accommodates learners who have disabilities and those without disabilities in a mainstream classroom. Inclusive education finds its roots in the fight for social justice in the field of education hence it is considered to be a moral issue. Gauthier, however, presents that inclusive education became a legal issue under the basis of the international law of 2006 which was adopted at the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). These rights were developed based on the Social model theory that refers to disability as being different from impairment since it is created by society's oppression that forms a barrier to individuals with an impairment in their performance. The social model theory agrees with the human rights model which asserts that disability is socially constructed and aims at uplifting the status of an individual with a disability to a status with rights and privileges like any other person (Gordon and Salyutov, 2017). Hence these rights were made to preserve the dignity of individuals with impairment and eliminate discriminating activities in societies. This empowers them to perform to the maximum ability.

However, Gauthier argues that despite the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) being ratified, many countries lack implementation that would lead to a practical change on the ground.

The question would be, what are the reasons behind the lack of change in society? Why are individuals with impairment still facing challenges despite efforts to remove barriers for individuals with a disability? This means that despite the efforts and laws toward the protection of learners with a disability the implementation on the ground is met with challenges leading to non-improvement of the status of those living with a disability. It also suggests that learners with disabilities face challenges in the mainstream classroom. The social model disregards the fact that disability can be caused by barriers that are both social and biological hence it is biased toward social barriers. Considering the effect of both the disability and impairment on the performance of learners with a disability would provide a holistic view of the circumstances that the learners deal with in their academic endeavors and social life (Gordon and Salyutov, 2017).This study investigated the challenges created as a result of the lack of implementation of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and explores solutions to barriers created by oversight.

The inclusion of learners who have disabilities in mainstream school is considered part of the fulfillment of the 1990 World Declaration of the Universal Human Rights calling for Education for All (EFA). It stipulates the standard procedures necessary for the provision of equal access to education for individuals. The Education for All (EFA) was instituted in 1990 during the United Nations World Conference in Thailand at Jomtien. The participants for the conference were drawn from 150 governments, coming from non-governmental and governmental institutions. All the countries were called upon to make basic education universal hence the acceptance of the World Declaration for Education For All. This policy promoted access to education at the primary level,

deal away with barriers to equality in enrolment, made sure that individuals have an improved social-economic status, and provided civic education on the rights that people have in their communities. Malawi through its country representative from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology proposed to implement the Universal Primary Education (UPE) which was later implemented in 1994 after Malawi gained its democracy. This spearheaded the thinking of creating a platform that allows learners from all walks of life to be given access to education (Wamba and Mgomezulu, 2015; United Nations, 2019). Education For All (EFA) formed a basis for bringing equality in the access to education for learners as it provided an opportunity for learning experiences even if the learners come from a low economic background. As much as Education for All (EFA) had set up a foundation for the admission of all learners it created an opportunity for primary and secondary school learners however, it was not explicit about the inclusion of learners with disability. It was for this reason that consented efforts were organized to promote the inclusion of learners who have disabilities to be considered in institutions of learning. Based on the foundation of Education For All (EFA) the target was mainly learners from primary and secondary schools. The efforts to extend inclusion to institutions of higher learning were not targeted even in the early strategies of inclusive education. This study investigated the challenges that originate from the lack of strategies for inclusive education that are inclusive of institutions of higher learning and identify approaches to redress them.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4 focuses on making sure that there is quality and equitable education which supports the provision of long-lasting learning opportunities to all individuals (United Nations, 2019). Countries including Malawi sanctioned Education for All (EFA) which led to the provision of free primary education which also raised the numbers of

learners in need of secondary education and consequently tertiary education. To improve access to quality education for learners who have disabilities, the Salamanca Statement was established.

The adoption of the Salamanca Statement which is based on the principles, practices, and policies on education for learners who have special needs and a Framework for Action, was adopted at the World Conference in 1994. The Salamanca became the pioneering legal device for inclusive education as it provided for the inclusion of learners with disability in mainstream classrooms while meeting their learning needs and fighting discrimination to create a conducive learning environment for learners who have disabilities. It became a basis of the international agenda for the promotion of reforms in education to serve the needs of learners with disability. The Salamanca suggested a sequence of procedures to be followed to meet the needs of the learners who have impairment by creating an environment and a curriculum fitting for the learners with disability. The recommendations made by the Salamanca included the adoption of the policy to admit learners regardless of their being abled or disabled in the mainstream classroom with exceptions to extreme cases requiring special attention. Objective inclusion of learners with a disability is recommended by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (Gauthier, 2018). Relating to this study, institutions of higher learning enrolling learners who have disabilities would be required to adapt to a set of procedures to accommodate the needs of the learners who have disabilities. This study assessed the preparedness of institutions of higher learning in providing inclusion services; the challenges faced and explore strategies for addressing the challenges.

The reason for introducing inclusive education was to accommodate all learners, with and without disabilities, in the mainstream environment. However, the current debate spins around whether there is a need to do away with schools that provide Special Needs Education to promote the achievement of inclusive education goals. The availability of special needs schools that

continue to enroll learners with disability suggests the persistent need for special needs education despite inclusive education. It was observed that mainstream schools are put into categories depending on the type of disability they admit into the school system. This implies that educational institutions and communities still believe that other disabilities cannot be managed by mainstream schools hence the continuation of Special Needs schools for specialized education for learners who are considered to have acute disabilities (Gauthier, 2018). As implied in this study, institutions of higher learning enroll learners based on their capacity in terms of skills, environments, and resources necessary for a particular disability. Therefore, there would be a specific type of disability or disabilities that institutions would decide to enroll in based on their capacity. This also suggests that institutions still regard individuals with an acute disability needs to be handled by Special Needs schools if they have to receive a quality education. This study investigated the perceptions regarding inclusive education to appreciate the challenges that are created based on diverse perceptions to explore ways of addressing them.

Malawi developed a National Education Sector Plan (NESP) to run for a period of ten years, from 2008 to 2017, to guide the activities in the education sector. Among other things, the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) recognized the expansion of access to quality education and the improvement of administration and governing systems in institutions of higher learning. It also projected interventions to be employed in the institutions of higher learning to address the challenges that were identified during the planning period. It established that these barriers were a result of obstructive legislative prescriptions, the vacuum in public policy, and among the challenges that were identified were also the unclear rapport that existed between the government and institutions of higher learning. These created challenges that included limited access to institutions of higher learning that is caused by inadequate space and methods of admission that

create obstacles for individuals with disabilities and females from getting admitted into the institutions. This resulted in a poor intake of learners with special needs or disabilities and females. To deal with the challenges of tertiary education the Malawi government planned to address challenges by the year 2017. To address the challenge of the learners with a disability, the government planned to mainstream the learners with special needs in all programs, train teachers with the necessary skills to facilitate special needs education, and create special needs unit responsible for the monitoring of programs that are related to special needs programs. Plans were also put in place to enhance access for learners with disability and females wherever necessary. It also planned to reinforce administration, governance, stewardship, transparency, and responsibility in institutions of higher learning so that they position the disadvantaged groups including those who have disabilities (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST), 2008). This study investigated challenges that originate from the unclear rapport between the government and institutions of higher learning which creates problems for learners with disabilities and suggest ways of addressing them.

These efforts were improved and assessed in the Education Sector Implementation Plan II -2013/14 – 2017/18 (ESIP II) (Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), 2014). Benchmarks were assessed where it was established that there was little progress in terms of enrolment of learners with disability and efforts were put in place to improve access to education in institutions of higher learning. The Ministry of Education indicates that some of the focus areas for the improvement of inclusive education are infrastructure, governance, and staff expertise necessary to meet the needs of learners who have disabilities. Education Sector Implementation Plan II (ESIP II) highlighted the efforts that were started to improve inclusive education in institutions of higher learning through the passing of the Higher Education Bill and the

development of the Qualification Framework to facilitate the provision of quality education at the tertiary level. These were considered strides in institutions for higher learning as they believed that they would promote inclusive education.

The National Education Sector Plan (NESP) and Education Sector Implementation Plan II (ESIP II) established the basis for a promising inclusive education implementation that provides access to quality education for learners regardless of their ability or inability. The plans spearheaded by National Education Sector Plan (NESP)and Education Sector Implementation Plan II (ESIP II) unveiled the challenges that are faced by learners with disabilities as they transition from secondary schools to tertiary education namely admission strategies that prohibit them from getting enrolled into the institutions, challenges faced by the few that are enrolled and ratification of the unclear relationship between the government and the entities providing tertiary education (Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), 2014). However, the reasons behind the institution's continued challenges of enrolling an inadequate number of learners who have disabilities should be explored. It would be helpful for the Ministry of Education to assess the progress made in terms of training teachers specifically the support the learning needs of those with disabilities. It would also be necessary to know the reasons behind the continued barriers regardless of plans that were put in place by the government through the Ministry of Education. The continued challenges for learners with disability or management of the institutions would signify a gap in strategies that are employed in implementing inclusive education, or non-compliance to the strategic plans that are laid down to improve inclusive practices in institutions of higher learning. This study however identified challenges to inclusive education that originate from gaps in the National Education Sector Plan (NESP), and suggest remedies redress them.

According to Mgomezulu (2017), Malawi's National strategy on inclusive education was established by the Ministry of Education to uphold children's rights to education and achieve quality education for all individuals. The strategy started in 2017 and is expected to run up to 2021. The National Strategy on Inclusive Education serves as an indicator of Malawi's concern for inclusiveness regardless of race, gender, ability, or disability. The strategy stipulates consolidated efforts to achieve inclusive education. One way to do that is to pursue the fulfillment of strategic United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) number 4, 10, and 16 which target "the promotion of quality education that is inclusive for the lifelong experience", and "reduce inequality within countries" and "promote peaceful inclusive societies for sustainable development" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2017, pp. 29-42). The incorporation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) in the strategy enhances the promotion of inclusive education. This focus was guided by legal tools like the Disability Act (Malawi Government, 2012) which stipulates the procedures for handling individuals with disability in the communities, workplace, and institutions of learning; and the Child Care, Protection, and Justice Act (Malawi Government, 2010) entails of the rights for the care, protection, and justice that is to be accorded to the children. These legal documents feed into the National Strategy on inclusive education on matters that relate the children and individuals with disabilities (Mgomezulu, 2017). Since Malawi has a National strategy for inclusive education, this study investigated the reasons behind the various challenges in implementing inclusive education and explore strategies to address the challenges.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was established in 1989 to safeguard children's rights. The rights were meant to be a source of provision, protection, and participation to improve the living conditions for the children. The Convention on the Rights of

the Child (CRC) looks at children as capable actors possessing rights like any other individual (Heimer & Palme, 2016). The National Strategy on inclusive education borrowed a leaf from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to encompass the provision of necessary care for children, strategize child protection measures for a safe environment for children and enhance child participation in activities that relate to them and their welfare. This inclusion gives a footing for the strategy to take care of pertinent areas regarding children's rights. It is in line with this, that inclusive education finds a basis for considering the rights of all learners, with and without disability to meet their learning needs so that they are exposed to equal opportunities and healthy learning experiences in their educational institutions. Mostly, children's rights as developed at the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are more applicable to learners studying in primary and secondary education institutions where the majority are below 18 years of age. Hence, these rights have no direct implications on learners who are in institutions of higher learning as the majority are above 18 years old and therefore adults. Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) does not directly link to the rights of learners in institutions of higher learning, it does provide an understanding of the necessity for inclusive education which would be essential for effective services to learners with disability in institutions of higher learning.

To take care of matters that concern the learners with disability in inclusive education, the strategy also incorporated the Disability Act 2012. Malawi established the Disability Act 2012 to protect the rights of individuals who have a disability and was regarded as a pivotal legal document for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all sectors of society (Malawi Government, 2012). Therefore, the analysis of the Disability Act is essential for the understanding of the efforts and progress toward inclusion in Malawi.

According to Section 10 of the Disability Act individuals with a disability shall be accorded their rights to education by offering them an equal opportunity through inclusive education to enable them a lifelong learning experience. The Disability Act also indicates that learners with a disability pursuing studies in secondary or tertiary institutions shall be supported financially if they prove to be needy and deserving. Section 11 of the Act stipulates measures of preventing acts of discrimination in educational institutions and the workplace towards individuals with disabilities. The Act forbids training and education institutions from denying admission or expelling an individual with a disability from the institution. No individual with a disability is to be subjected to discipline or discrimination. It also prohibits the denial of any services using disability as a basis. The government attached a fee of K100, 000 to individuals and K1, 000,000 to corporate bodies to indicate the seriousness of the rights (Malawi Government, 2012).

The Disability Act (Malawi Government, 2012) consents to inclusive education practices by explicitly stating the inclusion process for learners with disability. The act also stipulates the support of deserving learners with disability in institutions of higher learning which indicates a promotion of inclusive education at this level. However, although the Act mentions that no individual shall be denied admission to any school it does not clearly state the deliberate efforts that are needed to have learners with disabilities enrolled in institutions of higher learning. This would subject learners with a disability who make it to institutions of higher learning to conditions that may not be favorable to their conditions. This also implies that learners with disabilities have to compete under the same circumstances as those without disabilities for them to get access to institutions of higher learning. On the other hand, explicitly prohibiting any sort of discipline towards learners with disability in schools puts them in a special category that may also subject

them to indiscipline practices that may go uncorrected hence creating a breed of citizens whose morals have not been properly guided.

The National Strategy on inclusive education also subscribes to various legal frameworks and initiatives to consolidate the education efforts for all learners. To adhere to the national principles and policies the strategy draws its perspective from the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy I, II, and III (2017 – 2022). The Ministry of Education integrated plans in its operations to incorporate health and gender, Disabled People Organizations (DPOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Disability Programs (DPs) agenda to enhance its inclusion agenda (United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 2018).

The National Strategy on inclusive education subscribes to the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi Chapter 4 of the Malawi Constitution enlists the rights of human beings. The protection of people under the rights is accorded to any human being by being born in the nation (Malawi Government, 1994). It is in line with this that the National Strategy for inclusive education incorporated the concepts from the Constitution as a basis of equal access to education for all individuals irrespective of race, religion, gender, ability, or disability. This study will identify the reasons behind the challenges in inclusive education despite its legal backing by the Constitution of Malawi and suggest solutions.

Concerning the National Development Strategies Malawi established Vision 2020 in 1998 which was to be implemented through four strategies namely: the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy (MPRS), Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) I, II, and III. The goals in these strategies were meant to facilitate the achievement of the Vision 2020 goals that focus on

tactical thinking, collective vision and practicable leadership, participation of people, strategic administration, and nationwide learning. Vision 2020 stated that "by the year 2020 Malawi as a God-fearing nation, will be secure, democratically mature, environmentally, self-reliant with equal opportunities for and active participation by all, having social services, vibrant cultural and religious values and a technologically driven middle-income economy" (Malawi Government, 2017,p.30).

The Malawi Government (2017) states that the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy (MPRS) revolved around four pillars that are sustainable progress for the poor; human wealth growth, promoting the life of the vulnerable and enhancing noble governance. These pillars were addressing four critical cross-cutting issues which are HIV and AIDS, gender, environment, science, and technology. Upon review in 2005, the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy(MPRS) was found to impact the slight decline of poverty from 54.1% to 52.4 % with gaps in implementation and budgeting for the initiatives. These gaps that were identified informed the development of Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) I which was established in 2007 to be implemented from 2006 to 2011. This strategy is intended to reduce poverty by creating sustainable economic growth and development of infrastructure hence its policy framework balances focal issues related to economic and social improvement. The key priority areas included "Agriculture and Food Security; Irrigation and Water Development; Transport Infrastructure Development; Energy Generation and Supply; Integrated Rural Development; and Prevention and Management of Nutrition Disorders, HIV and AIDS" (p. 31). The implementation of the areas of priority targeted progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to improve education, health, environment, gender, and governance services which are considered to be essential to human development both socially and economically.

According to Malawi Government (2017) Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MDGS), II review established gaps that led to the inclusion of Child and Youth Development and Empowerment. However, its review proved that this initiative was not successful due to a lack of addressing the many challenges that were uncovered. This informed formation of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MDGS) III which encompassed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 agenda and the African Union Agenda 2063. This was done to facilitate the implementation of international frameworks through the national plans by mapping key areas of priority from Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063 including Education and skills development. To facilitate the education and skills development agenda, the strategy focused on four Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) namely 4, 5, 8, and 9 to promote inclusion, equality, economic empowerment, sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation. Agenda 2063 goals also focus on inclusion in all aspects of development (Malawi Government, 2017).

Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MDGS) regards education as being critical to the development of human capital and necessary for the social, economic, and industrial development of the nation as it empowers various individuals including females, young people, and people with disabilities through the acquisition and development of skills. It envisages that individuals that are educated and skilled would be central to the realization of speedy economic growth and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To meet this goal Malawi needs to increase the number of learners that transition from primary to secondary school which was at 16% and 8% for learners that make it to tertiary institutions. The estimated population as of 2017 was 17.2 million with a 20.4% unemployment rate. It is based on this that Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MDGS) III included education as one of the focal areas to improve the quality of education at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Hence among the activities planned in the

education sector focusing on institutions of higher learning, the agenda is to improve access and equity in higher education by creating partnerships, and providing loans and scholarships to needy students enrolled in accredited universities be it public or private, and providing special needs programs, resources, and facilities in institutions of higher learning (Malawi Government, 2017).

The concern for education in Malawi has been increasing through the various lessons learned through the initiatives that the government has put in place. Attention to increased quality and access to education progressed from the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy (MPRS),Malawi Growth and Development Strategy(MDGS) I, II, and more clear and focused with Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MDGS) III. The efforts in Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MDGS) III widened the scope to include the achievement of the international agendas of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and African Agenda 2063 which also focuses on inclusive education that is extended to institutions of higher learning. The strategy targeted the provision of special needs programs, resources, and facilities in institutions of higher learning. The plans highlighted in Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MDGS) III in regards to inclusive education are focused on issues relating to inclusive practices in institutions that provide higher education as they would facilitate improved access to educational institutions and learning for the learners who have disabilities (Malawi Government, 2017).

However, given the state that not much is done in institutions of higher learning in the area of inclusive education, this would seem to be too ambitious considering the challenges that were not addressed in the three previous strategies. There would be a need for a clear policy that would spearhead inclusive education at this level. The accreditation of institutions that are engaged in higher learning does not require an inclusive education policy among the critical policies National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) demands, although there is a requirement to make

infrastructure accessible to all, with consideration of learners with disabilities and recruitment that does not discriminate based on disability, gender, race or age (National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), 2015). Isolated standards on inclusive education, as stipulated in the Minimum Standards for institutions of higher learning, would serve as a basis for an inclusive education policy for higher education. This might imply that the current practices in inclusive education in institutions of higher education be subjective to the capacity of the individual institution to fit its convenience. Other institutions might have structures that allow access for learners with disability and an admission policy that does not discriminate but does not recruit learners with disability. This would translate to a continued limitation of admission for learners who have disabilities into institutions of higher education which has an impact on the social-economic development of the nation. This study investigated the impact of Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) strategies on inclusive education.

A brief analysis of the Malawi Disability Act, 2012

Malawi passed a Disability Act in May 2012 to facilitate the inclusion of individuals who have disabilities in all sectors of life by providing equal chances and participation to ensure the well-being of the citizens of Malawi. Through the Disability Act, Malawi expressed its initiative in mandating the provision of inclusive education. The Act also informed the National Strategy on Inclusive Education. Therefore, the analysis of the act provides a perspective on some of Malawi's primary initiatives toward inclusive education. The analysis provides an opportunity of drawing out the positive elements of the Act in the promotion of inclusive education but also elements that contradict the promotion of inclusive education. The Disability Act (Malawi Government, 2012)guides the terms that are used concerning disability issues as follows: Accessibility is recognized as standard design and refers to the creation of products, agendas, environments, and services that are optimal for use by all people without assistance or adaptation; The term "assistive

devices" refers to acceptable aids, technical applications, or other forms of support that help people with impairments work better; A permanent impairment, which might be mental, physical, sensory, or intellectual, is referred to as a disability. Compared to people who are able, people with disabilities have difficulty fully and effectively participating in society; Disability mainstreaming is the practice of integrating the needs, experiences, and concerns of people with disabilities into all aspects of social, economic, and political policy and program development in order to ensure that people with disabilities benefit equally; Discrimination refers to a difference, prohibiting or restraining an individual, on the basis of disability, which has the potential to weaken or nullify the recognition, gratification, or exercise of any human rights or fundamental freedoms in the socio-economic, civil, cultural, or other field; Disability Trust Fund refers to an endowment established by the Minister responsible based on the powers vested in him or her based on section 28 of the Act; Equalization of opportunities refers to a process that allows individuals who have disabilities to access various organizations of society and the environment, including activities, services, data and records; Impairment refers to any penalty or constraint that are mental, physical or bodily in configuration or function; Inclusive education refers to a process where one addresses and responds to the diversity of needs of all learners, regardless of whether they have a disability or not, through developing participation in learning, beliefs and societies and lessening marginalization from and within education; Institution refers to any building or other grounds in which a group carries work for the improvement of individuals who have disabilities, and includes locations where individuals who have disabilities live and they are supported by such organizations; National Advisory and Coordinating Committee on Disability Issues (NACCODI) refers to an established committee by the Minister responsible, according to the powers accorded in section 5(2); Reasonable accommodation refers to essential and appropriate changes and

modifications that ensure that individuals who have disabilities enjoy or exercise all fundamental freedoms and human rights on equal basis with other individuals, without daunting unequal or unjustified burden on the other individuals; and Rehabilitation means a goal –oriented process aimed at enabling an individual who has a disability to reach an optimum physical, mental, or social functional level, by providing such person with tools to improve his life (Malawi Government, 2012). The Act provides clear definitions which are meant to guide the perceptions and activities relating to the management and activities of individuals with disabilities.

The Disability Act, 2012 stipulates the duty of the government to adopt all policies and legislations that seek to provide equal chances for individuals who have disabilities for purposes of enhancing and protecting the rights of individuals who have disabilities, to ensure complete inclusion of the individuals with disabilities in all facets of life in the promotion of their dignity and wellness. The Act indicates the government's responsibility to recognize roles played by private and civil society organizations in the promotion and protection of the rights of individuals who have disabilities; and also promote partnerships in activities that provide remedies to the needs and challenges affecting the individuals who have disabilities through advocacy for the removal of barriers that might be socio-economic, attitude and environment for the promotion of inclusion of individuals who have disabilities. Given this, the government has the responsibility to adopt policies and legislations that seek to improve the livelihoods of individuals who have disabilities (Malawi Government, 2012). This implies that government has the mandate to adopt policies and legislations that would facilitate inclusion practices in education as a strategy to promote inclusive and equal access and participation in higher education.

The Disability Act, 2012 gives a mandate to the Minister responsible to create forums for all stakeholders on disability issues where reports from government ministries and departments

are received, reviewed, and discussed in regards to disability mainstreaming. Thereafter, recommend to government best practices for policy formulation, legislation, and programs related to disability and also oversee the monitoring, evaluation, and implementation of the disability programs (Malawi Government, 2012). Policy recommendation in the area of inclusive practices is a mandate of the Minister of Gender and Community Services to ensure effective inclusion based on best practices after wide consultation.

Government has the mandate to provide the necessary health care and services to individuals with disabilities to moderate the effects of disabilities and the growing cases of the disabled. The government is committed to the protection and promotion of the right to work and get employment for individuals who have disabilities by ensuring equal opportunities and conditions that allow them to have access to work and employment (Malawi Government, 2012). Since the ministry responsible for disability issues is a coordinating agency for all inclusion practices the ministry has the mandate to spearhead inclusion activities in the respective sectors. This networking and collaboration create a basis for inclusion that is tailor-made for the services that are provided by respective ministries and departments. Consequently, the Ministry of Education and education departments are a point of contact for educational inclusion needs and direction. Hence, inclusive education is a collaborative effort of the Ministry of Gender and Community Services and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology. Therefore, any challenges concerning inclusive education may strategically be addressed by these two ministries at the center of inclusion in education.

Since education, the world over is regarded as an essential element to the economic development of a country, equality, equity, access, and participation are essential. The provision of higher education is argued to be critical for self-development that enables an individual to

contribute effectively to society and become self-reliant. Hence, exclusion from higher education is regarded as an intellectual inequality (Walker and Wilson-Strydom, 2017). Therefore, as the government is committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities attain adequate standards of living that enable self-reliance and capacity to support their families this can be realized through the provision of access and participation in higher education to all individuals including those with disabilities.

The violation of Sections 9, 11, and 24 of the Disability Act, (Malawi Government, 2012) attracts a fine of K100,000 plus 12 months imprisonment for individuals and a fine of K1,000,000 for a corporate body. Section 9 indicates that no access or admission shall be denied to any person or denied services based on disability; Section 11 demands all education and training institutions not to deny the admission of any individual with a disability or expel such person from the institution. It also indicates that individuals with disabilities should not be denied benefits and services based on their disability. Section 11 is specific to education and training institutions while section 24 is generic to any institution. The attachment of the penalties signifies the priority that is put on the reinforcement of the specific sections leading to compliance.

Section 10 of the Disability Act, (Malawi Government, 2012) states that government recognizes the right to education for individuals with disabilities where equal opportunities that promote inclusion in education and lifelong learning are facilitated. Three strategies highlighted are: Ensuring no exclusion from basic education at all levels and opportunities to receive quality primary education; developing educational policies and programs that appeal to the needs of individuals with disabilities by making available teaching aids, learning support assistants, and assistive devices; and supporting learners with a disability pursuing secondary and higher education in public institutions with financial support, 10% of the allocation, in form of student

loans, scholarships, grants, subsidies and other unspecified incentives (Malawi Government, 2012). The act is very clear on the provision of access to primary and the general education but it is not specific on access to secondary and tertiary education. The reinforcement element for equal access to secondary and higher education is missing in the Disability Act as inclusion is focused on primary education. However, the disparity comes in where as part of inclusive activities government pledges a special financial support arrangement for individuals with a disability who progress to secondary school level and even higher education. The Act is not clear on how inclusive education is to be implemented and promoted in higher education with no benchmarks for the provision of access and participation for learners with disability.

The role of institutions providing inclusive education is not clearly stated as the promotion of equal access, assistive resources and financial support are government responsibilities. Missing the roles of the implementing agencies is a loophole that would compromise the implementation of inclusive education as there is no legal binding for institutions. Therefore, the Disability Act, (Malawi Government, 2012) is not exhaustive of issues necessary for effective and robust inclusive practices at all levels of education.

Institutional policies

The minimum standards developed by National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) do not demand an inclusive education policy as a requirement for setting up institutions of higher learning. Institutions are expected to make their buildings accessible and admission policy non-discriminatory (National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), 2015). As implied in this study, institutions may be found without inclusive education policies as they are not mandatory. There would be a reflection of inclusiveness in infrastructure set-up and admission policy which may translate to little or no recruitment of individuals with disabilities.

This investigation into the challenges of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning considered the challenges that originate from the gaps that are in the various agreements and strategies in Malawi. For instance, the implementation of inclusive education originates from the respect for the human rights of individuals with diverse disabilities that encourage societies to recognize their potential in attaining education and becoming effective citizens. The Malawi government subscribes to various international agendas that promote recognition and inclusion of individuals who have disabilities in educational institutions. Various strategies and Acts like the 2012 Disability Act explicitly mention the support of deserving learners with disabilities in the institutions of higher learning but do not indicate deliberate strategies that promote the inclusion of these learners to create favorable conditions that provide them with access to institutions of higher learning. Individuals with disabilities regardless of their social and medical conditions are subjected to the same rigorous process as other candidates without any disability to get access to any institution of higher learning. The major gap in most strategies and standards like National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) is that there are no direct linkages towards the inclusion processes and procedures that make them mandatory for the promotion of inclusive education. Statements that refer to the recognition and respect of learners with disabilities but not actions oriented towards the same need to be reassessed. This study investigated challenges emanating from the lack of explicit strategies for inclusive education for institutions of higher learning and identified measures to redress them.

Policy development lessons in Malawi

Studies have shown that traditionally, education has been viewed as a constant method to facilitate progress in personal development, social change, scientific-technological development, and economic affluence (McDuff et al., 2020; Chapola, 2016). Despite this perception, the persistent major challenge has been the nature of the education system and reform policies that do

not possess the elements to cause the necessary changes. Chapola (2016) in *Education and social change: Policy discourse analysis of education policy reform process in Malawi and Zimbabwe* presents the trends for policy reforms in the Education system of the two countries given the similarities in their colonial background system of government. Chapola through the analysis highlights the challenge Malawian education encounter in designing and prioritizing the reformation of the education policies that would support the development of the needed human capital to address the persistent needs in the socio-cultural, economic, and academic spheres. Chapola argues that the adoption of educational reform policies developed based on external pressure and putting an emphasis on the alleviation of poverty poses an oversight on the necessary educational policy reforms. Chapola refers to the historical incident whereby the Malawian education system was inherited from the racially segregated system of education with policies framed from that perspective. Chapola discusses that before Malawi's independence, Nyasaland education, the colonial description for Malawi, was run by missionaries who managed primary education, a few secondary schools, teacher training colleges, and trade schools. Education was in the hands of the missionaries with the colonial government running only three secondary schools, one in every region of the country. Ten years after independence government came up with the first formal plan for education development run from the years of 1973 to 1980 and the second plan of educational development followed covering the period from 1980 to 1995. The reason behind the development of the educational developmental plans was to address the social and economic needs that were tailor-made for Malawi. The first and the second educational plans show that the Malawian education system struggled to reinforce the open access to primary and secondary education policy to correct the inequalities left by the colonial system. The first educational plan aimed at increasing primary school enrollment from 33.5% to 50% and

enrollment at secondary school from 3% to 15%. The second educational plan covered all sectors of education setting targets for each sector.

According to Chapola (2016) the monopoly in the framing, dictation in policy design, and implementation by several policy designers with external orientations dates back to the colonial period, post-colonial era, and contemporary time. Chapola adds that the International organizations like United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Bank, International non-governmental organizations, International Monetary Fund, and very affluent individuals' influence has been evident in the formation and implementation of policy. Chapola argues that this trend lacked consideration of essential principles of curricula and instruction development necessary to appeal to the socio-economic and educational needs of the native Malawians. Providing an example of one of the agreements made at the 1980 Arusha convention on education to focus on the expansion of human capital and general development. As such all external policy designers refocused their targets to align policies toward the human development agenda. The continuation of the internal policy designers with the education system that encourages learners to be knowledge receivers than constructors of knowledge is a hindrance to critical analysis of the process of forming policy. Hence, both the positive and negative changes in primary education, secondary education, and tertiary education are a result of the contributions made by the internal major players in the education reform process namely: the sitting governments, political parties, churches, and local non-governmental organizations (Chapola, 2016).

The discrepancies between the educational policy design and the educational practice have been considered to be another challenge that affected the policy reformation. However, the challenge emerged from reluctance to be analytical and considerate of the social context that

informs the policy reformation. Policies informed by the economic and social-political status misinformed both internal and external policy developers, as the reality on the ground was different. An example given of the 1990 Free Primary Education policy which ended up compromising the quality and relevance of education did not consider issues of limited resources in Malawi, whether classrooms would be available to accommodate the increasing number of learners and whether trained teachers were available. Despite achieving increased access to basic education the compromise on the quality of education led to a product of learners who failed to perform effectively in secondary and tertiary education due to their poor background as untrained teachers flooded the primary education (Chapola, 2016).

After the first and the second educational plans, from late 1990 to early 2000, the government of Malawi developed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which emphasized the agenda of education for all which later progressed to the development of the policy called National Education Sector Plan (NESP) covering the period from 2008 to 2015. This policy aimed at addressing major issues affecting the education sector of that time, hence its focus was on the provision of access, equity, quality, and efficiency in education (African Network Campaign on Education for All, 2009 as cited in Chapota, 2016).

In contrast to Malawi, Zimbabwe, from its time of independence in 1980 prioritized education, and the government budget allocation reflects the prioritization. Two conferences in 1981 and 1982 were conducted to reconstruct the Zimbabwean educational policy. The outcomes from the two conferences led to a policy reform called the Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production aiming at providing education for production. Limited human capital to implement the policy led to the development of another policy focusing on teacher training known as the One Year In, One Year Out Scheme whereby teacher trainees spent the first year in college,

the second year in school for practical training, and the third year, which was the last, back in college. Zimbabwe conducted a commission of inquiry on the state of education in 1986 whose recommendations led to great changes in its education system. The educational policies designed at regional and international forums have been followed by both Malawi and Zimbabwe. One such policy is the 1990 Education For All (EFA) policy where both countries agreed to align the educational policies by the year 2000 however the realization of the policy was shifted to 2015 during the 1995 world summit on Social Development. This followed a revisit of the national plans for the two countries to align to the new goals of the development of early childhood, access to free primary education, lifelong skills, promotion of adult literacy, gender equity, and equality in education (Kapfunde, 1997 as cited in Chapola, 2016).

A study by Chapola (2016) indicates that Malawi has been in haste in its adoption and implementation of policies given out by developmental partners with no proper plan and setting for the native academic needs and interests. A critical analysis of the Malawian educational plans has shown that since independence the plans have always been connected to the statements of development policies. In a bid to create a synergy that would bring meaningful change in Malawi while responding to both national and international agendas in the period between 2008 and 2017, the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) adopted the strategy too (National Education Sector Plan (NESP), 2008, as cited in Chapola, 2016). The adoption was influenced by a lack of capacity in human capital with relevant expertise to develop educational reform policies to address socio-economic needs. This approach gave meaning to education as a catalyst in addressing the national agenda hence the National Education Sector Plan adopted the same approach bringing together all efforts regardless of the sector in education to address a common challenge and respond to the Malawi Growth Development Strategy and associated international protocols like Education For

All and Millennium Development Goals. Although, the policy developers lacked knowledge of the education system in Malawi and the Malawi government had no financial capacity to fund its policies the education agenda needed to be linked with the externally developed statements to get access to funding and resources. The need to expose both policy designers and implementers to the basics of the adopted policy has been established as implementation failure was prescribed to a lack of familiarity with the policy (Chapola, 2016).

Policy reform has been indicated as a catalyst for robust implementation in any activity that affects the socioeconomic, academic, or political development of individuals. Bringing together diverse efforts from stakeholders in Special Needs Education, forums for the disabled, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, the Ministry of Gender, developmental partners, and all stakeholders towards inclusive education through policy reform can aid a major redress of multiple challenges leading to the improvement of inclusive education. As implied in this study, the development of a standalone policy on inclusive education will consolidate efforts and resources toward effective inclusion hence providing a solution to most challenges related to inclusion. The absence of an inclusive education policy on the national level represents divided efforts that do not yield effective practices as they lack concrete support from the government and other stakeholders. However, the development process for an inclusive education policy needs the wide participation of all stakeholders.

According to Silver (2019),Malawi has experienced policy development from government initiatives but also civil societies and non-governmental organizations initiatives. The readmission policy is one such example of a policy that was developed apart from government initiatives. A learner that became pregnant in Malawi before the year 1993 received permanent expulsion from school. The emergence of the re-admission policy that allowed young mothers to be re-admitted

to school after a one-year suspension started as a result of the efforts of selected stakeholders within the Ministry of Education and Gender; advocacy initiatives from the National Commission for Women and Development in Malawi; and activists funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the girl's education project, Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE). The movement from total expulsion for young mothers to legalizing school return after a one-year suspension was a huge milestone for Malawians. Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE)project-led initiatives in policy change demonstrate the unequal influence that international funding agencies possess on educational policy development in Malawi since girls' education was not a priority for the government. Girls' education became one of the government's priorities that receive considerable funding and attention from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology. The government perpetuated this policy by conducting a formal review of the re-admission policy in the year 2016. Although some players were found to have mismanaged their time as they were civil servants working in the Ministries of Education and Gender the positive element came as the policy brought an instant change in the affairs of school management concerning girls that were becoming pregnant after the year 1993 (Silver, 2019). Literature indicates that stakeholders in the education system have a role in facilitating policy development. The positive contribution can be born from inclusion projects fighting for the rights of individuals who have disabilities to gain access, equity, and equality in education in institutions of higher learning. Individuals and other stakeholders can contribute positively to policy development without violating their work procedures but by taking advantage of the opportunities that are offered for the improvement of the education system.

Reliable data on inclusive education in Malawi

The dawn of Special Needs Education (SNE) came with countries making commitments to its promotion through local and international policies, conventions, and agreements. Despite all

these efforts individuals with special needs, in the sub - Saharan region, seem not to benefit enough from public education. A comparative study on "*the assessment of special education situations between Lesotho and Malawi*" was conducted focusing on accomplishments, complications, and consequences of the status of special education in the countries. At the advent of Special Needs Education (SNE), the governments of Lesotho and Malawi did not take the responsibility of providing education to children with special needs. This role of providing education to learners with disabilities was assumed by non-governmental organizations, churches, and individuals. Chavuta (as cited in Mkandawire et al., 2016) indicates that the Malawi government was not active in the education of individuals who have disabilities starting from colonial times to independence in 1964. The Catholic Church through Montfort College of Special Needs Education in Chiradzulu almost by itself assumed this responsibility. Due to negligence, Special Needs Education (SNE) research-based statistics in Malawi are very limited and not comprehensive. The absence of reliable statistics made it challenging for learners with disabilities to be assisted. The church used a spiritual and sympathetic approach to learning, the provision of Special Needs Education was slow and not all-encompassing since it did not have enough resources for the same (Mkandawire et al., 2016).

The study findings revealed that Malawi and Lesotho share so many similarities in special education accomplishments and complications regardless of some disparities available. The need to do more on the implementation of already existing policies to support learners who have disabilities in Special Education to fulfill Education For All (EFA) goals were recommended. The statistics on the population of individuals with disabilities was 190,000 according to the 1993 National Survey which translates to 2.9% of the national population. It is indicated that 45% of those with disabilities were in the age range between 15 and 45 and 24% with age over 50. The

population increased in 2008, according to the National Statistics Office where it rose to 3.8% with hearing, visual, and learning impairments being common in primary schools. However, it was found to be impossible for the Ministry of Education to plan using this data to refer to all kinds of disabilities because the information was limited to a few disabilities. Lesotho's statistics registered minimal enrolment in the higher levels of education while Malawi indicated no statistics on the enrolment of learners who have disabilities in institutions of higher learning(Mkandawire et al, 2016).

Inclusive education having its background in Special Needs Education is indicated to have grown away from the government priorities but the church and other individuals of goodwill. Based on this background, establishing reliable information that can be used for planning and the establishment of policies would continue to be a challenge even after the government's intervention until adequate research is done to establish the important data. It is for this reason that established enrolment data for learners who have disabilities in institutions providing higher learning would likely be rare. This study may take the opportunity to contribute to the gap in the data, especially on inclusive education for institutions that are engaged in higher learning to provide a reliable source for planning and decisions about inclusive education in institutions providing higher learning.

According to the study that was conducted by Hummel and Engelbrecht (2018) on teacher education and the ideas of diversity, Malawi struggles with its focus between Special Needs Education (SNE) and inclusive education. The focus on both inclusion and Special Needs Education is reflected in the inability to distinguish the two hence making references interchangeably. The confusion in the use of the terms Special Needs Education (SNE) and inclusive education creates a barrier to finding data that is reliable for the planning and

management of inclusive education. Implied to the current study, individuals and/or institutions of higher learning might be using the terms interchangeably although in the real sense they are different. This might affect the information that will be collected as it would not have a true reflection of inclusive education. This confusion might end up in keeping records that do not reflect inclusive education activities and efforts but rather a mixture of Special Needs Education (SNE) and inclusive education.

This section discussed the status of the enrolment of learners who have disabilities in inclusive education. The process of recruitment and enrolment were discussed. The enrolled numbers of learners with disabilities were analyzed to validate the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in educational institutions. The individual, family, and social factors that influence the enrolment and the retention of learners with disabilities were also discussed to assess various effects on the enrolment process of the learners with disabilities. Factors that lead to their inconsistency in attending classes and dropping out of school have been discussed too.

Problem Statement

The problem is that although inclusive education is implemented in institutions of higher learning it is faced with challenges. There is a continued exclusion of learners who have disabilities in institutions providing higher learning. This observed exclusion has a long time effect of denying the population of individuals with disabilities the empowerment that is necessary for their self-sufficiency and positive contribution to society hence creating a social gap between individuals with disabilities and those without disabilities (United Nations Educational, Science, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019). Kamchedzera (2015), Chitiyo, Odongo, Itimu-Phiri, Muwana, and Lipemba (2015) and Chitiyo,Hughes, Chitiyo, Changara, Itimu-Phiri, Haihambo, Taukeni, and Dzenga(2019) explored the gap of inadequate personnel with technical expertise in handling

learners who have disabilities that affect the provision of inclusive education and established the need for professional development. The challenges of teaching in an inclusive classroom in Malawi include a lack of technical expertise in terms of relevant knowledge and skills in handling learners who have disabilities, and scarcity of teaching and learning resources coupled with the difficulty in providing extra support amidst large classes (Chataika, Kamchedzera and Semphere, 2017). Chirwa, Lingolwe and Naida (2021) support the presence of challenges in providing inclusive education but also include a challenge in infrastructure suitable for different disabilities. According to Phiri (2021) despite the presence of learners who have disabilities like deafness in mainstream education, the learners struggle to learn due to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Phiri posits that due to these circumstances some learners with disabilities drop out of school and opt for special schools. However, some learners fail to enroll in special schools due to the requirement of exorbitant fees and are also denied access to enroll in mainstream schools since their access is very limited. Those who get access to mainstream schools encounter challenges due to a lack of technical knowledge of their needs by the teachers.

Learners with disabilities face ongoing difficulties such as a lack of resources, inadequate communication skills, a lack of appropriate teaching tools, frequent absences, inadequate infrastructure, and discrimination. Some difficulties result from the fact that people with disabilities have unique birth defects that call for certain technical skills needed for efficient teaching and learning (Chimwaza, 2015; Edmunds as cited in Mgomezulu, 2017). According to an analysis report from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019), people with disabilities are almost always worse off than people without disabilities because they are more likely to never attend school, drop out frequently, do not complete primary or secondary education, and spend only a short period in school if they do.

Studies indicate the presence of challenges like discrimination, teacher expertise, resources, and infrastructure among many of the Malawian primary and secondary schools' inclusion of learners with disabilities (Chimwaza, 2015; Mgomezulu, 2017). Artiles et. al. (2015) emphasize the need for capacity development in teaching skills on instructional approaches used in inclusive education. Deficiency in technical knowledge and skills among teachers who handle learners with disabilities compromises the quality of inclusive education provided. A link is established between the inequalities and access gaps found in South Asian and Sub-Saharan African primary and secondary schools to problems in achieving equal access to higher education; Malawi hasa 2% access rate to institutions offering higher education among which are minimal numbers from individuals with a disadvantaged background that includes those with disabilities (Ilie and Rose, 2016).The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Malawi (UNICEF Malawi) (2020) *Education Situation Analysis Report* indicates that 99% of learners with disabilities do not have access to institutions of higher learning. The report indicates that out of 8,656 learners with disabilities enrolled in secondary schools in the 2018/19 academic year only one percent had access to higher education. The report highlights the 0.4% admittance into higher education out of 34,167 admissions to higher education. However, there is a disparity in the total enrolment of learners with disability presented in the report indicating 117 in the discussion and 133 in the summary table. Nevertheless, this indicates a less than one percent access to higher education for learners with disabilities. Furthermore, a total enrolment of 0.2% for learners with disabilities was recorded, as both public and private institutions of higher learning enrolled 56,624 learners with 112 learners with disabilities (Ministry of Education (MoE), 2022). According to the National Planning Commission (2020) for Malawi to achieve vision 2063 of "an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant nation" enabler 5 of human capital development is key. Since education

is central to the development of human capital, therefore, exclusion of any grouping of individuals contradicts the national agenda of building a nation that is inclusive in its wealth and self-reliance; hence Vision 2063 promotes the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all sectors at all levels. Conclusively, the literature indicates that inclusive education is faced with challenges in Malawi. Since previous studies focused on primary and secondary school sector inclusion practices, this study focused on institutions providing higher learning to successful learners from secondary school to provide a perspective of tertiary institutions. It is based on this background that this investigation into the challenges of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning in Malawi was conducted.

Purpose of the study, Research Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this mixed study is to provide insights into the challenges and their impact on institutions of higher learning in Malawi to inform strategies for improving inclusive education. Despite Malawi being active in promoting inclusive education, challenges affect its implementation. For instance, Mgomezulu, (2017) reported that individuals with physical disabilities are liable to the worst forms of discrimination. Hence children with disabilities, albinism and those that suffer from chronic diseases are found to be excluded. The discrimination that leads to exclusion creates discrepancies between the government's efforts to promote inclusive education amidst inadequate capacity to implement it and individual behavior toward those with disabilities in society.

According to the results of the study conducted by Artiel et al. (2015) in Malawi, changes in the approach of providing education to learners with different learning requirements from the traditional approach, the special needs approach, and the current migration to the inclusive education approach emerged as a national initiative through the revision of laws and formation of

new policies. However, inclusive education is stated as a government's commitment in only a few education policy papers and the term is carefully and rarely used in common reference to Special Needs Education. Artiel et al. also point out contradicting views that were evident in the promotion of the introduction of special needs modules in teacher training institutions rather than inclusive education modules and there were no clear procedures on how resource centers would be used in the provision of inclusive services. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Malawi (UNICEF Malawi) refers to learners with special needs including those with socio-emotional and behavioral difficulties, and vulnerable children referring to those in poverty, abused, neglected, or orphaned. However, measures supporting Special Needs Education focus mainly on those with disabilities that are motoric and sensory hence materials and strategies used are brailles and sign language, and assistive technologies connect the special needs perception to disability.

Hence this study provides insights into the impact of the challenges encountered in the provision of inclusive services in institutions that provide higher learning. Therefore, this study intended to investigate the social, cultural, and economic issues and other aspects of the challenges of implementing inclusive education in institutions providing higher learning and analyze the impact of the challenges to create a platform for quality inclusion.

Research Aims

The study aims at ensuring that the inclusion of learners with disability in the mainstream education system at the tertiary level is incorporated per the policies that are put in place by both the government, through the Ministry of Education, and higher education governing bodies.

Research Questions and Research Hypothesis

Main Research Question

What are the challenges affecting inclusive education in institutions of higher learning in Malawi?

Specific Research Questions

    (1) What is the enrolment status of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning?

    (2) What types and degrees of disability are accommodated in institutions of higher learning?

    (3) What perceptions do key stakeholders have toward inclusive education in institutions of higher learning?

    (4) What are the challenges that affect the implementation of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning?

Hypothesis

$H1_0$.   The implementation of inclusive education in institutions of higher education in Malawi is not effective due to various challenges.

$H1_a$.   There is effective implementation of inclusive education in institutions of higher education in Malawi.

Significance of Study

    The significance of the study is that it will inform policy and practice on challenges being encountered in inclusive education implementation and their effect on institutions that provide higher learning in Malawi. Previous studies focused on the primary and secondary sectors hence a focus on higher education was necessary. Literature indicates that although library services are critical to institutions engaged in higher learning, due to the independent model of the study that is used, they are compromised due to a lack of funding from the government. Coupled with that are other challenges which emerge due to inadequate resources, lack of skills and knowledge for some teachers, and infrastructural challenges (Malunga, 2017 as cited in Shonhe, 2019). Hence, the exploration of the challenges provides an essential insight into the impact of the challenges in inclusive education. For instance, given the fact that the provision of quality education at the tertiary level is critical for its contribution to personal, social, and economic development,

hencelack of expertise among the teachers compromises the quality of citizens being produced (Walker and Wilson-Strydom, 2017).

Therefore, this study will inform policy and practice on the necessity and strategies of narrowing the social gap that is created by challenges in providing inclusive education. This study will also inform the stakeholders in inclusive education on what type of disabilities could be suitable for inclusion and what category would need special education.Vygotsky's Theory of Dysonto-genesis has practical implications for inclusive education as it denotes the differences in disabilities that need to be understood in light of the variations in handling them in the process of teaching and learning (Rodina, 2006). Enlightenment about various disabilities accommodated for inclusion has provided the necessary information for stakeholders to prepare for inclusion strategies.It will also inform parents and guardians about the available options for learners who have disabilities to proceed with school in institutions that provide higher learning.

This study is significant since it would document the challenges encountered in the provision of inclusive education in institution of higher learning. This would create an opportunity for learners who have disabilities to have potential access to quality educational services as the understanding of inclusive education and solutions to challenges encountered in implementing inclusion are provided. According to United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2019) report learners with disabilities are prone to exclusion from education at different stages and are exposed to discrimination. Therefore, the understanding of inclusive education and solutions to challenges have the potential to improve admittance into higher education institutions for learners who have disabilities for their acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills that would enable them to positively contribute to society.

This study will also inform policy on what effective inclusive education would be. The establishment and documentation of the gaps in the provision of inclusive education through the exploration of challenges and their solutions provides a direction for the provision of effective inclusive education. The efficiency in providing inclusive education would be promoted through the narrowing of the social gap between individuals that are able and not able as both groups would be empowered for positive contributions to society (Walker and Wilson-Strydom, 2017).

Summary

This chapter presented a background on the study of inclusive education to provide an overview of the topic understudy. The statement on the problem has been presented indicating the persistence of the challenges that are faced by learners with disabilities and a focus on the primary and secondary schools sectors by previous studies. Consequently, the need for this study to focus on institutions of higher learning as also active players in inclusive education. The chapter also presented the improvement in the quality of inclusive education in institutions that provides higher learning as the purpose of the study. The aims and objectives of the study were also presented which revolved around the investigation of challenges in inclusive education in institutions of higher learning by exploring the enrollment rate, disabilities accommodated in institutions, and the perceptions towards inclusive education. The chapters that follow will present a literature review, in Chapter 2, wherein examination of the literature to inform the study on key challenges and establish gaps will be done. Research methodology presenting the study design, sampling strategies, data collection, and analysis tools will be presented in chapter 3. While chapter 4 will include the presentation of findings, and an evaluation of the findings, and chapter 5 will present the implications of the study, results, recommendations for application, and future study. Chapter 5 will end with a conclusion to the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study, as presented in chapter one, is to investigate the challenges of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning in Malawi leading to improved inclusion. The literature review presents the theoretical framework which is based on the theories and models that guided this study. The conceptual framework was used to highlight and justify the independent and dependent variables that provided direction for the study. The last section of the literature review is a presentation of empirical literature focusing on the international and local, practices, policies, and agendas that have facilitated the introduction and implementation of inclusive education, the curriculum about teaching and learning strategies and resources, the physical features required in inclusive education, student recruitment in institutions of higher learning, personnel and student engagement in inclusive education. The literature that was searched was from the years 2015 to 2021 except for the theories and historical concepts for theoretical and historical foundations to aid the development of the study.

The following terms were used to identify literature ranging from theories to inclusive education: Vygotsky's Theory of Social Constructionist Epistemology, Vygotsky's Theory of Dysontogenesis, social model, human rights model, medical disability model, disability rights, Malawi Government Constitution, the definition of inclusive education, inclusive education policies in Malawi, inclusive education policies, inclusive education institutional policies in Malawian higher education, admission policies, access to institutions of higher education, enrolment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning in Malawi, curriculum implementation in inclusive education, requirements for inclusive education, challenges in inclusive education in Malawian universities, quality teaching, the role of universities, disability

rights, perceptions on inclusive education, teaching strategies in inclusive education, and pedagogy.

The following key search engines will be used to find literature: Google scholar, UNCAF e-library -ProQuest Central, and Z-library. The literature used ranges from Special Needs Education (SNE) to inclusive education, disability rights, inclusive education policies and strategies, learner engagement and perceptions, and challenges in implementing inclusive education in primary, secondary schools, and also tertiary institutions. Reference is made to policies and agendas that progressed from the 1990s to 2020 with a focus on strategies to go up to 2030 and 2063. The peer-reviewed studies used were drawn from studies ranging from 2015 to 2021.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's theories of social constructionism epistemology and dysonto-genesis, as well as three models—the social model, the human rights model, and the medical disability model—guided the inquiry into the difficulties of inclusive education in Malawi's higher education institutions. The inclusive education concept is supported by Vygotsky's social constructionism epistemological theory. Theoretical explanations have been used in studies to explain how learners with disabilities can achieve the desired learning level with the help of educators' competencies and technology. They have also been used to explain how learners' performance levels and confidence levels improve when they work alongside coworkers in a workplace (Mosito, Warnick, and Esambe, 2017; Fleming & Haigh, 2018).However, in this study, the theory was not just used to explain the effect of joint support from the social environment but also to explain the influence of the teachers, peers, and education stakeholders in defining the conditions of learning for individuals with disabilities in an inclusive education environment.

Vygotsky's theory of dysonto-genesis is used as a complementary theory in this study as it presents the biological differences that disability presents which are the basis for social reactions. Karasu (2019) used the theory to define disability as social retardation and not a biological disease. However, this study used the theory to emphasize the appreciation of the biological impairment which is the basis of the challenges and to provide realistic solutions to the challenges faced by learners with diverse disabilities. Hence this study presents disability as both social and biological.

The two theories are complemented by the three models of social, human rights, and medical disability. Studies on inclusive education and special needs have used these models to define disability as being social, a right for individuals who have disabilities, and a basis for the challenges that they face. The human rights model used alongside the social model theory asserts that disability is socially constructed and aims at uplifting the status of an individual with a disability to a status with rights and privileges like any other person; the medical model has been criticized for its insufficiency and oppressive element (Hogan, 2019 and Hogan, 2019). This study supports the social and human rights perspective and hence makes an argument that limiting access to higher education for learners with disabilities based on institutional unpreparedness causes institutional segregation and the lack of policy mandate creates a violation of their right to education. This study also considers the medical model as a basis for understanding the different impairments to provide the necessary support that is dependent on the type of disability for effective inclusion. This study presents an argument that despite being criticized for its oppressive perspective on disability, the medical model indirectly provides a critical element of biological impairment that requires proper consideration in addressing inclusive challenges. Therefore, the use of the two theories and the three models was to bring about the understanding of the potential

of individuals with disabilities be it personally or assisted, and the role of society and policies in inclusive education.

2.2.1 Vygotsky's Theory of Social Constructionist Epistemology

Vygotsky's theory of social constructionist epistemology which gives a foundation for models that are used in special education, and inclusion that are based on positive differences guided the study. Vygotsky recognized that the social variations provide a direction for the roles played by parents, instructors, peers, and the general society on the learner with a disability. These provide a guide in curriculum development and the choice of instructional strategies. This theory is considered to be a methodological framework for psychology and special needs education which has a bearing on the practical work of inclusive education in the contemporary world. Vygotsky indicates that an individual's higher mental functions are co-constructed while sharing activities between the child and another person. Then the co-constructed process develops to be a basic part of the development of the child through internalization thus learning takes place. This is a contrary view to Jean Piaget's cognitive theory on knowledge construction where Piaget believed that the constructive process of learning takes place as individuals construct their knowledge based on the level of cognitive development (Woolfolk, 2016). According to Vygotsky (1978 as cited in Mosito et. al., 2017), there are different levels of potential learning achievement when a learner works alone and when given support. Vygotsky refers to this as a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which is a difference between what learners can achieve on their own and the potential achievement if provided with the required support from capable individuals who might be educators or any other person who is more knowledgeable and the strategies and resources used therein. Among the three means of developing the mental higher process, Vygotsky promotes imitation where learners learn through modeling with a preference for collaborative learning as

peers strive to understand each other and, in the process learning takes place, than instruction which demands learners to internalize the teacher's instructions to regulate them in the learning process. Therefore, teachers have a role to support learners in achieving beyond their limitations while in the Zone of Proximal Development through this process which is referred to as scaffolding. Hence, to provide effective support, teachers are expected to establish the learners' level of prior knowledge of the subject and use other learners who are more knowledgeable to support their peers. Teachers are also expected to prepare learners to get out of their comfort zones and take risks to achieve a higher level of understanding and performance. However, Vygotsky's ideas on the role of culture and social processes have been criticized for being exaggerated for undermining the role of biological cognitive predispositions that individuals are born with. Those that criticize this theory also argue that it does not recognize effort-based personal comprehension that leads to an individual's rise above the social norms (Woolfolk, 2016; Bates, 2019).

The work of Vygotsky as explored by Feuerstein et.al. (1991, as cited in Bartlett and Burton, 2016) indicates the role of human mediators in the process where a child interacts with the environment. Mediation takes place between the individual and the environment through social interactions that generate meaningful situations and experiences using the individual psychological tools to mediate the psychological processes. Feuerstein developed the mediated learning experience (MLS) theory to be used for individuals and cultures that are deprived and those with learning disabilities in the improvement of social constructionism. This potentially brings an understanding of the presence of the hidden learning potential that is critical for providing knowledge and understanding to parents and teachers not to merely accept the deficiencies that the children or learners may possess but to work and encourage active modification of the deficiencies.

As implied in this study, support from capable people like peers, teachers, parents, and even guardians becomes essential for learners with disabilities given the challenges that confront them. Hence, for these learners to perform to the desired level of achievement beyond their limitations require the support of abled persons, and technical individuals, and the use of the right methodologies in the teaching and learning process is necessary for effective performance.

2.2.2 Vygotsky's Theory of Dysontogenisis

Therefore, this study also specifically used Vygotsky's theory of dysonto-genesis (from the Greek words "dys" referring to an anomaly, "ontos" meaning being, and "genesis" which is development hence deficient development. Dysonto-genesis theory is also known as the theory of distorted development and it offers a framework for analyzing the mechanisms that can enable change and improvement for learners with a disability as it focuses on making emphasis on an individual's strengths than weaknesses. Vygotsky developed a practice-focused model for learners with special needs that create a favorable societal view of individuals with disabilities by directing the focus on solidification and empowerment for individual skills as opposed to emphasizing weakness or non-conformities. The theory also stresses the importance of interpersonal relations in learning and this would be connected to the influence of social factors in affecting learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning (Rodina, 2006; Hogan, 2019).

Vygotsky's ideas are for generic individuals and should not be used in disregarding biological disabilities hence the need to employ different mediating mechanisms to facilitate positive change in learners with disability. There is a criticism that Vygotsky's ideas are general and do not detail their application to instruction hence differing and inconsistencies in interpretations in literature. However, this was found to be based on the separation of the human mind and the environment hence individuals interpret based on their perspective as the confusion

emanates from the literal perspective of the concepts and lack of appreciation of his philosophical orientation (Rodina, 2006 as cited in Mosito et. al, 2017).

Therefore, in this study Vygotskian Social Constructionist Epistemology ideas on disability and Vygotsky's Theory of Dysontogenesiswere used as their implications on the practical implementation of inclusive practices to understand challenges in inclusive education and explore strategies for addressing the identified challenges. This theoretical framework was also used by Rodina in a qualitative, document analysis study on the views of Vygotsky's social constructionist on disability which focused on a methodology for inclusion. Rodina (2006) used it to identify the best social conditions of development among children with disabilities in inclusive education. Vygotsky's theories on psychology and Special Needs Education have been vital to the establishment of the Russian framework for Special Needs Education methodology for practice. The Russian government used the theory for the identification of methodologies to be used in the field of education for the promotion of inclusive services. Hence it has emerged to be a framework for the practical approach to inclusive education in the contemporary world (Rodina, 2006). Since this study is an investigation into the challenges of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning in Malawi, using this framework to guide the study is paramount. This study used this framework to identify the various challenges encountered in the process of providing inclusive services in institutions that are providing higher education and explore ways of redressing the challenges. Therefore, the research questions targeted drawing out information on the identification of the sources of the challenges and redressing the challenges. The clarification on the sources of the challenges is highlighted through the models that are used in complementary to the theories in this study to bring a defined perception of the origins of challenges that are

encountered by the learners who have disabilities. Hence, the use of the medical disability, social and medical models is discussed in the following section.

2.2.3 Medical Disability Model

The study also used the medical disability model which asserts that disability is a basis for the challenges that individuals with disabilities encounter and the social differences that are created around them. This view suggests that disability is biologically constructed and that nothing can be done to redress it. It suggests that challenges that are encountered by individuals who have disabilities emanate from their biological makeup hence they are prone to face various challenges depending on the type of disability that individuals possess (Hogan, 2019; Hogan, 2019).However, this study used the medical disability model to understand the biological construction of various disabilities to address the misconceptions brought by the medical disability model on disability status as it creates an environment that is discriminatory and oppressive. The model was used to understand the variations in the disabilities that also require different strategies to address and support them in the process of teaching and learning. Therefore, the social model was used in this study to complement the medical model so that both the social and biological challenges should be addressed by asking questions about the effects of various disabilities on the process of teaching and learning. This study while supporting the social construction and human rights elements of disability brings an appreciation of the biological differences within and among the disabilities with unique challenges requiring relevant interventions to redress the challenges; it argues that different disabilities require unique expertise, teaching strategies, resources and support to address the unique challenges.

2.2.4 Social Model

Therefore, to complement Vygotsky's perspective and medical disability model, the social model theory was also used in this study to address the challenges learners who have disabilities are confronted with. The theory was developed to rebut the medical disability model which views disability as a foundation of the challenges and the social differences faced by individuals with disabilities. The medical view disregards the role of social structures in creating an environment that is discriminatory and oppressive. Hence social model theory was developed and it has been influential in shaping policies that relate to the education and social issues of people with disability. The Social theory describes disability as being entirely social. Disability is regarded as something that is imposed on people with impairments by society to disable them from being effective. Based on this perspective impairment is described as lacking a part of a mechanism of the body while disability is referred to as a hindrance or a limitation caused by a social organization in its little or no regard to the individuals with impairment leading to their exclusion from mainstream social activities. Hence, according to social model theory disability is regarded as social oppression (Silva Bampi, Guilhen, and Alves, 2010; Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2013). This study used the social model to identify the barriers that are socially constructed for individuals with disabilities and explore strategies to be used to redress the challenges to create a healthy learning environment for learners with disabilities. A healthy learning environment can be created through respect for individuals' rights hence this study will also use the human rights model. Therefore, the research questions targeted the identification of the barriers that are socially created and the means of redressing the identified barriers.

2.2.5 Human Rights Model

The Human Rights model was used alongside the Social model theory as it asserts that disability is socially constructed and aims at uplifting the status of the individual with a disability to a status with rights and privileges like any other person (Gordon & Salyutov, 2017). The respect and recognition of individuals with disabilities as any other human being is a facilitator of positive efforts in addressing the challenges faced. Hence, the use of the human rights model emphasizes the importance of according the necessary respect and recognition of individuals with disabilities and addressing the challenges that are encountered in their lives for them to enjoy their basic rights in society. Therefore, the study questions were asked to identify challenges related to the rights of learners with disabilities and strategies for addressing the challenges.

It is based on the social model, human rights model, and Vygotsky's social constructivism epistemology theory that this investigation into the challenges of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning was conducted to analyze the social issues that affect the learning process and the learners with disability. However, Vygotsky's theory of dysonto-genesis and the medical disability model were used to address the biological features of the learners with a disability that should never be overlooked for the provision of effective support. Figure below is a pictorial representation of the social construction of knowledge and disability and the biological reflection of disability that causes diverse disabilities which require unique interventions for effective inclusion in the education system.

Figure 1: *Theoretical Framework for Inclusive Education*
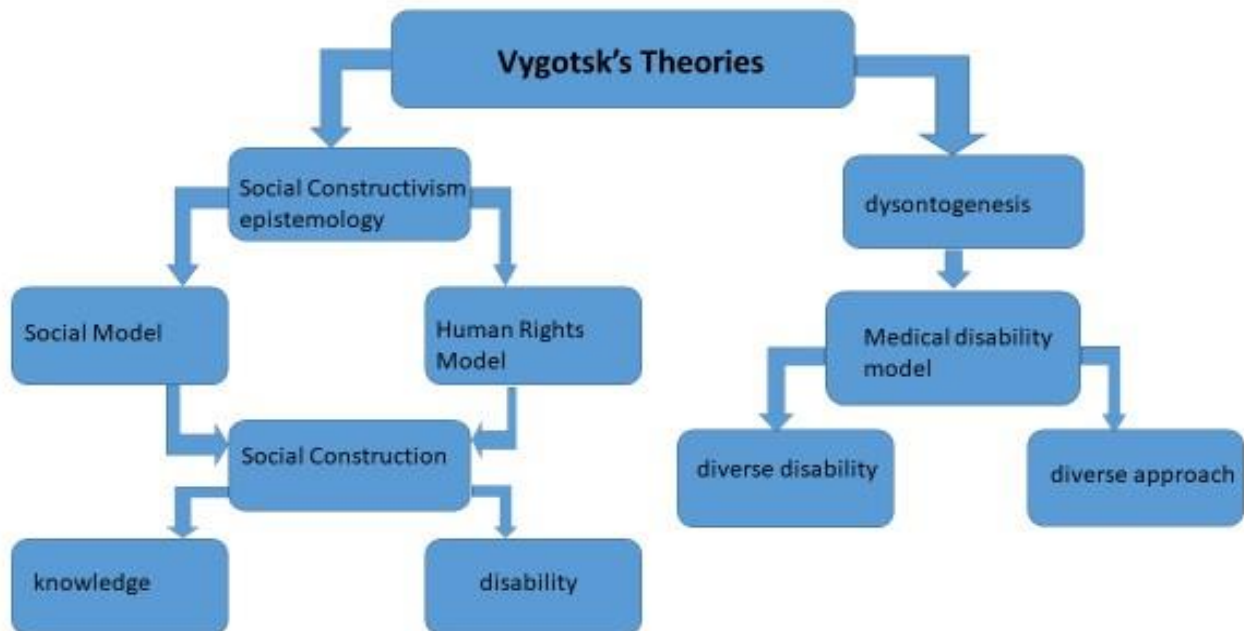
Note: This figure was designed by Chiumia Mwale (2023)

2.2 Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework focused on a dependent variable (DV) inclusive education which is influenced by the independent variables (IV) challenges related to learners, teachers, classrooms, institutions, curriculum, and policy. The variables were guided by Vygotsky's theories and the medical disability, social, and human rights models in investigating the challenges. This conceptual framework used was also used by Chilumba and Penda (2019) in the assessment of the challenges in implementing inclusive practices for learners who have a hearing impairment. The framework started with the learners who have a hearing impairment, reflected the inclusive practices, and ended with the assessment of challenges faced by learners with hearing impairment. However, this study is not limited to hearing impairment but a diversity of disabilities and also focuses on institutions of higher learning, not primary schools which

reflects differences in academic level and age. This framework adds the assessment of the processes that are involved. The study investigated how the challenges affecting inclusive in institutions of higher learning which are in three categories connected by the arrow down the challenges box namely core challenges related to teacher, learner, and institution; auxiliary challenges related to the teacher, learner, and institution; and other challenges which are cultural, political and religious as indicated by the arrows too. The arrow pointing to the right to inclusive education indicates the effect that the challenges (IV) have on inclusive education (DV). The effect of inclusive education influences its effectiveness in terms of performance, behavior, attitude, teaching methods, and skills. The processes involved between the challenges and inclusive education are indicated by the arrow that diverts just before the inclusive education box to indicate facilitators of the processes namely government support, curriculum adaptability, competence/skills, attitude, and time.

Figure 2: *A conceptual framework of the challenges of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning*
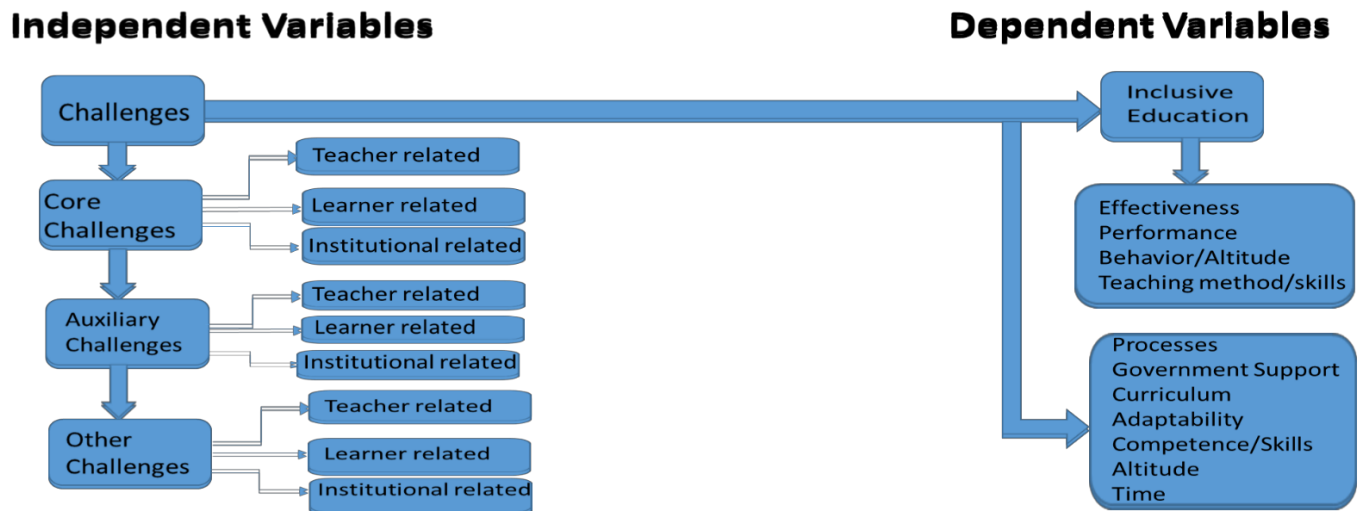
Source: Adapted from Chilumba and Penda (2019).

2.3 Empirical Literature

2.3.1 Curriculum Implementation

2.3.2 Capacity development in Inclusive Education

Inclusive education, worldwide, is regarded as a practice that takes into consideration the diverse learning needs of children, young people, and adults. Inclusive education that is considered to be successful is the one that provides for the participatory learning of diverse groups and individuals in an integrated education structure considering the groups that are disadvantaged which continue to be excluded from education or are not supported by the existing system to the level that would enable them to perform to their full potential. The inclusive education viewpoint presents that the child has potential regardless of disability but the educational system that creates barriers is expected to adapt to all individuals. Because of this, refine project conducted a 14-month

research project entitled "*Research for Inclusive Education in International cooperation*" in collaboration with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH,Center for Education Research and Training (CERT), University of Malawi, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and Scientific Advisory Board in German. The study used a qualitative and multi-perspective approach with a focus on the nationwide, district, and school or community levels in Malawi and Guatemala. The issues explored included access, acceptance, and participation in inclusive education. The researchers explored who was provided access or no access to the education system, targeted inclusive education, dropouts, reasons behind it, reasons for exclusion, and measures implemented. Acceptance was explored both at the interpersonal and institutional levels identifying disadvantaged, discriminated, or privileged groups; practices, and policies that affected learners' opportunity to learn. Participation was defined in terms of being separated or incorporated in the school or classroom, willingness and unwillingness to interrelate with one another; the creation of opportunities for learning that are conducive for all learners, and teaching or learning that is being organized to meet the different learning needs in the classroom (Artiles et al., 2015).

The study results from Malawi indicated a change in the provision of education to learners with different learning needs from the traditional approach, the special needs-oriented method to the inclusive education-oriented methodology was aided by the government efforts through revising laws and forming fresh policies. However, inclusive education is stated as a government's commitment in only a few education policy papers. The term inclusive education is carefully and rarely used as the common reference is made to special needs education. Contradicting views were

found in the promotion of the introduction of special needs modules in teacher training rather than inclusive education and there were no clear procedures on how resource centers would be used in the provision of inclusive education. Ministry of Education Science and Technology reference to learners with special needs includes those with socio-emotional and behavioral difficulties, vulnerable children referring to those in poverty, abused, neglected, or orphaned. However, measures supporting special needs focus mainly on those with sensory and motoric disabilities hence the use of sign language, braille materials, and assistive devices connecting the special needs perception to disability. National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development (NESTED) developed in 2011 does not refer to inclusive education and special needs are rarely mentioned despite the 2007 mandate from the National Policy on Special Needs Education to make Special Needs Education (SNE) mandatory in teacher training. This reflects no clear direction of inclusive education with Special Needs Education (SNE) and apparent support for it (Artiles et al., 2015).

According to Artiles et al. (2015), there is a need for capacity development in teaching skills on instructional approaches used in inclusive education. Teachers need equipment of knowledge and skills in teaching and learning strategies. Arteles et al. argues that the role of head teachers in promoting inclusive education was found to be critical hence the head teachers require training on the same. The introduction of laboratory schools in the districts was also recommended to serve as a learning point in implementing inclusive education. The teachers training in inclusive education was believed to have the potential to address the lack of a common understanding of the concept of inclusive education, lack of coordination and networking, and lack of knowledge and skills in implementing inclusive education.

Although the study focused on primary education it indicates that inclusive education is a concept that focuses on children, young people, and adults who are regarded as being

disadvantaged or excluded. It is from this point of view that inclusive education is a requirement in institutions of higher learning where the majority are young people. The study also addressed the common reference to learners with a disability as a focus for inclusive education. The discrepancies in the understanding of the terms Special Needs Education (SNE) and inclusive education indicate a dilemma and lack of direction in addressing the needs of learners with various disabilities. The lack of commitment to inclusive education as evidenced in most educational policies and documents compromised the implementation and the efforts toward inclusion processes. The challenges faced by teachers in schools may have their origin from the articulation and lack of clear articulation of inclusive education issues in the education policies leading to the non-commitment of teacher training institutions in equipping teachers with knowledge and skills essential for inclusive education. The absence of guidelines on how to use the resource centers also creates a gap in the provision of inclusive education services. The use of a qualitative approach deprived researchers of establishing the intensity of the barriers to access, participation and acceptance. Given the 14 months of the study, an increased sample could have worked too (Artiles et al., 2015). As implied in this study these challenges may affect the implementation of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning.

According to the report by European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2014), the common teaching approaches used in most countries where inclusive education is done include; the use of extra time to provide complementary lessons for learners who have disabilities to enable them to catch up with the abled ones; coaching of individuals or groups to enhance studying and learning skills; or the use of a teacher with the technical skills in Special Needs to provide technical support which is based on the type of disability. Usually where a technical subject teacher is involved the expert teacher in Special Needs Education is incorporated into the

classroom as a methodology used to address the disparity among students. A teacher who is conversant in Special Needs Education (SNE) is required for the effective teaching and learning process in an inclusive classroom to compensate for the learning challenges of learners with disabilities. Sometimes the challenges include the burden of content that is offered in the classroom. Hence, the need for the adjustment of the curriculum to reduce the requirements or change it to suit the purpose of inclusion is also one area that is considered. This implies that there is a need for inclusive education with the necessary support for learners with disabilities.

2.3.3 Learning Styles

Teaching and learning are dependent on many factors including how the learner naturally takes in and processes the information. There are diverse ways in which learners learn based on their personalities, abilities, and perceptions, and these are called learning styles. Therefore, teaching processes and learning in an inclusive education needs to be done in consideration of different learning styles that appeal to different learners apart from understanding the diverse disabilities since apart from being impaired the learners with disabilities also have distinct learning styles that appeal to them like any other individual. The following learning styles should be considered in planning inclusive classrooms:

2.3.3.1. Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) Model

Bates (2019) stipulates multiple learning styles that can be used in a classroom to appeal to the different capabilities and potentials of learners. One of the learning styles was developed from Roger Sperry's concept by Ned Hermann into the Brain Dominance Instrument which suggests that individuals are either left or right-brain thinkers and they view things differently which influences their understanding of things. The left-brain thinkers are said to see things sequentially and logically; a work list makes them work well, they are critical in their analysis,

and are effective in Mathematics and science. They are very detailed and precise and do well in documenting research, can analyze and interpret information, and set goals. On the other hand, right-brain thinkers see things in their totality. Those who are the right-brain thinkers may be unsystematic, volatile, and most often relate and work well with people. Unlike those who are left-brain thinkers, right-brain thinkers are self-starters, inventive, and emotionally oriented leading to contemplation and acting based on their feelings. They are good at solving problems, use intuitions, and are more comfortable with exploring the unknown.

Among these are the theorists, organizers, innovators, and humanitarians. The theorists use the upper brain for their thinking and prefer logical and rational learning activities. The organizers use the lower-left brain in thinking hence they prefer organized and well-ordered learning activities. On the other hand, innovators use the upper right brain in thinking and prefer creative and imaginative learning activities while humanitarians who use the lower right brain in thinking prefer interpersonal and people-oriented learning activities. Herrmann argues that even though learners normally prefer no more than two learning styles teachers should encourage them to develop the complete usage of all the learning styles. Teaching strategies that are structured, rational and language-based normally appeal to the left-hand side brain thinkers based on Herrmann's model. To appeal to the right-hand side of brain thinkers, teachers need to use teaching strategies that are imaginative, creative, and interpersonal. For instance, by asking learners to organize their work and summarize a topic, the use of analogies and metaphors stimulates their thinking, hence learners should be asked to present their ideas in picture forms, or through music and dance. These strategies including the use of role-playing, case studies, and progression of information presentation starting from past knowledge before bringing in current information, facilitate learners' ability to visualize what the situation would be like in the future or apply the

concept. As implied in this study, learning in an inclusive classroom should make considerations of the brain orientations of the learners apart from the diverse disabilities (Bates, 2019).

2.3.3.2. VARK Model

Fleming developed the visual, auditory, reading, kinesthetic (VARK) model of learning which is widely used for assessments. The model categorizes learners into four groups based on how they intake and process information as follows: Neil Fleming describes visual learners as individuals who learn effectively by using sight, they think in pictorial ways by creating mental images that are used to inform the memory system. Teachers can use pictures, arrows, charts, diagrams, displays, handouts, and films to appeal to visual learners for their effective learning experience. A clear emphasis on specific elements of the design stimulates visual learners to create clear pictures of information in their minds. Auditory learners effectively learn by listening, they think in words and learn effectively through lectures and group discussions. They like listening to information that is vocally presented to them, a vocal partnership that happens in a group setup, and reading out to themselves. Teachers would be required to articulate concepts and o instructions for auditory learners to effectively grasp the content. On the other hand, reading learners effectively learn from written materials such as handouts, presentations, and book references. These learners can handle heavy text and take notes and they excel in assignments that demand them to cite from other sources. Hence for reading learners teachers need to provide a list of reading materials and references for them to read. Teachers need to provide them with assignments that challenge them into searching for referencing materials and read widely but also provide adequate handout notes on different subject matters to enrich their intake of information. The fourth type of learner is referred to as kinesthetic learners who effectively learn through doing, and body expressions which are best done through interacting with others. These learners learn

effectively when they are physically involved. Hands-on activities enhance their intake of information as based on their nature, kinesthetic learners thrive well when during course work their senses are engaged. Kinesthetic learners should be given physical experiences like feeling, touching, doing, and holding as they prefer practical experiences (Bates, 2019).As implied in this study, teachers need to use multiple teaching strategies in a lesson presentation to appeal to all types of learners by using teaching and learning aids to appeal to visual learners; providing clear explanations of concepts to appeal to auditory learners; giving a list of reference materials, handouts and write on the board to appeal to the reading learners; and incorporate practical elements, assignments, and activities that involve body movements to appeal to kinesthetic learners.

2.3.3.3. earning Style Inventory (LSI) Model

Another learning style that is used in teaching and learning is Kolb's learning style model which was developed by David Kolb called the Learning Style Inventory (LSI). It was developed based on how people take in information which might be either through concrete experience, by getting involved in practical activities, or abstract conceptualization, by thinking through information; and internalize information through active involvement in experiments, like conducting testing, or reflective observation that is done by watching something or an activity. Hence Kolb suggests that learners can be divergers, assimilators, convergers, and accommodators who do not relate to fixed personalities and have the potential to change regardless of fixed patterns of learning behavior. The divergers are learners who are imaginative and sensitive and can grasp the big picture. They are effective in actively doing and observing learning. Divergers learn effectively through observation and brainstorming hence teachers are required to encourage them to see things from different perspectives since they find it difficult to focus their attention on one

specific point. Teachers should also provide feedback for their work because the lack of feedback discourages them. Assimilators are regarded as learners who focus more on developing theories than on practical application. These are the watching and thinking types of learners, hence they learn effectively by organizing the ideas and abstract concepts in a logical format. Assimilators find it difficult to work with concrete ideas and limited time to think things through. The convergers are the thinking and testing learners. These learners stay emotionally apart and they organize information through assumptions and testing. Convergers work effectively when working with technical activities and experimenting with new ideas as they learn well through practical applications. However, they find it difficult to work with abstract concepts if there are no opportunities to try out new ideas. On the other hand, learners that are accommodators are the testing and the type of learners who rely on their instinct and solve problems through experimental processes. They learn effectively when they encounter new challenges and experiences as they prefer to learn in the process of working and getting the tasks completed. They find it difficult to handle the logical flow of an argument and the absence of new challenges (Bates, 2019). As implied in this study, effective teaching and learning would take place when multiple teaching and learning strategies are used to appeal to different learners.

2.3.3.4. earning Style Preferences Model

The learning styles preferences model was developed by Peter Honey and Allan Mumford. To complete a given assignment, Honey and Mumford propose the adoption of four different learning styles. They created the two dimensions of the learning styles, based on Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (LSI), to create a diagnostic tool called the Learning Style Questionnaire (LSQ). The categories of the learning styles were based on how an individual takes in information either by doing that activists or by thinking that is theorists. Activist learners are mostly open-minded and enthusiastic and do not hesitate to try new ideas while theorist learners usually like to think of

unique ways of doing things and are usually creative and innovative in dealing with challenges. Therefore teachers need to engage activists in group work for them to share ideas and engage in a variety of new experiences while allowing the theorists to explore new information within the context of the concepts at hand. Teachers need to take note that activists find it challenging to work in a routine set-up and with repetitions while theorists are impatient in dealing with individuals with differing views. Another category is based on how an individual internalizes information either by experimenting that is for pragmatists or by watching that is for reflectors. Pragmatist learners are good at problem-solving using new ideas while reflectors mostly sit back and observe and are very critical of the processes. In the event of an activity experiencing failure to work the pragmatists lose interest in the activity while the reflectors may be very slow in making decisions. This implies that teachers should expect learners of different preferences in the classroom hence the need to prepare learning materials that appeal to all learning styles but also encourage learners to try out other learning styles even if they are not comfortable with them (Bates, 2019).As implied in this study, learners with disabilities also possess different learning preferences which need to be explored and considered for effective learning.

2.3.3.5. nd Styles Model

Bates (2019) presents a Mind Styles model developed by Anthony Gregor. According to the Mind Styles model, learning styles are defined as a set of distinct behaviors which work as pointers for how individuals learn from and adjust to their environment. The model presents four combinations of behaviors based on perceptual abilities namely the way one understands information be it abstractly or concretely and ordering abilities namely how one arranges, systemizes, record, and dispose of information be it sequentially or randomly. Abstract – Sequential learners tend to be logical, analytical, and well-organized and like to work in a predictable environment, and are too systematic. Hence they learn well through research, lectures,

and observation than through practicals. They find it challenging to follow specific rules and regulations and work with individuals that are not open and flexible to share their ideas and emotions. The Abstract – Random learners are sensitive and impulsive. Details and deadlines do not appeal to them and they may be found to be too emotional. They learn effectively in groups where they find opportunities to interact with others but have challenges concentrating on doing one thing at a time and working within limitations. On the other hand, Concrete-Random learners use intuition and are curious and creative. They do not like keeping records and working towards deadlines and are too impulsive. Independent learning and innovation appeal to them as they learn best through trial and error. Their challenge comes with restrictions and limitations on their learning, recording keeping, and production of formal reports. Lastly, the Concrete- Sequential learners are orderly, practical, and detailed in their approach. May be obsessive with perfect work and have a dislike for working with abstract ideas. They learn effectively through practical activities where they apply their ideas and they prefer instructions and need an orderly and quiet environment for the effective completion of tasks. They do not do well while working with groups and where there are abstract discussions hence straightforward and clear instructions appeal to them. Therefore teachers need to understand that learners think differently and should be encouraged to get out of their comfort zone to utilize all learning styles (Bates, 2019).

2.3.3.6. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) model was developed in the 1960s by Isabel Briggs-Myers and Katherine Cook-Briggs. Its development is centered on four diverse scales that describe types of personality as Extrovert (E) or Introvert (I), Sensors (S) or Intuition (N), Thinkers (T) or Feelers (F), and Judges (J) or Perceivers (P). The Extrovert (E) and Introvert (I) personality scales indicate how individuals respond and interact with the environment where extroverts are

outgoing and enjoy social interaction while introverts are the thinking type that enjoys isolation. The Sensors (S) and Intuitors (I) personality types explore the processes that individuals use to collect information from the environment. The sensor personality pays attention to facts and details and enjoys practical experiences while the intuition pay attention to pattern and impressions hence they like venturing and envisioning future assumptions. The Thinkers (T) and Feelers (F) personality types describe individuals that make decisions from collected information whereby thinkers focus on facts and objective information hence decisions made are logical, objective, and consistent while feelers tend to be subjective and their decisions are made in consideration of people and emotions. The last pair of personality type scales is Judges (J) and Perceivers (P) which focuses on how individuals deal with their surroundings as judges, they prefer organization and order while perceivers are more flexible. Regardless of responses given to find the type of personality all responses are considered correct and of equal value. The Mayers-Briggs Type Indicator - MBTI test produces an analysis of an individual personality based on the responses to a set of questions that indicates the personality that fits (which are E/I, S/N, T/F, and J/P) which are further categorized into 16 personality types. For instance, individuals with personality preferences of Extroverts, Sensors, Thinkers, and Judges are considered ESTJ. Preferred learning styles are based on the category. For instance, the ESTJ category completes assignments on time and strictly follows instructions while the ENTP category generates new ideas and theories and does not like detail (Bates, 2019).

2.3.3.7. The Mental Self-Government Model

The Mental Self-Government Model was developed by Robert Sternberg who proposed the model of thinking/learning styles using the metaphor of self-government where the mind is regarded as a system that needs to be governed as a society. Sternberg suggests 13 learning styles

of which four are associated with forms of government; three with functions of government; two with levels of government; two with the scope of government and the other two with political learning hence the styles are called the government styles. A monarchic government-style personality is considered to be a single-minded and determined, individual with this personality who likes to focus on doing one thing at a time. A hierarchic government-style personality is systematic and organized, individuals with this personality can do many things at a time. An oligarchic government-style personality tends to be flexible and lacks skills in setting priorities while an anarchic government-style personality challenges authority and does not like systems, guidelines, and restrictions. The personalities function differently based on their mind type as such legislative do things in their way setting their own rules; the executive follows instructions while the judicial judge and evaluate individuals and things. Based on the levels of government styles some global learners are abstract thinkers able to deal with the big picture and local thinkers who work well with details; on the scope of government styles, some internal learners are introverts and able to handle content and issues themselves and external learners who are extroverts who depend on other people's support. On the other hand, a learning government personality can either be a liberal whose individual breaks boundaries and goes past agreements ora conservative who complies with rules and follows agreements (Bates, 2019).

2.3.4 Implementing the curriculum

According to a study that was conducted by Valeta, Sefasi and Kalizang'oma (2016) on the status of higher education in Malawi to appreciate its position through the identification of opportunities and challenges for public and private universities in Malawi. Valeta et al. established that the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) registered four universities, that belonged to the public category and sixteen private universities, however, none of the registered universities

was among those ranked high on the global ranking system for higher institutions of education. The low ranking reflected limited research and publications, inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and a curriculum that is not oriented to the industry which in the end compromises the quality of education. The average assessment system to a larger extent uses the simple average diverse pass marks that range from 40 to 50% depending on the grading scale agreed by the institution. Some universities use the grade point average (GPA) system. The continuous assessment, quizzes, mid-semester examinations, and term papers contribute 40% of the final grade while the end-of-semester examination contributes 60%. Learners who fail in one or two courses are allowed to write supplementary examinations and if they fail they repeat the courses in most of the institutions while in some they are asked to repeat the whole academic year. For those that are made to repeat the whole year, learners feel that it takes away the motivation and the opportunities for them to excel as it is perceived as a punishment. Learners that fail at least three courses are withdrawn on academic grounds, the process which most universities do at the end of the academic year but others do this process every semester. Most curricula in the Malawian universities are theoretically based and lack industry orientation which is key to the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge that is relevant in the industry world. Limited laboratory facilities, lack of seriousness, and poor course planning are some of the factors attributed to the rare exposure to practical undertakings in courses. The Open and Distance Learning (ODL) being explored by some universities seem to create hope for the transformation of the curriculum to make it responsive to the industry however need for investment and a change of attitude towards the strategy would be required for its success.

The assessment criteria and requirements to which learners in institutions of higher learning are subjected have proved to be challenging to learners who do not possess any

disabilities. The challenges of learning in an environment that has limited resources and demands for those that might be struggling to achieve academically due to failure to cope with the academic pressure demotivates learners(Valeta et al.,2016). As implied in this study, learners with disabilities are subjected to the challenges that are faced by all other learners apart from the limitations that are unique to them. This creates an uneven playground for learners with and those without disabilities although all of them are subjected to the same assessment procedures and requirements.

Inclusive education involves the implementation of the approved curriculum of a particular level. Ministry of Education uses primary school curriculum for standards 1 to 8 and secondary school curriculum for Forms 1 to 4 while the curriculum for institutions of higher learning is dependent on the programs that are offered in the particular institution. Learners in mainstream schools use the same curriculum as all learners in inclusive education. There is a common approach to curriculum in the mainstream classroom, at all levels of education. A mixed approach case study was conducted on the Special Needs Education (SNE) resource centers' practices in Zomba district Malawi to understand the interpretation and implementation of inclusive education policy. The results were used as a benchmark for the development of a model for implementing inclusive education. The target area for the study was 7 primary schools in Zomba from which 40 participants were drawn. The findings indicated that teachers who specialized in the management of Special Needs Education supported the teaching and learning of learners who had disabilities in the mainstream classroom. They also made use of resource centers to support these learners. Their duties included detecting learners with disabilities in the school, supporting teaching in the mainstream classroom, and offering separate lessons to learners with disabilities in a Special Needs Education classroom. The teachers also acted as advocates for children's human rights and

inclusive practices in schools and communities. They also taught learners who had disabilities the practice of special needs-related activities in resource centers. The learners with disabilities in inclusive education ages ranged from 5 to 25 years. Their teachers displayed enthusiasm and efforts toward the provision of inclusive education despite limited resources. However, there was a lack of policy efforts to support the schools (Ishda, Maluwa-Banda, Moyo, and Mgogo, 2017). The study highlights one of the important duties of teachers in the mainstream classroom which is to teach learners who do not have or have disabilities and advocate for the basic rights of learners who have disabilities and to support their learning process. This reflects the role of teachers as custodians and implementers of the curriculum to all learners regardless of their learning needs.

Although teachers are custodians and implementers of the curriculum, various barriers affect their duty. Chataika, Kamchedzera and Semphere (2017) conducted a qualitative case study in Lilongwe Urban district in Malawi using a total sample of 35 participants of whom 19 were regular primary school teachers and 16 primary school learners. The participants were identified using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using questionnaires, focus group discussions, and observations. Analysis was done using thematic data analysis. The study was conducted to explore the barriers that were encountered by a teacher who is not trained to handle learners who have disabilities in primary school during the preparation of instructional approaches in inclusive education. The study established that teachers faced challenges to accommodate all learners in the process of teaching and learning in a mainstream classroom. The challenges emerged from a lack of knowledge and skills in handling learners who have disabilities. The teachers faced challenges in planning teaching and learning methods and activities fit for an inclusive classroom due to a lack of knowledge on the same. Teachers had no knowledge on how to adjust the content to fit the needs of the learners who had disabilities since most of the teachers

were not specialized in handling special needs education. The teachers who had received training in special needs education were found to be specialized in specific areas as the training focuses on three categories namely hearing impairment, learning difficulties, and visual impairment. It was established that in a classroom a teacher who may be specialized in hearing impairment may be confronted with multiple disabilities beyond his or her specialization which created a challenge. Teachers were also found to have challenges in using some teaching and learning resources indicated in the teacher's guide for inclusive education. Recommendations for professional development were made for teachers who specialized in handling learners who have disabilities but also for teachers who specialized in Special Needs Education. Professional development was proposed to equip teachers with skills and knowledge to manage classrooms that have learners of various learning needs.

The study revealed the practical encounters in an inclusive education classroom as both regular and Special Needs Education teachers are responsible for teaching and learning. The lack of or inadequate knowledge and skills in preparing for the methods to be used in the teaching process, adjusting the content to suit the different learning needs, and using various teaching and learning materials necessary for an inclusive classroom negatively affect the implementation of inclusive education. The specialized teachers in Special Needs Education are seen to be not fully trained to handle all disabilities which compromises the effectiveness of inclusive education. The study could have used the mixed approach to establish the objective issues in teaching methodologies, enrolment, and technical skills in an inclusive classroom which could have been used to find solutions to the barriers (Chataika et al., 2017). Chataika et.al.'s study revealed the efforts of training primary school teachers in Special Needs Education which is lacking for higher education. Secondary school teachers are also exposed to one module on Special Needs Education

(Artiel et. al., 2015) but there is no evidence of training higher education teachers on the management of disabilities.

Some barriers relate to the types of disabilities that are found in schools. Disability can be classified as physical, intellectual, or emotional. Some or all types of disabilities may be found in an institution hence the need for expertise to handle them is necessary. Even though individuals that have intellectual disabilities are subjected to a high rate of physical and psychological conditions as compared to the general population they receive inadequate access to health services. The medical personnel is trained to treat human beings based on the curriculum that is designed for their training. The study that was conducted in the Australian medical universities was based on the premise that the curriculum lacked the necessary content to inform the change and practice of doctors that consider their clients with intellectual disabilities. During their training, the doctors are not exposed to intellectual disability education and a few doctors choose to major their studies in this area. The need to teach the fundamental elements like effective communication with the intellectually disabled should start in the first year of training to inculcate positive attitudes. Inclusive education proved to have the potential of enhancing the learner's competence, attitude, and confidence to work with the general population. Modern medical schooling emphasizes the need for learners to be active participants in their education through sharing skills and knowledge by critically evaluating information, making decisions, and solving problems. Lecturing as a common method used in tertiary education does not provide room for learners to develop the necessary knowledge and skills. The findings of this study indicated the need to integrate different strategies that enhance learning through self-direction, hands-on experience, and inclusive practices and the need for bodies that provide accreditation to institutions to advocate for more instruction in this area. A renewal in the national education framework with a focus on skills and

knowledge necessary to address issues of intellectual disability, and physical and mental health would impact the curriculum (Trollor, Eagleson, Turner, Tracy, Torr, Durvasula and Lennox, 2018).

The nature of the curriculum that is offered in institutions of higher learning has an impact on the performance of the learners in the institution. Teaching and learning also depend on the knowledge and skills that the lecturers possess concerning the types of disabilities they are exposed to as every disability is unique and can be addressed differently. Most teachers in Malawian universities may not possess the knowledge and skills on disabilities. The gap for content on disability in institutions of higher learning, which provide training to teachers and also provide education to learners who have disabilities, create efficiency challenges for teachers and learners. The teacher without the essential knowledge and skills to provide inclusive education would find it difficult to incorporate diverse teaching methods and adjust the content at hand to meet the different learning needs in the mainstream classroom. The learner with a disability, on the other hand, is exposed to the content that is developed by an individual without learning challenges in mind. The challenges emanate from the National Educational Framework and the institutional curriculum that is not exhaustive in addressing the necessary areas to address disability issues. The policy also needs to provide direction for inclusive planning, implementation and monitoring, and accreditation bodies. National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), in the case of Malawi, has a central role to reinforce and advocate the implementation of inclusive practices that benefit learners who have disabilities. The scenario in Australia will likely be observed in Malawian universities as the study anticipates establishing a gap in knowledge and skills for handling learners who have disabilities in an inclusive classroom (Trollor, et al. 2018).

Lord and Stein (2018) based on the study results on "Pursuing inclusive higher education in Egypt and beyond through the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities" argue that inclusive education practices in institutions that provide higher learning in developing countries do not provide clear directions for learners who have disabilities. The barriers to communication limit learners who have disabilities from fully participating in the learning process. The consequence of limited participation is the exclusion of individuals who have disabilities from acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills. The limits include preventing learners with disabilities from pursuing Teacher Education courses, and science fields, and limiting access to humanities reflects negatively on the need for disability studies. The findings from the data collected from 24 universities and 8 technical colleges through a mixed approach indicated that from the time that the government of Egypt endorsed the Convention Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD), nine provisions were made in the national Constitution to address the rights of individuals who have disabilities but lacks the practical requirement to accommodate measures for non-discriminatory commitments. The lack of a clear legal framework to provide for a passage that is supported from secondary to tertiary institutions for learners with disabilities as stipulated by the Convention Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) was found challenging too. Only a few universities had policies to guide the practice of including learners who have disabilities although it is a requirement for the implementation of the Convention Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD). Lord and Stain also established a gap in the collection of data on learners with disabilities. It was established that learners' lack of disclosure of their disabilities was due to fear of stigma, discrimination, and restrictions on the choices of an area of study for learners with disabilities. The challenges established ranged from legal, policy, physical and online environmental, resources communication, and attitude. The information about learners attending

inclusive education in secondary schools created barriers to learners in the choices of courses at the tertiary level. Lack of knowledge on support structures available for learners who have disabilities in institutions of higher learning left learners without a clue about the available assistance in their learning and also lack of self-advocacy skills was found to be a challenge too. The criterion for admitting learners with disabilities was found to be unclear and the informal practices in the absence of policies disadvantaged the learners with disabilities. Access to course materials, online services, and curriculum was established as another barrier to learning for individuals with disabilities at institutions of higher learning. This extended to challenges to be accommodated during assessments and examinations.

Recommendations made from the study included improving inclusive education in institutions of higher learning, this included addressing barriers that originate from secondary schools through reforms in higher education, and training teachers in the knowledge and skills necessary for inclusive education. Creating clear laws, policies, and data on inclusive education and adapting the curriculum to accommodate the needs of learners who have disabilities would promote inclusive education. This should include access to support, infrastructure, materials, both print and online, and an environment that supports the process of teaching and learning for individuals who have disabilities (Lord and Stein, 2018). This scenario may relate well with Malawian institutions of higher learning, as Malawi is also a developing country, where inclusive education may be a phenomenon faced with multiple challenges emanating from pre-entry to tertiary education, law, policies, and institutional challenges.

The study, which was conducted in Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, by Chitiyo, Hughes, Chitiyo, Changara,Itimu-Phiri, Haihambo, Taukeni and Dzenga (2019), explores teachers' special and inclusive education professional development needs. The purpose of the study was to enable

learners who have special needs to be accorded an opportunity to get the most out of learning from the mainstream classroom as they learn together with their peers who have no disabilities. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in a survey that was conducted in three countries. Participants were identified using the purposive sampling method. The convenience sampling method was used to identify special and general teaching schools from primary and secondary schools in three countries while purposive sampling was used for the representation of teacher participants in various categories across the countries. Participants who responded and returned the questionnaires were 300 from Malawi, 125 from Namibia, and 204 from Zimbabwe.

The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis establishing the need for teacher training specifically in teaching strategies that relate to the teaching skills necessary for the management of classes with learners with disability. There was a concern from the countries that learners with special needs may be disliked and hence be subjected to discrimination despite their willingness to promote inclusive education practices. Based on this a need to create awareness among the learners and the society on inclusive education and living with individuals with a disability was found to be necessary. Inappropriate and undeveloped infrastructures were cited as barriers to the process of teaching and learning learners who had disabilities. Teachers also indicated challenges caused by lack or inadequacy of materials that are basic and essential in supporting the learning of learners who have disabilities. The researchers doubted the practicality of full inclusion in Africa based on the challenge of the degree of the lack of materials necessary for the advancement of inclusive education. However, the use of purposive and convenience sampling methods limited the generalization of results (Chitiyo et al., 2019). Institutions subject both learners with and without disabilities to the common curriculum in the mainstream classroom. Teachers find challenges in subjecting all learners to the traditional

teaching strategies and hence require training in strategies that equip them to provide learning experiences that take into consideration the needs of the learners who have disabilities. Apart from the lack of necessary technical knowledge and skills to manage the learners who have disabilities, the lack of basic materials for the teaching and process of learning of the learners who have disabilities compromises the implementation of inclusive practices.

Technology has been used to enhance the process of teaching and learning in inclusive education to enable learners who have disabilities to gain the most from the classroom. The information about assistive technology is shared on the website to enable teachers in South Africa to learn various strategies for managing inclusive classes. The use of online resources was found to improve the inclusion of learners with disability. The South African government developed Strategic Disability Policy Framework in 2018 which recognizes the need to include individuals with disability in higher education and hence promotes a deliberate speed up in their access and success. Hence, the use of assistive technology promotes access to information, teaching, and learning resources. Twenty institutions of higher learning and 50 vocational training institutions have support centers and they collaborate through an association of Higher and Further Education Disability Services Association where those involved in disability issues share information and coordinate support for the country (Cleophas, 2019).As implied in this study, universities in Malawi can learn how knowledge, skills, and resources for inclusion are coordinated to improve the provision of inclusive education. A clear education policy on inclusive education becomes an effective facilitator for the implementation as inclusive education is done to fulfill the education agenda.

2.4.1 Environmental and structural requirements in inclusive education

This section discusses the environmental structure requirements that are necessary for inclusive education institutions as learning takes place in an environment. Schools have specific standards and requirements for the infrastructure that is fitting for learning. Usually, the standards that are developed by the governing bodies overseeing the educational institutions have a learner without a disability in mind. However, with the advent of inclusive education, the expectation is to have a change in the standards of infrastructure that is fitting for learning. The analysis of infrastructure standards and requirements will also be assessed focusing on their impact on learners with disabilities. The analysis will be done on primary, secondary, and tertiary level studies since most studies were done in primary and secondary inclusive education practices and a few in institutions that are engaged in higher learning. The implementation of inclusive practices started with early childhood and primary education in most countries and then it was replicated in secondary and there is progression to institutions that provide higher education. The practice of implementing inclusion in institutions that are engaged in providing higher learning as a progression of inclusive practices from lower levels of schooling would be better understood by also appreciating the foundations that were laid down in the lower levels of education in preparing the learners for higher education.

2.4.2 Basic infrastructure and structural requirements: lessons from primary and secondary schools

According to Ineland (2016) the structures that are considered hybrid present both chances and dangers to inclusive education based on the diversity in values and expectations of the organizations. The findings of the qualitative study using interviews and a web survey that was conducted in Swedish secondary schools suggest contradictions arising from both inclusive

education and disability arts set up of institutional logistics that are not compatible which compromises the professional approaches by creating ambiguous circumstances for teachers' daily activities. This situation arises from the core element of inclusive education which is to create a learning environment that is inclusive and accessible for all learners. On the contrary, the structure and organization of the school environment including the attitudes of the professionals may produce circumstances where teachers favor inclusive models but find it challenging to practice as a result of different forms of school shaped by the history, politics, and philosophical perspectives shaping the values and norms that create daily routines.

The organization of daily activities in an institution usually takes into account the available structures to be used. The building of infrastructure is done with the objective and activities in mind hence the structures that were put in place before the emergence of inclusive education would require restructuring or else would create challenges in the implementation of inclusive practices. Since the goal of inclusion is to make learning accessible and accommodative to all learners regardless of disability, considering the arrangement and type of activities alongside the structures available is critical for the success of inclusive education.

Inclusive education progresses with related issues of quality, equity, access, social justice, and acceptance of learners who have disabilities in educational institutions. Inclusive education's initial goal was to ensure that learners who have disabilities are involved in mainstream schools. Therefore, promoting the complete involvement of learners who have disabilities in institutions that provide higher education requires strategy. Tchombe (2017) suggests the need to reconsider the values, address the available structures, and streamline the curriculum and assessment processes. The consideration to make the changes compatible with the implementation of inclusive practices is regarded as vital. The social construction of societies restricts some groups from fully

participating in certain activities in the community. There are also some barriers related to the practices, attitudes, values resources, and environment of the school community. Hence inclusion requires that there be a major restructuring of the mainstream schools and classrooms to meet the diverse needs of learners who have disabilities incorporated into the system. Restructuring is also needed in the policies, culture, and practices of the institutions to facilitate the learning and participation of all learners while meeting their diverse learning needs. Evidence from the studies that were conducted in five countries in Africa namely: Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Cameroon, Togo, and Nigeria indicate that policies are limited to children who have disabilities and do not include those who are disadvantaged and refer to inclusion as the ordinary presence of learners with disabilities in an institution without addressing their social needs. Little reference was found on what constitutes inclusive education, and what practices and skills are necessary for teachers handling inclusive classes. The prescriptions that were imposed on teachers were derived from international declarations like the 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child to Education, the 1990 Jomtien Declaration of Education for all, and the 1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action adopted for Special Needs Education has been challenging in the absence of proper procedures and skills. However, the positive attitude that teachers display toward inclusion can be supported by allowing institutions to start with partial to full inclusion. The need for teacher training in inclusive knowledge and skills is essential for the success of the process of teaching and learning in an inclusive classroom.

Inclusive practices demand major adjustments in mainstream schools and classrooms to meet the diverse needs of the learners including those who have disabilities. The structural changes would range from policy, teacher education, and curriculum to, the school and classroom environment so that it is made fit for effective teaching and learning processes of all learners who

have disabilities (Tchombe, 2017). Malawi as an African country might also be struggling with the changes that are needed for the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation.

African schools are presumed to have challenges that range from physical or visible threats such as infrastructures to invisible threats like abuse which create barriers to the effective process of teaching and learning. The state of security of schools facilitates the success or failure of the learners in the school. Hence schools must provide security for all types of learners (Themane, 2017). Schools are regarded to be secure for individuals with a disability if they provide easy access to the facilities so that the learners are not limited in terms of mobility and they are also protected from any abuse that may come their way. The security of learners is a prerequisite to effective learning as it creates a safe environment and levels the playground for academic competition.

Effective learning requires an environment that positively contributes to the teaching and learning experiences. The availability of a learning environment that provides for a fair, equitable and no barriers to education is called an inclusive education as it strives to accommodate all learners, who have and do not have disabilities, in a mainstream classroom. A study done in South Africa on considering the place for classroom acoustics in inclusive education to establish the effect of noise on learners who have impairments in language, learning, and sensory to establish preferred listening conditions for these learners and assess the countries classroom acoustics against the preferred standard procedures based on the local and international guidelines. The study established that noise negatively affects learners who have language, learning, and sensory impairments. Most classrooms were found not to meet the necessary standards of noise control hence the need to revise the classroom acoustics to ensure the effective inclusion of learners who have disabilities. The study also established the need to control the volume, material furnishers,

and noise transmission by building or considering classes that have accurate distance calculations in designing the classroom to make sure that there is a healthy classroom space for learning (Van Reenen & Karusseit, 2017).Deficits in the requirements were found to compromise the effectiveness of the inclusive classroom as they affected the learners with sensory, language, or learning impairments.

Since disability is diverse, the institutions of higher learning are likely to have enrolled learners with different categories of disabilities that require particular attention. Some might have sensory, language, or learning disability which is sensitive to noise. If the classrooms available in institutions of higher learning do not have the standard specifications that control noise, the learners with these disabilities will find it challenging to effectively learn. There might be a need for institutions to redesign the classes or construct new classrooms altogether to ensure the achievement of the inclusion of all learners in the mainstream classroom.

2.4.3 Infrastructure and structural challenges in institutions of higher learning

Emong and Eron (2016) conducted a study on the inclusion of learners who have a disability in institutions providing higher learning. The study was based on the premise that regardless of having strong legal and policy frameworks regarding inclusive education Uganda learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning still experienced segregation and discrimination. Hence, the study was done to explore the status of inclusion of learners who have disabilities in higher education and also explore approaches employed to achieve effective inclusion. A descriptive qualitative approach was used in collecting data, over six months, using desk review, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires. The findings indicated the presence of tendencies that are discriminatory and exclusive being reflected in admissions practices, processes

to have lectures, assessment and examination practices, and entrance to library and residence hall services.

Results indicated that learners faced barriers in accessing lecture rooms, especially in an old building, which are also in majority, due to a lack of disability-friendly structures. Learners with disabilities find libraries to be inaccessible, for instance, those with visual impairment find library materials exceptionally inaccessible as the restrictions on borrowing books create challenges for them to study. These students are expected to write in braille from books that are on reserve while in the library, as they cannot take them out of the library, which inconveniences other library users since the need for silence in the library and the machine makes noise. If the learner wants to bring the guide to the library, access is denied for the guide since the supporting person is mostly not a student. The findings also indicate that the modifications that are done in some libraries and structures do not address the needs of all disabilities but mostly consider the physically disabled disregarding the other disabilities. The absence of brailed books and periodicals and audio sets another barrier to the learning process of the learners with disabilities in the universities. As books are critical to individual learning in an institution of higher learning lack of access to books negatively affects the learning process and the performance of the learner (Emong & Eron, 2016).

Implied in this study, there might be infrastructure challenges for learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning since most of the buildings were constructed before the inclusion standard might have been put in place. The mobility and access to building for learners with disabilities might be compromised due to the type of buildings available or being put in place. The set-up of libraries and lecture halls and the procedures therein might be challenging too since most may have followed the standard procedures for learners without disabilities. Apart from this

learners with disabilities might find challenges in accessing accommodation as some buildings are not disability friendly and also the bed space challenges have led to the majority of students outsourcing accommodation outside the campus. Structural challenges emanating from the standard library rules and regulations may also be found to be affecting learners with disabilities depending on the type of disability they possess. These challenges might be prevalent in the Malawian institutions that provide higher education and might be affecting the teaching and learning processes for learners who have disabilities.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) Infrastructure is yet another important aspect in the teaching and learning for institutions of higher learning as learners mostly depend on online libraries for their studies and research. Learners with a disability who progress to institutions that provide higher learning are expected to use available Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure. Bhardwaj (2018) conducted a study focusing on the mechanism of information access for visually impaired learners in institutions of higher learning in selected universities in Delhi. Data were collected from participants who were sampled using the purposive sampling method from five universities using a questionnaire. Findings indicated that there were very basic Information Communication Technology (ICT) facilities for learners who have a visual impairment in institutions of higher learning. The existing Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure created challenges in the learning process and research endeavors for learners who were visually impaired. The universities in Delhi were found to have no infrastructure that is suitable for the needs of these learners for effective services as a result of lack of funds hence unavailability of suitable equipment like devices for accessing information or provisions to maintain or update the assistive software that is available in school. The lack of trained staff to provide services to learners with visual impairment compromises the services

offered and it was also established that there was a lack of awareness about the library services and resources available to learners with visual impairment.

The need for a viable Information Communication Technology (ICT) Infrastructure for learners who have disabilities in institutions providing higher learning cannot be over-emphasized. Higher education requires a lot of exposure to data which is mostly not in print but on the internet. Limited access to the internet would negatively affect the studies and research process of these learners who are disabled. Malawi being one of the developing countries still faces challenges in Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure and the challenges of equipment, devices, and the internet may not necessarily be limited to learners with disabilities but also those without disabilities. This study might find Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure impacts a lot on inclusive education in institutions of higher learning.

According to Meskhi, Panomereva, and Ugnich (2019), the development of learning through the internet in institutions that provide higher learning in inclusion practices depends on the availability of internet systems and perceptions of the institution towards it. It is also influenced by the social progression and technological knowledge that society possesses. The study indicates that electronic learning can be effective in inclusive practices upon alignment with the traditional mode of learning to levels that would accommodate the learners who have disabilities and the technological level of knowledge of the society. However, the study also indicated that the use of electronic learning would improve the capacity of institutions that provide higher learning and national strategies to develop higher education,

The introduction of electronic learning in inclusive education would seem to be far-fetching for the Malawian institutions that are providing higher learning based on the technological development level in the nation and institutions. Strategies to incorporate learners with diverse

disabilities might be challenging. However, it would be an opportunity for the capacity development of both individual institutions.

Infrastructure development is considered one of the factors to be considered in the "leave no-one behind" campaign in pursuit of the inclusion of individuals with disabilities. Department for International Development (DFID)(2019) in collaboration with International Child Education Development (ICED) facility describe that the correct design and implementation of inclusive infrastructure can facilitate the involvement of individuals who have disabilities in socio-economic development. The majority of the world's infrastructure is non-inclusive hence creating unnecessary barriers to the individuals with disabilities who form fifteen percent of the population of world, which is about one billion people. Infrastructure that is not disability-friendly inhibits individuals with disabilities from realizing their potential due to the barriers in their environment. Barriers create a basis for equality and block access and participation, especially for individuals with disabilities in pursuit of their diverse careers.

As part of the response to the United Nations Agenda 2030 for sustainable development for all to attain inclusive prosperity the consideration of the 80% part of the individuals who are disabled but poor need to be considered. Individuals with disabilities are targeted in five goals out of seventeen United Nations Sustainable Development Goals focusing on equal access and opportunities in education, addressing inequalities, growth and development, human settlement, and data collection and monitoring. Addressing disability issues in the five goals aims at maximizing inclusion in all spheres of life (Department for International Development (DFID), 2019).

Department for International Development (DFID) (2019) emphasizes the necessity to promote the inclusion of individuals who have disabilities in its partnering countries. Channeling

resources toward disability infrastructure was done to influence disability inclusion. Developmental partners are bringing efforts together in a bid to improve the approach and delivery of infrastructure that is inclusive to set an example of how societies can improve infrastructure to accommodate individuals with disabilities. The improvement of access and usability of infrastructure and transport for individuals with disabilities requires financial support and guidance.

Given the fact that most buildings are not disability friendly, it is implied that 15% of the world population finds infrastructure a challenge in their social, economic, and academic endeavors (Department for International Development (DFID), 2019). Learners with disabilities find infrastructures that are not disability friendly inaccessible and a barrier to studies. Inhibited access to essential areas like halls of residence, libraries and classrooms compromises the effective learning process for the learner with a disability. Consequently, the improvement of infrastructure is paramount to the provision of equal access and involvement in higher education to benefit learners who have disabilities. As implied in this study, institutions with infrastructure that is not disability-friendly prevent access and involvement for learners who have disabilities. Barriers to mobility access to essential buildings negatively affect the social and academic life of the learner with a disability at the institution. This might lead to low performance, uneasy life, and dropping out of school. Institutions with disability-friendly infrastructure promote the positive inclusion of individuals with disabilities. The need to improve infrastructure in the institution can never be overemphasized if no individual is to be left behind in the socio-economic development.

2.4.4 Assistive Technologies in Higher Education Inclusive Education

Inclusion practices in South Africa are widening as the nation emerges from a background that inflicted the society with multiple elements of social inequalities and injustices that glared

through exclusion, discrimination, segregation, and colonization. Apart from these social injustices individuals with disabilities experienced further segregation into special schools and even mainstream schools. Through the healing process, the promotion of inclusive education has brought positive results tithe education system. The formulation of a Strategic Disability Policy Framework in 2018, prioritizes the need for inclusion of the individuals who have disabilities in institutions providing higher education. Hence the framework was developed to hasten the provision of access and ensure the success of individuals who have disabilities in institutions of higher learning. However, disability has linkages with matters that relate to gender, race, class, and economics that affect access and ability to afford the support needed for inclusion. The exclusive dependence on these factors tends to be challenging. The increase in technology and assistive technologies has opened a door to social and economic inclusion while greatly improving access to education for individuals specifically for those with disabilities in South Africa. However, possible exclusion was also noted especially in areas with limited technology as poor access is persistent. The provision of access to free-open source software like NVDA, where electronic books from certain publishers are made available is helpful, although sometimes it is abused by making copies for learners who do not have a disability. The use of cellphones for recording devices has proved to be useful too where expensive assistive technologies are not accessible (Cleophas, 2019).

Studies have shown the value of using assistive technology in promoting inclusive practices in South Africa by indicating the positive gains with the existing gaps. The use of MapAbility in institutions of higher learning has been proven to be effective given the fact that all universities have the internet. The MapAbility provides access to all learners in the institution to know the available resource at their disposal in a brief moment. Learners with disability are

considered in the provision of internet services to enable them to use online tools in getting information. Due to the nature of higher education learning that demands a lot of reading materials, it demands access to extra reading and learning materials rather than depending on assistive materials like braille and Sign Language interpreters only. Access to reading and learning materials has been increased through the use of other assistive technology tools like screen-reading software that allows individuals to have access to the reading and learning materials but text enlargement software that accords an opportunity for the individual to enlarge the text and have increased access to the needed information (Cleophas, 2019).

A survey conducted in South Africa, Namibia, Malawi, and Sudan has shown that although assistive technology has shown to have influenced the promotion of the inclusion of learners with disabilities there are disparities in the usage and application in the countries. Disparities in access to assistive technologies were reported to be evident not just across the countries due to different economic levels but also within the countries too thus compromising access and affordability. Given the large volumes of learning and reading materials in higher education, technology acts as an enabler and support leading to improved academic performance and successful participation leading to meaningful economic contribution (Visagie et. al. as cited in Cleophas, 2019).

Limited access to assistive technology due to limited finances compromises the reading and learning process for learners with disabilities given the huge amount of materials required for information. To combat this challenge groupings in support of individuals with a disability provide coordinated support services on most campuses of higher education institutions aiming at increasing access to the technologies for learners with disabilities. However, these services have been met with economic challenges leading to institutions having no services, sometimes limited or blurred services due to a lack of expertise and financial capacity from the groups. Technical

support is better placed when provided by institutions with technical expertise and an agreement with the government and institutions that supply the assistive products to subsidize the service would be an effective means to deal with the challenge. Where institutions providing higher learning access bursaries to support learning for individuals with disabilities assistive technologies would be easily provided. Institutions of higher learning have also come together to coordinate efforts in supporting learners with disabilities in the institutions. The association coordinates the provision of assistive technology support and offers pieces of advice on the best practices for community assistive technological support (Cleophas, 2019).

As implied in this study, the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in institutions that provide higher education would be enhanced with the provision of assistive technologies. The technological support would provide learners with disabilities a chance to access reading and learning materials that would assist them to learn effectively. Assistive technologies would increase the admission and involvement of learners who have disabilities in institutions providing higher learning thereby decreasing the inequalities that come as a result of the exclusion of limited access to reading and learning materials which puts learners with disabilities at a disadvantage in the academic competition. However, as literature has indicated, countries like Malawi suffers from limited access to the internet even in some institutions of higher learning; economic constraints given the fact that assistive technologies are very expensive; and a lack of coordination in the area of assistive technologies for the learners with disabilities among the higher learning institutions. These challenges would be expected, in this study, to affect the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in Malawian higher learning institutions.

The zeal from the activists for individuals with disabilities while appreciated needs to be checked and properly directed as it has to work within its limits, taking into account the potential

of resources and the technical expertise necessary for the provision of other activities. For instance, lobbying the government to subsidize internet services and assistive technological materials for institutions would be an area of consideration. Where necessary, it would be essential for the groups to engage institutions that supply assistive technological materials to request a subsidy or support would be essential since the products are very expensive. On the other hand, the institutions of higher learning might also coordinate their efforts to secure resources to support the inclusion activities with the most needed support of assistive technology. This linkage might also be used to share experiences in the inclusion process where best practices would be emulated to promote inclusive education in the institutions. Institutional roles to make assistive technology available to learners with disabilities are essential, even in the event of critical economic deficiencies institutions would explore the use of free-open access assistive technologies to support the process of teaching and learning for learners who have disabilities. Government involvement in the formulation of a policy framework that promotes inclusive education would be crucial in the promotion of inclusive practices, as the policy provides a mandate and direction for implementation. Hence, where the policy would be present, inclusion activities would be coordinated and spearheaded by the government. On the other hand, the absence of policy would signify uncoordinated efforts and a lack of direction for the inclusive education program.

2.5   Challenges in Inclusive Education

This section provides a discussion on challenges that are encountered in providing inclusive education both at the policy and institutional levels. Despite inclusive education being the education standard that does not segregate learners from all walks of life, some challenges might create barriers to the provision of effective services. Education services have necessary standards and procedures that have to be fulfilled to meet the necessary target. These standards

and procedures are at various levels from the policy, institution, and also the communities where the learners with disabilities come from. Therefore, this section will explore the various challenges that have been discovered through the provision of inclusive practices to inform the current study. The challenges will range from broad challenges to specific challenges concerning the provision of inclusive practices in higher learning institutions. Studies conducted at primary school and secondary school levels will be included because inclusive education activities started in the lower levels of education and progressed to the higher levels. Hence, the primary and secondary school experiences in inclusive education are essential as they serve as a blueprint for inclusive education practices and lessons drawn from there can be used in the institutions of higher learning for effective implementation.

2.5.1 General challenges in the library services

Library services are critical to university education for learners both with and without disabilities. This is due to the aspect of independent learning at the tertiary level of education and for research purposes. Shonhe (2019) from the Department of Library and Information Studies at Botswana University conducted a study consolidating the challenges that are faced by schools in developing countries. Since Malawi is a developing country, it was part of the sample. The purpose of the study was to enlist challenges creating barriers to the effective provision of school library services in developing countries to paint a picture of the status of existing school libraries. Since one of the necessities for achieving quality education is the provision of effective library services, the study focused on the assessment of the current libraries.

The findings indicated challenges that are encountered in providing library services in developing countries are similar. These problems contain poor staffing practices. The study revealed that learners bemoaned the libraries in developing countries had either no library staff

who is qualified or there was only one librarian who was qualified. These challenges compromised the provision of services through library collection that is irrelevant, poorly organized, and cataloged reading materials. This negatively impacted the learners in an institution. The other challenge that was established was that countries allocated inadequate funding towards library services in developing countries. This led to inadequate resources and the recruitment of few qualified and majority of unqualified staff. The budget for the school library was found to be a challenge at both school and national levels based on the school and the national policies. The development of library services was found to be compromised by a lack of funding as the Ministry of Education was found to have inadequate funding for the library services (Malunga, 2017 as cited in Shonhe, 2019).

The absence of a library policy was established as a challenge since the policies provide guidelines for the activities and decisions that are taken in the library. The absence of library policies deprives institutions of a roadmap for effective library programs hence ineffective library services. The other challenge which was established pointed out Information Communication and Technology (ICT) infrastructure and poor library facilities. Need for a vigorous technological infrastructure system in the education system is necessary to run an effective library system. However, the Information Communication and Technology (ICT) system in developing countries was found to be mostly outdated and compromised in its output. It was established that some schools did not have even a school library and where the library was available the facilities were outdated and not in good condition lacking proper reading space for learners (Malunga, 2017 as cited in Shonhe, 2019).

The challenge of lack of awareness of the importance of school libraries for quality education in a country was also established. It was found that libraries were not marketed enough

in such a way that learners and all users were not aware of the importance of libraries in education. Lack of awareness led to an inability to appreciate the critical role school libraries play in teaching and learning from school managers (Malunga, 2017 as cited in Shonhe, 2019).

Challenges that are specific for Malawi are the lack of trained librarians, lack of school library policy and standards, lack of adequate financial resources, poor Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, and lack of information literacy skills among students. These challenges are general for all Malawian schools where learners who have disabilities are incorporated for an inclusive learning experience. Hence, despite the challenges that are common for all learners' library users in institutions of higher learning this study should anticipate that learners who have disabilities would meet multiple challenges accessing library services. The need for specific facilities to accommodate the learners' access to information in the library demand adequate finances for the purchase or renovation of the necessary facilities in higher learning institutions. Given findings on challenges encountered due to inadequate funding learners with disabilities' access to effective library services will be compromised.

2.5.2   Challenges in inclusive education knowledge and skills

According to the study that was conducted at Montfort College, exploring the challenges that were encountered in the implementation of inclusive education in Malawi, revolved around Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory which stipulates that the growth, development, and learning of children are influenced by the environment that surrounds them and affects them positively and negatively. The child gets influenced by the immediate family members and then the other circles of relationships and friends. The qualitative, case study design, was used to collect necessary data and sampled participants were selected using the purposive sampling technique (Chimwaza, 2015).

The study established the training of teachers as one of the critical intervention strategies Montfort Special Needs Education College used to promote the learning environment of inclusive education. Teachers were found to be central to the implementation and transformation of policies in the field of education. Apart from providing training in Special Needs Education, Montfort Special Needs Education College was also involved in research on inclusive education to improve the activities around the implementation of the same and was involved in creating awareness of inclusive education. All of these were done as interventions toward inclusive education. Despite the initiatives that were done by the college the study established the challenges that were encountered in the implementation of inclusive practices. The challenges included insufficient qualified teachers. Montfort Special Needs Education College was the only institution that was training primary school teachers in Special Needs Education-related skills and knowledge in Malawi. The problem is that it could not train enough teachers to provide for the needs of the learners who have disabilities all over Malawi. Hence, a persistent need for an improved capacity to train teachers across the country so that more teachers can be trained in special needs management. The need for teachers' training can never be overemphasized as it shapes the attitudes of the teachers and equips them with sufficient skills and knowledge necessary to deal with learners who have disabilities. Teacher training is dependent on funding from the government as it was implied that inclusion would be possible with teachers who are trained in skills and knowledge related to the management of Special Needs Education (SNE) in mainstream schools (Chimwaza, 2015).

Chimwaza (2015) also cites cultural beliefs as a barrier to inclusive practices. Individuals who have disabilities are regarded as of low status in the community and are believed to not be capable of performing some tasks. Since inclusive education is about the attitude change towards

the learners who have disabilities from traditional perspectives and the teachers' point of view. The challenges of negative attitudes toward learners who have disabilities negatively affect the inclusion of learners who have disabilities. Furthermore, a lack of political will to invest in inclusive education was established as another barrier. The government's reluctance to allocate adequate finances towards the improvements of inclusive education through restrictions on the number of mainstream schools involved in providing inclusive education, training teachers in skills and knowledge related to Special Needs Education, and in-service training work against the promotion of inclusive practices.

Although inadequate, Montfort Special Needs Education College supplies Special Needs Education teachers to primary schools for basic education. The obvious challenge is that the trained teachers are not adequate for all the primary schools in Malawi and no colleges are training special needs teachers who are responsible for inclusive education in secondary schools and tertiary education. This implies that if there be any teachers with knowledge and skills in special needs education handling inclusion programs, they will have been trained as primary teachers. The use of primary teachers in higher learning institutions is likely to compromise the teaching and learning outcome for learners who have disabilities in mainstream classrooms, at this level. Challenges anticipated would range from methodology, content, and also resources.

Implementation of inclusive education has encountered challenges in education institutions. Mitchel (2016) defines inclusive education as the provision of education to all learners, irrespective of the learning needs that may result from a disability or otherwise. The success of inclusive education depends on various factors that include acceptance, giving learning opportunities to all, adapting the curriculum to fit the learning needs, driving resources and support towards the inclusive program, and having the political will of the leadership. This analysis of the

features that constitute inclusive education makes a strong argument on the elements to be considered in its implementation but does not address how the elements present would make inclusive education effective. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the challenges of inclusive education and thereafter bring elements that would facilitate its effectiveness.

According to the study that was conducted by Blandul and Bradea (2017) on the development competencies in handling psychological elements of instruction and methods necessary in special or inclusive education teachers, the teacher's competence is critical for the effectiveness of the teaching practices in inclusive education. Three types of competencies in the teaching profession are professional competency, referring to the knowledge of theory the teacher possesses, psycho-pedagogical competency, which indicates the capability of the teacher to know the students and establish a relationship with them and methodical competency, which shows the capacity of the teacher to teach the content at hand. The study intended to identify the psycho-pedagogical and methodical competencies of special or inclusive education teachers, as well as ways of improving the competencies using continued professional training activities. Findings indicated that teachers trained in skills and knowledge of special needs management are more empathetic and use diverse teaching strategies. Hence teachers passionate about inclusive education are concerned with the continuation of professional training in the field of Special Needs Education. Study findings led to the conclusion that the inclusion of learners who have special needs in mainstream schools is challenging for any country in the world despite the investment made in the initiative. This means implementation of inclusive education is prone to challenges even if the system can provide resources. Hence, the Malawian higher learning institutions, situated in the developing countries region where resources are a challenge, are likely to have

challenges. Competencies in the teaching profession can be evident through the pedagogical skills and strategies displayed by the teachers.

Pedagogy is defined as a platform that allows teachers and learners, learners among themselves, to relate and interact where the transfer of knowledge is facilitated, and empowerment is nurtured, through cross-cutting social and institutional structures. It is through a pedagogy that transformation and the reproduction of cultural, economic, and political patterns take place as knowledge is constructed through the teaching of various disciplines like physics and history using the curriculum. Therefore, universities have the potential to contribute toward intellectual justice through the recognition and valuing of diverse knowledge, social practices, and practical experiences the world over. To bring about intellectual justice universities are required to level the playground among the diverse groupings of people in society by promoting the participation and inclusion of diverse and unequal learner groupings in the universities to close the social gap that is created by intellectual inequalities. Since education is considered to be an outlet from poverty and a driver for an individual's social mobility, in both developed and developing countries, therefore providing equal educational opportunities for children and learners belonging to disadvantaged backgrounds is critical. However, the common trend is that children from affluent homes have more access to universities than those from poor backgrounds. This perpetuates the social gap as the disadvantaged groups are left underpowered and occupy lower ranks in society. Although the exclusion tendencies are accepted as natural and in tune with the power logic by both the working class and the disadvantaged learners it is a form of segregation and undermining of minority groupings. Universities have the potential to address intellectual inequality by providing a platform for the association, teaching, and learning, a curriculum, and pedagogy strategies that create identities that are comparative to peers in school, teachers, and society informed by

knowledge and the development of self-esteem. Through learning, individuals develop capacities to develop individual potentials and societies hence becoming reliable as they position themselves in the social rudder (Walker, and Wilson-Strydom, 2017). Through this process, teachers are found to be instrumental.

Ballard and Dymond (2018) conducted a qualitative study on the perspectives of teachers teaching secondary school learners on inclusive education. In the study, they found the roles that are essential in creating a safe environment for learners who have disabilities. The roles include safeguarding the learners and creating trust, promoting collaboration for a balance in health care needs ensuring and advocating for inclusion in school. The study was qualitative focusing on the in-depth understanding of the teacher's perceptions however this study would use the mixed method in investigating challenges of inclusive education to capture both the objective and the sentiments of individuals. The mixed approach would be used so that the two approaches would complement each other for generalization.

A qualitative study using a case study design was conducted to explore teachers' experiences in executing the inclusion of learners who have special learning needs, in selected primary schools in South Africa. The study's focus was to extract good practices from the teacher's experiences in implementing inclusive education for special education needs. Adewumi, Mosito and Agosto (2019) established that although some teachers were not qualified or trained in skills and knowledge related to Special Needs Education, they accommodated learners who had disabilities in the classroom. Some of the good practices established were the provision of remedial work to learners who had special learning needs. Considering what learners who have special learning needs might need, to wholly capture what is taught in the mainstream classroom, teachers were found to be providing extra classes that were meant to cover up for the lost concepts and

makeover any challenges that might have been encountered in the classroom. Teachers' use of teaching aids was also considered a good practice that enhances the effectiveness of teaching and learning for learners who have disabilities. Another good practice that was established was the teachers' act of giving individual work to learners. This worked for the benefit of both learners with and without disabilities in that learners were able to apply the knowledge gained from the classroom to individual activities and it was easy to identify learners struggling with the concepts at hand. It was also noted that whenever teachers established any challenges among their learners they were taking time to inform their parents. These good practices promoted inclusive education implementation (Adewumi et al., 2019).

However, the teachers encountered various challenges in carrying out their duties in the inclusion of learners by incorporating Special Needs Education. Some of the barriers that teachers faced, as established by the study were as follows: Lack of parental participation created a barrier to the collaborative support between parents and teachers towards learners with disabilities. Another challenge that was established is that teachers were found to have a heavy workload as apart from teaching normally teachers were expected to add extra efforts to meet the diverse needs of the learners who have disabilities which creates a huge workload. These challenges coupled with inadequate training for teachers handling learners who have disabilities present teachers with problems in handling an inclusive classroom due to a lack of knowledge and skills. In addition to all these challenges, inadequate resources to support inclusive education initiatives were found to be another barrier to effective services in implementing inclusive education (Adewumi et al., 2019).

Related to this study of investigating challenges of inclusive education in higher learning institutions there might be best practices that might be working for the effectiveness of inclusive

education. However, there might also be multi challenges encountered in the provision of inclusive education which might emerge from policy to institutional day-to-day operations. These challenges might negatively affect the effectiveness of inclusive education in higher learning institutions. On the other hand, since the study was qualitative it would not capture the quantitative side of inclusive education, for instance, enrolment numbers, frequency of services towards learners with disabilities, teachers who are trained or not trained in handling learners with disabilities, and the number of facilities and materials that promote or disadvantage learners with disabilities.

According to Chitiyo et al. (2019) as most countries are accepting inclusive education many challenges are encountered in the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in the mainstream classroom. One main barrier established, in African countries, is the shortage of teachers who are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide a learning experience that is appropriate for learners who have disabilities. Chitiyo et al. conducted this, in Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, to identify professional development needs for all teachers, both for general teaching and management of special learning needs, concerning special needs and inclusive education in the three countries. The study was done using a mixed approach design to draw out data from the three countries where a semi-structured survey questionnaire was administered to a sample of 629 teachers from Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. The findings established that challenges can be addressed through providing in-service training to all teachers in the management of special learning needs and inclusive education. The in-service training is essential for equipping teachers involved in inclusive education with knowledge and skills that are necessary for the process of teaching and learning the learners who have disabilities. The knowledge and skills enable teachers to ably support learners with disabilities.

The findings also indicated that the achievement of inclusive education was dependent on the attitude of teachers towards the implementation of inclusion policies and practices. Teachers with negative attitudes toward inclusive education might not make any effort towards developing themselves in the area of special needs or handling inclusive classes. This leads to neglect of essential elements of knowledge and skills for effective inclusion of learners who have disabilities in mainstream schools. However, a positive attitude alone is not adequate for effective inclusion. There is a need for the availability of certain resources in inclusive education classrooms, as other studies proved that when resources are available teachers' attitudes improve positively. The improvement of the teachers' attitude would contribute to the realization of inclusive education for the benefit of learners who have disabilities (Chitiyo et al., 2019).

As implied in this study there are challenges in the implementation of inclusive education due to the professional challenges of teachers handling learners who have disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Lack of knowledge and skills in handling learners who have disabilities due to no training will compromise inclusive education services in the institutions of higher learning, as teachers without any professional training in Special Needs Education would not effectively utilize the available teaching strategies and resources for the effective teaching and learning of learners who have disabilities. The challenge in resources in higher learning institutions will contribute negatively to the motivation of teachers in providing teaching and learning services in an inclusive classroom. The need for trained teachers will be found to be one of the challenges that need to be addressed by the institutions of higher learning in Malawi for the government and the private sector to set aside financial resources for the training of teachers who are already serving and all those in service. On the other hand, a lack of resources in the institutions of higher learning would also

compromise the provision of inclusive services and negatively affect the attitude of teachers working in inclusive schools.

This section discussed challenges encountered in implementing inclusive education. The challenges highlighted included inadequately trained teachers in inclusive education who are meant to be responsible for the teaching and learning of learners who have disabilities. Lack of knowledge and skills was found to be compromising the implementation of inclusive education. The financial challenges impact negatively the provision of inclusive education as resources are dependent on finances and effective services with standard infrastructures that accommodate learners who have disabilities. The attitude of the teachers and the community was also discussed as a creation of a barrier to the effective inclusion of learners with disabilities. The regard of individuals with disabilities as having lower status as compared to other individuals in society puts them in a disadvantaged position in both the community and school as those with disabilities are regarded as not capable of performing other activities. It is based on this analysis that the study on investigation of challenges in inclusive education in higher learning institutions in Malawi, is expected to discover various challenges affecting the provision and the effectiveness of inclusive education. The challenges might arise from government policies and procedures, community approaches and attitudes, and institutional policies and procedures.

Worldwide interest has grown in inclusive education in recent years since countries adopted the Salamanca Statement. Many countries have embarked on activities with the urge to incorporate learners with disabilities into mainstream education. However, this positive passion for responding to international obligations is not matched with essential processes, expertise, and legislation to produce long-term implementation and change. The insignificant impact made by policies and activities demands alternative ways to make inclusive education practically possible.

The training that is provided to teachers in inclusive education has proved to have failed to bring significant change. A notable impact for inclusion requires leaving behind the quick approaches of training teachers in inclusive education by incorporating inclusion in the pre-service training to complement the in-service training. Thus equipping teachers with realistic learning opportunities that empower them with the necessary problem-solving and critical-thinking skills to enable them effectively implement inclusion in the classroom. Collaboration with relevant stakeholders and exchange patterns among teachers enhances positive inclusion practices and support where possible. The absence or inadequacy of teacher expertise in institutions where inclusive education is implemented is also a challenge that compromises inclusion. Providing room for monitoring and evaluation helps in making the necessary corrections timely. Hence, taking serious consideration in addressing the challenge of expertise is critical to improvement in inclusion services (Lewis, Corcoran, Juma, Kaplan, Little and Pinnock, 2019). The persistent challenge in teacher expertise regarding handling inclusion classrooms is a critical element for the inclusion of learners who have disabilities. Technical expertise is a requirement for teachers in inclusion to be effective, such that teaching methodologies employed should be tailor-made to appeal to the diverse needs of learners in the classroom. Without expertise in handling learners who have special needs compromises the provision of inclusive education. Therefore, if the institution has adequate teachers with technical expertise in handling learners with disabilities the inclusion practice would be effective. On the other hand, the absence of expert teachers in an institution where learners with disabilities are incorporated is a recipe for disaster in inclusive education.

2.6.1 Student Enrolment

This section discusses the enrolment of learners with disabilities in inclusive education programs. Inclusive education demands that there be an enrolment of a diversity of learners that

include those learners with disabilities. Therefore, this section assesses the availability of enrolment policies that accommodates the enrolment of learners with disabilities and the presence of these learners at the institution in various programs. Factors that influence the enrolment or non-enrollment of learners with disabilities in the institution of higher learning will also be discussed. Lastly, the availability of reliable data in regard to inclusive education will be discussed too as it is the basis for the planning and implementation process. Due to limited studies on inclusive education from higher learning institutions studies, conducted in primary and secondary schools have been incorporated to create a platform for the practice of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning.

2.6.2 Access to higher education

Equal access to institutions that provide higher education is one of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals which intends to ensure that there is equal access, to quality mechanical, occupational, and tertiary education including universities for all men and women by the year 2030. The focus of this study, conducted in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, was to ascertain patterns of admission to educational institutions that provide higher learning determined by wealth and gender. Links between inequalities and gaps in access were established in primary and secondary education to understand the problems in achieving equal access to institutions that provide higher education (Ilie and Rose, 2016). The study established a rate of lower than 5% for those accessing higher education in 20 Sub-Saharan countries including Malawi with less than 2%. Those that are admitted into institutions of higher learning are mostly from the rich with minimal numbers from the low social-economic background including women and those with disabilities. Ilie and Rose also established that the achievement of the global goal of attaining equal access for men and women by 2030 would be realized through closing the inequality gaps where the poor

women and disadvantaged are excluded from higher education institutions; as equality that encompasses all would demand a change in structure to accommodate the poor and the disabled. Implied in this study, equal access to institutions that provide higher learning, as an element of inclusive practices, would be challenged by economic disparities where the majority of Malawians are poor.

McDuff et al. (2020 p. 85) define an inclusive curriculum in higher education as "Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education in which pedagogy, curricula, and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all." The significance of the inclusion of learners from different nations, socioeconomic statuses, and cultural and ethnic backgrounds in higher education institutions, is a widely considered means of economic improvement and development (Universities United Kingdom, 2016, as cited in McDuff et al., 2020) Graduates from institutions of higher learning are considered to be on average financially stable, live a healthier life, and likely to get employment. Despite international agendas to widen the participation of disadvantaged groups' trends of inequalities in disparities in degree attainment have remained a greater challenge. McDuff et al. (2020) present an argument in favor of the usage of the Inclusive Curriculum Framework as it seeks to promote equal opportunities for all learners throughout the learning journey to ensure student success. The efficiency of the Inclusive Curriculum Framework is grounded in the three fundamental principles that are drawn from the inclusion policy, theory, and evidence namely: the creation of a curriculum that is accessible; a reflection of the learners in the curriculum; and the equipment of learners with skills to enable them to fit in the diverse environment. An accessible curriculum begins with a better comprehension of the requirements for accessibility as stipulated by law and guidelines. Institutions have a legal binding to make physical adjustments that are reasonable enough to

accommodate the mobility of learners who have disabilities. Enhancing the entrance of learners to buildings, access to learning materials, and providing alternative methods through the use of educational technologies, online or modules for study promotes a flexible learning experience. Ensuring that learners are participants in the curriculum formation so that their cultural, values, and experimental needs are incorporated prevents learners from being alienated from the curriculum and hence empowers them. Hence, the curriculum focuses on equipping learners with long-life skills that prepare them to work and contribute effectively to their global and diverse environment. The orientation of the curriculum has to take the approach that prepares the learners for engagement in the society and workplace. The success of any curriculum is dependent on the support from leadership, the engagement of staff, the knowledge and skills levels for a stand, and the involvement of learners (McDuff et al., 2020). The challenges of inclusion compound upon the persistent challenges facing learners with disabilities in that their access to institutions of higher education is compromised by the social gap that is created by disparities in economic status, backgrounds, and political trends apart from the inherent disabilities. Strategic inclusion that is based on policy, theory, and evidence has the potential of bringing significant impact. The policy gives a legal mandate for implementation, evaluation, and accountability, while theory and evidence inform the process. Consequently, the presence of policy gives institutions an obligation to comply with the legal demands and the guidelines that are put in place for implementation. Following that, the absence of policy creates a scenario where institutions have no legal binding to implement inclusion and would have an excuse for lack of implementation.

2.6.3 Factors influencing enrolment of learners with disabilities

Banks and Zuurmond (2015) conducted a study in Malawi on "the barriers and enablers to inclusive education for children with disabilities". Based on the data from the National Statistics

Office of Malawi the study premised that 2.4% of the population in Malawi comprises those with a disability. However, the definition that was used for disability, in the census, was contrary to that used by the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health. Hence, the estimated population referred to those with hearing impairment, visual impairment, reduced mobility, and speaking difficulties but does not explicitly refer to the other types of disabilities. Even though the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology gather data on the enrollment number of learners who have disabilities in school every academic year, the enrollment figures are provided by teachers, and the majority of these teachers have no training in identifying learners who have disabilities. The other problem is that the information on the attendance in school for learners with a disability is not available hence estimates are made. There is also little information on the number of children who have disabilities and do not attend school.

The findings from the study indicated several factors that affect the school access and experience for learners who have disabilities. These factors range from individual, family, school, and social factors. Gender and poverty also were found to influence learners with disability access and experience in school. The teachers and caregivers expressed doubts about whether learners with disabilities in the mainstream school could receive significant education. This attitude prevented some caregivers from enrolling their children who have disabilities in school, some who happen to be enrolled did not regularly send them to attend a school or encourage them to study diligently. On the part of teachers, it was found that the teachers were reluctant to put extra effort into teaching learners who have disabilities. These challenges emanated from the thinking that children who have disabilities need no incorporation into mainstream schools, especially those with behavior problems. Cases were found where guardians were instructed by teachers never again to send the learner or learners with a disability, they deem to be difficult to handle, to school

but in other cases, the guardians chose to keep the learner out of school for fear of giving a burden to teachers (Banks & Zuurmond, 2015).

Learners seemed to have substantial control over the decision to attend school as there were reports of self-enrollment regardless of the wishes of their guardians, dropping out, and absenteeism at their own will. However, some guardians were found to be fully engaged in the education of their children hence scenarios of engaging teachers on the learners' conditions and the necessity for accommodation. On the other hand, other guardians displayed a withdrawn approach which was attributed to a lack of schooling (Banks & Zuurmond, 2015).

Another factor that influenced the enrolment of learners who have disabilities in schools was the deficiency of resources besides infrastructure that would accommodate the learners with disabilities. Inaccessible facilities create mobility problems for learners with disabilities and deficiency in investment towards inclusive education disadvantaged many from benefiting from the learning process. For those learners with disabilities that were enrolled, it was established that some were being progressed to the higher class without passing the assessment attributing the practice to the age of the learners while others were subjected to multiple repetitions of classes. These activities led to low self-esteem and potential withdrawal from schooling (Banks & Zuurmond, 2015).

Physical and sexual abuses were also some of the factors that negatively affected the enrolment of learners with disabilities. It was established that learners with disabilities were subjected to teasing, bullying, and being deprived of their food from classmates although teachers were not aware of these activities. Therefore, even those that may have enrolled themselves, especially girls with disabilities, dropped out of school due to their ill experiences (Banks & Zuurmond, 2015).

Article 24 in the Convention of Rights for People with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Malawian Disability Rights Act demand that individuals with disabilities should be provided with access to education. A study conducted at Chancellor College in Malawi focused on the admission and fairness of learners who have disabilities at the University of Malawi. To collect data, qualitative approach strategies of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used. Assessing access of learners with disabilities to their enrolment in the institution, this study established that Chancellor College registered an enrolment of 58 learners, 31 boys, and 27 girls, with disabilities between the years 2004 and 2014. The types of disabilities that were enrolled among the learners at the college were found to be visual impairment, which were in majority, followed by hearing impairment, physical and albinism (Kamchedzera, 2015).

Kamchedzera (2015) indicated that the assessment that was done on the institution's documents indicated that learners with disabilities that were enrolled in the college met the entry requirements. The college also made a deliberate effort in 2004 to ensure recruitment that considers gender and those candidates that were mentally and physically challenged. These efforts were repeated in 2012 as the college was willing to enroll more learners based on gender and disabilities. The learners with disabilities were distributed in various programs namely: Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Social Science, Law degree, and masters but 50 percent of them pursued Bachelor of Education. The process of selecting learners into various programs at the college follows the allocated number of learners needed for an individual program with an exception of the Bachelor of Education where all excess eligible applicants are directed to. Notably, there are disparities in the process of selecting learners for various colleges that renders the education program crowded with learners who have disabilities.

Kamchedzera (2015) established that the University of Malawi through Chancellor College was engaged in inclusive education as it was enrolling learners who had disabilities in a number of its programs. However, study findings indicated that there were inadequate resources to enhance the learning experience of these learners who had disabilities enrolled. Since inclusive practices started with the use of the existing structures that were constructed with the standards of abled learners the introduction of learners with disabilities was met with challenges. It is based on this that infrastructures require some renovations that would make them accessible to learners with disabilities so that the principle of providing access and equity is maintained. Beyond the provision of access and equity to learners with disabilities in institutions, the findings indicated the need for Malawi to produce graduates that are productive to the development of the Malawi nation. This would only be possible through the inclusion practices that require the Ministry of Education to create clear inclusive education policies for the tertiary level. It was also established that there was an oversight to orient lecturers on skills and knowledge necessary in the management of learners who have disabilities to create an inclusive classroom. The need for training can never be overemphasized as lecturers need the skills and knowledge necessary for handling an inclusive education classroom (Kamchedzera, 2015).

Despite the limitation in the program selection, Chancellor College was found to be in the lead in inclusive education. Institutions of higher learning may benchmark from the college to learn how they can venture into the enrolment of learners with disabilities. It would be proper to learn from the challenges those teachers and the learners face and the process and mechanism that the college follows to ensure the enrolment of learners with disability in an institution. The infrastructure challenges should be expected and the limitations hindering the enrolment of learners with disabilities.

Finding data for the enrolment and attendance of learners with disabilities at the institution seems to be challenging as the study indicates the absence of records of the same. The enrolment of learners with disabilities is positively and negatively influenced by various factors. For instance, the attitude of teachers and guardians that learners with disabilities cannot learn effectively is a negative effect that is a barrier to the enrolment of these learners. The behaviors of fellow learners also affect whether the learners with disabilities would stay in school or not. As implied in this study, the enrolment of learners with disabilities might improve with the self-motivation of the learners with disabilities themselves and the motivation from guardians and teachers. However, the enrolment might drop due to the attitude and behaviors of the guardians, teachers, learners, and the surrounding communities apart from the lack of self-esteem by the learners themselves.

According to Mulwafu, Tataryn, Polack, Viste, Goplen, and Kupe (2019), most individuals with hearing impairment do enroll in school. This was established in a study that was conducted in, two districts in Malawi, Ntcheu located in Central Region, and Thyolo located in the Southern Region where a diagnosis was done on children with hearing impairment. Having followed up on their socio activities including their activeness towards education, it was established that about 30% of the sampled individuals with hearing impairment did not enroll in school. This was in agreement with other published studies that indicated that individuals with hearing impairment are less likely to attend or progress through school. Hence the need to find better inclusive strategies for addressing their learning needs so that they can be enrolled since an individual with hearing impairment also has the right to education.

Individuals with intellectual disabilities in Malawi are said to be underprivileged and pressed to the sidelines of society. Intellectual disabilities include but are not limited to mental illness, epilepsy, and Down syndrome. Individuals with intellectual disabilities need support due

to cases of slow learning, body movements that cannot be controlled, inaudible speech, challenges in decision-making, and memory. The need to start and progress inclusion services were highlighted. Hence, Ngomwa (2019) intended to validate the barriers that were encountered by individuals who had intellectual disabilities, scrutinize policies, and parts of the legislation that would influence better access and map the way, and remove barriers to ensure that Assistive Technologies are readily and easily accessed. The absence of information that is specific for individuals with an intellectual disability creates challenges in locating and establishing the necessity for assistive devices. Lack of data deprives the majority with disabilities of being reached (Ngomwa, 2019).

Inadequate data on disability is a challenge in dealing with issues that relate to individuals with disabilities. The admission of learners who have diverse disabilities, in higher learning institutions, would be difficult to analyze in the absence of valid information. Therefore, it would be challenging to establish the enrolment rate of learners who have disabilities, in institutions, due to challenges in admission and resources.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Malawi (UNICEF Malawi), (2020) in a "*Situation Analysis of Children with Disabilities in Malawi*"indicates routine data that was collected on the enrolment numbers of learners in both primary and secondary levels from 2009 to 2018. Inclusive in the data was the enrollment number of learners who had special learning needs. An increase in the enrollment number of learners who have special learning needs at the primary level was reported to be from 83,666 in 2009 to 173,651 in 2018. The trend indicated a constant enrollment of learners with disabilities at 2% up to 2015 which increased to 3% from 2016 to 2018. On the other hand, the enrollment number of learners who had special learning needs at the secondary level tripled from 2,780,in 2009, to 8,656, from 2009 to 2018. This led to the

population of learners with special needs doubling from 1% (2009 -2015) to 2% (2016 to 2018). Data from the EMIS (Education Management Information System (EMIS) reports (2009 -2018) indicated a 0.4% enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning mainstream classes, 0.1% in Special Needs classes, and 0.2% in special classes within the regular schools. The common disabilities recorded in both primary and secondary were hearing impairment, learning difficulties, and low vision. The study concluded that primary schools were accessible for learners who have disabilities, with 4% of learners who have disabilities not attending school while secondary schools had 96% of learners who have disabilities not attending school. The report indicated that 99% of the learners who have disabilities did not have access to institutions that provide higher education. Implied in this study, the enrollment of learners who have disabilities in institutions of higher learning will be low despite an increase in the enrollment numbers at primary and secondary levels.

Education Sector Performance Report (Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), 2020) indicates the enrollment number of 117 learners who had disabilities in the 2018/19 academic year, from both public and private institutions that provide higher learning in Malawi. The public institutions enrolled a total of 82 learners with disabilities however almost half of these learners (42) were enrolled in one institution while the other half were spread over the rest of the public institutions of higher learning. The thirty-five learners with disabilities were recorded to have been enrolled in privately-owned higher learning institutions. The report also indicates that Special Needs Education is streamlined in teacher education institutions as one of the core education foundation courses offered to pre-service teachers and Master of Education programs. Some public institutions of higher learning were reported to have Special Needs Units and resource centers that are influential in enhancing the learning environment. Efforts were reported to improve

infrastructure toward disability-friendly status and admission policies that accommodate the enrollment of learners who have disabilities.

The Education Sector Performance report provides a basis to assume that the enrollment number of learners who have disabilities is on the lower side with an uneven distribution among institutions of higher learning. This can be an indicator that inclusive education has not taken root in most institutions that are engaged in the provision of higher learning and this could reflect the general status of Malawian tertiary education. The sparing presence of disability infrastructure-friendly, resource centers, and Special Needs Units can be a sign of a lack of support services in institutions of higher learning for learners with disabilities which might be a barrier to access to learning for these learners. This study might find that challenges emanating from these scenarios may affect the provision of inclusive education.

2.6.4 Factors affecting female learners with disabilities' enrollment

A study that was conducted in Kenya indicates that the challenges that are encountered by individuals with disabilities get aggravated by other factors like gender, race, and poverty. Disability and gender have for a long time been critical in marginalizing female learners in education thus placing female learners with disabilities at the greatest risk of never attending school or dropping out from education. Study results indicate those female learners who have disabilities are expected to be subjected to exclusion, stigma, and isolation from societies (United Nations Educational, Scientific Organization (UNESCO), 2015). Achieving Sustainable Development Goal number 4 to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" requires more groundwork due to the multiple social issues affecting the progress of its achievement. Specifically, for female learners with disabilities, the progress in the achievement of inclusive and equitable opportunities that allows them to effectively

access and participate in educational activities, would require addressing the outstanding disparities in gender and economic status. Literature provides evidence of the limitations that confront female learners with disabilities such as poverty, financial constraints, and limitations to rehabilitation services and support. Coupled with a lack of inclusion in education planning and curriculum development; inaccessible infrastructure, resources, and teaching strategies; isolation, abuse, stigma, and discrimination from relatives, members of society, peers, and teachers pile up the multiple challenges that create barriers for a female learner (Cheshire, 2018).

Given the challenges affecting the access and participation to education for female learners it is argued that addressing the barriers through the capacity building of those in responsible positions and service providers will enable them to effectively respond to the diverse learning needs of the female learners who have disabilities; promote the enrollment, participation, and retention of the female learners who have disabilities which would create opportunities for acquisition of knowledge and skills in tertiary institutions. Knowledge and skills demonstrated through self-development and positive contribution to society would signify the presence of effective inclusive education. Therefore, to facilitate an effective inclusion process there has to be a consideration for the unique needs and challenges of individual girls who have disabilities.

Cheshire (2018) argues that inclusive education is to be founded on the notion that education needs to provide solutions and strategies that respond to different learning needs for all learners by providing education that promotes the participation of learners, communities, and cultures; and reduces the exclusion that comes from the education system and the exclusion that is present in the education too. Cheshire also states that inclusive education has a different perspective from Special Needs Education since in special needs education learners with disabilities are allocated to specialized schools. Excluded from the mainstream education system,

away from their communities, Special Needs Education has been seen as a promotion of systematic exclusion; while inclusive education takes into account the benefits learners who have disabilities receive when they are integrated into the mainstream schools.

Leonard Chishire's inclusive education model suggests that children with disabilities should be the focal point for inclusive activities. Hence, at the center of the model is the child with a disability surrounded by six support systems namely: child identification, assessment, and support; the teachers, head teacher, and school management committee providing training on how to provide support to the learner with a disability; creation of a learning environment that is accessible and inclusive; parents, family and community awareness; working with civil society and government on institutionalizing inclusive education; child to child activities. The model was designed to facilitate effective inclusive education that addresses the social challenges and works on closing the gap created by the disparities in educational opportunities (Cheshire, 2018).

As implied in this study, there are common challenges for male and female learners with disabilities but there are also gender-related barriers that affect female learners who have disabilities. Exclusion from enrollment, dropping out of school, isolation, and discrimination from communities, peers, and teachers would be expected to be more for female learners with disabilities. To improve access and participation for female learners who have disabilities in higher learning institutions, other factors to be considered would be the economic status of the individual, and the gender and race of the individual in question. Addressing the underlying cause of exclusion, isolation, and segregation is critical to dealing with the barriers to inclusive education.

2.6.5   Impact of disability on access to learning

According to Capri, Abrahams, McKenzie, Coetzee, Mkabile, Saptouw, and Swartz. (2018), intellectual disability is one among the multiple types of disabilities that are exposed to

numerous great cases of abuse of human rights. The assessment of 82 qualitative and quantitative studies that were conducted in South Africa to investigate Intellectual Disability rights issues explored the rights of individuals who have disabilities and related practical experiences for individuals who had an intellectual disability. This was done to provide proof of which to advance and improve inclusive services. The South African constitution and Disability Rights were used for the assessment to explore human rights issues that affected individuals with intellectual disabilities. The findings were put into four themes namely: right not to be discriminated against; right to psychological and bodily integrity, as it was found that they appeared to be easy targets of sexual violence; right to accommodating services and challenges to rights implementation. The analysis of these four themes revealed that individuals with intellectual disabilities are confronted with complex problems when they try to assert their constitutional rights. Discrimination issues were found to affect an individual's right to an education that is inclusive, all-encompassing communication, capability and capacity, and also socio-political participation which are critical for individual rights in society.

In the constitution of Malawi in Chapter 3 Section 13 among the fundamental principles that the nation follows is Education in subsection f where apart from basic education Malawi commits to offer greater access to higher learning and continued education to its citizens. Sub-section g provides for fundamental principles concerning the disabled highlighting granting more access to public areas and full participation in all spheres of the societies wherever possible. Chapter 4 describes the rights of all individual citizens regardless of ability or disability and one of the rights is to be free from any sort of discrimination (Malawi Government, 1998). This reflects that access to education in higher learning institutions is supported by the Constitutional mandates of the Republic of Malawi. However, a study on "the living conditions among persons with

disabilities in Malawi", conducted by Eide and Munthali (2018) established low-level standards of living among families with individuals with disabilities regardless of their economic status in the society. The study also indicated differences among individuals who have and do not have disabilities in terms of school performance, attendance and literacy. However, the differences were found to be minimal when the individual with a disability was from a high economic-status family. This reflects the need for resources and a supportive environment for individuals with disabilities to perform well in their academics. Applied to this study, the success of individuals with disability in institutions of higher learning is dependent on their economic status and of support that is provided for them to excel in their studies. Hence, universities would be required to have adequate resources for effective inclusive education services.

This section discussed lessons on basic infrastructure requirements from primary and secondary school education in implementing inclusive practices. It also assessed infrastructure challenges in institutions that provide higher learning about inclusive practices and the impact of having a disability on a learner with the rights that are provided. Looking at the provision from the Constitution a comparison was done of the practices in educational institutions and communities and related to how they influence inclusive education. It was established that the individuals' families 'economic status and institutional financial status determine the provision of inclusive education that allows or does not allow the provision of necessary facilities and support for learners who have disabilities that influence the access, attendance, and performance of the learners with disabilities in the institution.

2.6.6   Equal and Inclusive Access to Higher Education

Studies done in England's education system indicate that schools are an essential medium for the promotion of equal opportunities and do provide promising outcomes for individuals from

disadvantaged backgrounds. An analysis of the school system's contribution towards closing the gap between the disadvantaged and peers from affluent backgrounds revealed positive trends toward the closed gap taking place at a very slow pace. For instance, upon completing secondary school education learners from disadvantaged backgrounds were found to be about one and a half to two years trailing behind learners from affluent backgrounds. Thus it was estimated that England would require 50 years of interventions to close the gap completely so that learners from disadvantaged and affluent backgrounds would catch up with each other and be able to write the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination alongside their peers. Nevertheless, the gap varies across the nation. The situation is indicated to be worse among learners from very disadvantaged backgrounds they rely on the government even for the basics like food. Consequently, the youth from the disadvantaged groups get affected by the outcomes of the inequalities later in their lives as such that they are less likely to proceed with tertiary education; they get employment that pays them lower average earnings; prone to have health problems; they likely get involved in criminal activities than their peers from the affluent backgrounds. When a significant number of individuals do not attain their education and economic capabilities it becomes a burden to the country through wasted human capital since the grouping does not contribute significantly to the country but is dependent on the nation Learners who have special educational needs and disabilities regardless being part of a disadvantaged group are found at the bottom in their attainment of the achievement. The different types of disabilities present diverse requirements for the support needed for their educational attainment (Andrews, Robinson, and Hutchinson, 2017).

Education systems in any country present a critical system for bringing equality and justice among groupings through empowering strategies that close the socio-economic gaps. Academic

attainment is thus important in the achievement of a social platform in that individuals from different groupings and backgrounds would justly compete for placement on the social ladder. However, there has always been an educational gap between individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds and individuals from affluent backgrounds. Disadvantaged backgrounds limit learners from accessing quality education that leads to the attainment of higher levels of success while affluent backgrounds with the availability of massive resources and opportunities attain high achievements. The differences in the footing for the disadvantaged and affluent individual backgrounds create an educational gap outcome that affects the individual life for the rest of his or her life. Thus the requirement of equity and equality in offering educational opportunities is essential to the country's social and economic development and the production of responsible citizens with self-capabilities to effectively contribute to national development. The exclusion of a significant number of a grouping is detrimental to national development as it leads to the creation of citizens that are dependent on the government for their survival. In contrary conditions, these individuals might be involved in activities that might be criminal hence troubling the societies they find themselves in (Andrews et. al., 2017). As implied in this study, the exclusion of individuals with disabilities from higher education is as good as creating a dependent community that fails to support itself with even the basic requirements in life like food, shelter, medication, and even clothing. Hence, subjecting individuals to unhealthy conditions in a society where they tend to look down on themselves as not important and capable to serve the nation at times would lead to deviant behaviors. Closing the gap that is created by disparities in the education that is accessed by different groupings would be essential for social justice and equal rights to empowerment.

Inclusive practices regarding education systems are specifically referred to the meaning derived from how individual countries respond to the various treaties and conventions governing

inclusive practices at all levels of implementation regarding human rights articles such as the Convention against Discrimination in Education and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, United Nations Educational, Scientific Organization (UNESCO) provides a broader definition for inclusion as referring to including all groups that are marginalized by providing equity complemented by equality and admission to educational institutions. Access to higher education institutions that are considered fair is dependent on both equality and equity based on the principle of fairness that all individuals are entitled to an identical opportunity to have access and be allowed to participate in higher education institutions. However, equity takes into account the diversity of learners by providing an entitlement of a just opportunity to entrance and involvement in higher education institutions while understanding the individual learning needs and circumstances that may require policies for the provision of extra support and relevant accommodation to create a fair playgroup for learning. The necessity for equity and inclusion in education is the promotion of respect for diversity and valuing the contribution that is made by all individuals. Thus, access to education is the basis for socioeconomic, political, and personal development and the inclusion or exclusion of accessing education empowers or denied individuals of the necessary empowerment for participation in society (Ludeman, 2022).As implied in this study, access to higher education institutions for learners who have disabilities shall entail equal and fair opportunities for admission and involvement in higher education institutions about their learning needs. Wide access and participation shall be evidenced by the number ratio of learners with disabilities to abled learners.

Ludeman, (2022) argues that improving access to institutions of higher learning for learners who have disabilities in an inclusive system entails broadening the involvement initiatives to improve admission into higher education institutions by offering opportunities to all individuals.

Historically, to improve access for learners that have marginalized backgrounds, there have been increased demands for education for marginalized groups through initiatives driven by legal reforms and human rights declarations. As such inclusive education is grounded in justice and accordance with equal opportunities which are the democratic principles necessary for the improvement of access to higher education institutions. Justice inequality derives an attitude that supports respect for human differences. Implied in this study, a mark for improved access to institutions that provide higher education shall be substantiated by the widening participation of learners who have disabilities in higher learning institutions resulting from democratic principles of justice and equality. In the absence of wide participation for learners who have disabilities, justice and equality shall be considered a reflection of barriers to admittance into higher education institutions for learners who have disabilities.

Inclusive education is a mark for modern learning regarding the increasing globalization trends marked by diversity and interconnectedness. Accordingly, inclusion requires remodeling the teaching strategies, curricula, learning environments, assessments, and learning outcomes to appeal to contemporary learning needs. This creates a challenge to the leadership of the institutions of higher learning and the policymakers to provide social justice without compromising the quality and relevance of academics and professionalism. For higher education, inclusive education implies equal and equitable treatment for all individuals, hence diversity refers to a diverse learning environment that offers multiple benefits as a result of different capabilities, strengths, and viewpoints (Ludeman, 2022). Effective inclusion practices shall be considered to be the adapted teaching and learning strategies, environment, curricula, and assessment criteria that are considerate of the diverse learning needs of individuals who have disabilities reflected in institutional and national policy documents to reinforce effective inclusion.

Studies indicate that the experience of discrimination related to the barriers to equal participation continues among individuals with disabilities even when access is provided to higher education due to selective inclusion. These trends of barriers are evident in higher learning institutions that consider enrollment and management of learners who have disabilities as being costly, specifically when the management of disability issues is exclusive from other diverse transformations like gender issues. The Social Model of Disability, which is rooted in the Human Rights Model, proposes that the common disadvantage of individuals with disabilities draws from the complex type of discrimination that is institutional-based. The persistent violation of rights for individuals who have disabilities demands awareness for lecturers in learning institutions and employers in workplaces as stipulated in Article 8, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which gives an obligation to member countries to make initiatives that raise awareness on disability issues a priority. Studies confirm that the promotion of tolerant attitudes to embrace the concept of inclusive education leads to the positive adoption of a learner-centered approach and promotes consideration of learning needs that is facilitated by sensitization among lecturers (Ludeman, 2022). The provision of access alone is not adequate in the absence of equal participation and regarding inclusive education as other cross-cutting issues in education require mainstreaming. In regards, to this study, where institutions will be found to regard inclusion as a standalone program that is expensive to implement will be a reflection of negative perceptions and trends of complex discrimination towards individuals with disabilities in institutions of higher learning. Selective inclusion will be regarded as the choice of specific disabilities to be accommodated in an institution of higher learning.

2.7.1   Perceptions of Inclusive Education

This section discusses different perceptions that people hold about inclusive education. Analysis of various perceptions on the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in the mainstream classroom will provide the different ideas, beliefs, and stereotypes that individuals might have about inclusive education. The knowledge of these will inform this study on factors that influence inclusive education. Some of these factors might be triggers while others might be barriers to the process of inclusive education, hence the need to understand them to identify the elements that shape inclusive education in institutions that provide higher learning. An understanding of the environments that foster or create barriers to inclusive education would be necessary. The section will also explore the role of pre-service training and the creation of awareness in shaping teachers', learners', and guardians' attitudes towards inclusion in mainstream classrooms. Most literature that is used is based on primary education due to a lack of literature on inclusive education that is specific to institutions of higher learning hence lessons will be drawn from the practices and findings from studies that were conducted at primary and secondary levels to inform the current study on the challenges in implementing of inclusive education in institutions that are providing higher learning in Malawi.

2.7.2   Attitudes towards the education for learners with disabilities

Bank and Zuurmond (2015) conducted a case study using a mixed approach in the Ntcheu district in Malawi to identify factors that trigger the inclusion or the sending of learners with disabilities to school. Barriers that inhibit the inclusion and sending of learners with disabilities to school were also identified. Results were analyzed using a thematic approach, where the findings indicated that the attitudes that people have towards the education of those children with

disabilities were critical to the decisions that they make about their schooling in terms of how they attend school, their performance, and the experience they get at the school.

The findings indicated that individuals with disabilities attend school despite the extremely difficult conditions they find themselves in as a result of their desire to learn and associate with peers. Poverty and persistent health conditions are some of the conditions that surround the lives and homes of those individuals with disabilities. Apart from the conditions, both the caregivers and the individuals with disabilities, the belief that education could lead to the creation of an improved and independent future, emerged as the main reason that the learners attended or were sent to attend school. However, some caregivers indicated reluctance to send individuals with disabilities to school because they were afraid that the care and protection for their wards will not be sufficient at school. Most schools were found to be not well equipped with resources and expertise for effective teaching and learning of learners who have disabilities. The infrastructure arrangement and style of the schools created access challenges for the school. Hence, they prefer to have them stay at home under their watch with the assurance that their care and protection are assured (Bank & Zuurmond, 2015).

The study findings also indicated the shared perceptions of caregivers and teachers that are skeptical of the effectiveness of the education that is provided to the learners who had disabilities in mainstream schools. Caregivers and teachers felt that inclusive education might not necessarily be effective for learners with disabilities. For this reason, some caregivers made their children stay at home while others who sent them to school did not get concerned with the performance of these learners. Hence, whether they passed or failed in class they did not care and mostly they did not follow up. This also leads to a lack of monitoring of the attendance of learners with disabilities at school. This led to almost three-quarters of the learners with disabilities repeating classes,

proceeding without passing the requirements of the class, or dropping out of school when they feel that they have outgrown the age of a particular class. On the other hand, teachers with the perception that including learners with disabilities might not be effective do not put extra effort into teaching an inclusive classroom to ensure that the learners who have disabilities effectively learn. The inadequate resources and lack of training gives the impression that inclusive education is not ideal. The teachers handling inclusive classrooms did that as a matter of principle not necessarily to facilitate learning for the learners with disabilities as learners are either asked to repeat a class several times or progress to the next level without passing just because of their age. Evidence was established that some teachers ask learners whom they consider to have behavioral problems to drop out of school to avoid inconveniencing other learners. This led to other learners who were willing to learn grudgingly staying at home (Bank & Zuurmond, 2015).

According to the study that was conducted by Nketsia (2017) the attitudes of teachers on the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in the mainstream classroom are significant to the implementation of inclusive practices. A cross-section study, that involved pre-service teachers, was conducted to explore their views on the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in a mainstream classroom in Ghana. The findings indicated that pre-service teachers understood disability as a relationship between the environment and individual biological factors and that the teachers expressed flexibility in interrelating with individuals who have disabilities. However, the teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education were not positive, as some were inclined toward their cultural and religious beliefs on disability. Studies indicate that teachers' mixed attitudes regarding the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in the mainstream classroom are apparent in developed and developing countries. Some studies indicate that many teachers have neutral or negative attitudes toward learners who have disabilities being included in mainstream schools

while others presented a positive attitude toward the same. Some of the factors that impact the teachers' attitudes were found to be inadequate time, insufficient teacher preparation, lack of skills and knowledge on disabilities, inadequate or absence of resources, and the curricula's lack of flexibility.

Attitude is critical to implementing inclusive education. It also came out clearly that most challenges in inclusive practices hinge on attitudes and disposition. Relating to this study, challenges that might be encountered in the institutions of higher learning concerning inclusive education might to some extent be contributed to the attitude of lecturers or tutors, guardians, peers, and learners with disability themselves.

A study aimed at exploring the teachers' professional needs in special needs and inclusive education conducted by Chitiyo et al. (2019) supports that the teachers' attitudes have an impact on the success or failure of inclusion practices was established. This mixed approach study was conducted in Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, among participants who were sampled using a combination of purposive and convenience sampling procedures. Data analysis was done using Scientific Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) and thematic approaches. Teachers with negative attitudes do not take the required initiative to participate in professional development relevant to supporting the inclusion strategies while those with positive attitudes are likely to make an effort to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge for effective inclusive practices. However, compared to Namibia, the teachers in Malawi and Zimbabwe were found to be more receptive to inclusive education. The positive attitude that was identified among the Malawian teachers would be essential in promoting inclusive practices and policies for institutions of learning. This study may also find that most lecturers and tutors in institutions of higher learning possess a positive attitude toward the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in the mainstream classroom. This would

facilitate the development of standard practices and policies for inclusive education in institutions of higher learning despite other factors that also create barriers to effective inclusion practices.

2.7.3 Effects of Attitudes towards the education of learners with disabilities

Chimwaza (2015) conducted a case study on the challenges that are faced in the implementation of inclusive practices. The study employed a qualitative approach using a purposive sampling technique in selecting Montfort Special Needs Education colleges and selected primary schools in Blantyre. Research indicates that the teacher's attitude is key to implementing inclusive practices. Teachers who have a negative attitude toward the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in mainstream classrooms do not take the initiative to create strategies that would enable these learners to learn effectively. However, teachers who are willing and concerned with the welfare of learners with disabilities display the ability to be creative in coming up with ways of teaching in a way that these learners learn effectively. This study established that a change in attitude would enhance the services that are offered to learners who have disabilities in mainstream schools. However, this change comes with the creation of awareness of disability issues and welfare. This awareness has to potential to assist both guardians and teachers to appreciate the potential that learners with disabilities might reach if given the necessary support. There is a need for community awareness to sensitize disability issues and the importance of education for children with disabilities. Teachers need proper training on handling learners with special needs. Skills and knowledge in providing an effective learning experience to learners who have disabilities will ease the tension that teachers face due to a lack of knowledge on how what strategies they can use to effectively teach a class that is inclusive of learners who have disabilities.

According to the desk study that was conducted on the prevailing evidence about the systems of education that provides for the provision of quality education services to the learners

who have disabilities, in low and middle-income communities; training has an impact on changing the attitude of the teaching and learning of the learners who have disabilities. This study focused on coming up with updated studies on the educational strategies that are effective for learners with disabilities that will facilitate the production of approaches that are most effective for a quality outcome. The analysis involved 131 articles on inclusive education and children with disabilities. Studies indicated that there are concerns that the content of the courses that are offered to teachers being trained lacks the element that provides for the impartation of the relevant practical skills to support the learner of those individuals with disabilities. The mainstream teachers handling inclusive classes find challenges in managing the classes due to a lack of knowledge and methodologies that are specific and effective for inclusive classes. This fails to address the educational needs of diverse learners' hence developing a negative attitude toward learners with conditions that they cannot deal with (Wapling, 2016).

2.7.4 The role of training in changing attitudes towards inclusive education

According to Wapling (2016) studies indicate that a lack of evident readiness to embrace inclusion practices and accordingly respond to the diverse learning needs of all learners worries many novice teachers. For instance, in a survey among final-year teacher students in Ghana on their perceptions about being confident to teach learners who have special learning needs, only a third of the sampled stated that they felt confident. This happens although the courses that are provided to student teachers during pre-service training include inclusive education and this also creates general awareness of the issues that deal with disabilities. The skills and knowledge that are offered during the pre-service training are essential in guaranteeing that novice teachers sustain both the belief of being capable to teach an inclusive classroom and a positive attitude towards the teaching and learning of learners who have disabilities.

Research also indicates mainstream teachers who are offered a major component of Special Needs Education in their training courses are expected to sustain positive attitudes toward inclusive education. They are also reported to have a high probability of adapting to inclusive classroom practices. In the same vein, teachers with adequate knowledge of specific disabilities or impairments display a more positive attitude toward learners with disabilities and their inclusion in the mainstream classroom. As such, the studies indicate the need for training to address the practical realities of inclusive education not just the theories and principles of inclusion processes. The concerns of the novice teachers who are exposed to inclusive classes with limited resources, large student numbers, and high workloads due to a limited number of teachers that might be at an institution should be addressed by providing the teacher, during training, with the necessary knowledge and skills to deal with the practical challenges in an inclusive classroom (Wapling, 2016).

Many studies refer to the training experience of teachers as a powerful connection between teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes to inclusive education. The teacher's judgment about their ability to handle an inclusive classroom determines their effectiveness. Teachers who doubt their abilities towards learners with disabilities may have more negative attitudes toward inclusive education. Low self-efficacy negatively affects the teacher's attitude towards inclusion as it creates a lack of confidence in the capability of the teacher to handle an inclusive classroom. Hence, teachers with a negative attitude toward inclusive education give far less focus to the diverse learning needs of learners who have disabilities in the classes. Attitudes were found to have a critical impact on the responses that teachers give to learners who have disabilities in the classrooms as compared to resource availability or possession of technical knowledge of specialized teaching strategies. Teachers who are exposed to the practical handling of learners with

disabilities during their pre-service training have proved to be more receptive to inclusive practices and able to sustain a positive attitude toward learners who have disabilities in inclusive education with less negative views (Wapling, 2016).

Studies also indicate the complexity that is presented by the teachers' attitudes which creates a confusing picture. Generally, teachers recommend the implementation of inclusive education but things change when it comes to them being involved in the inclusive teaching practice as they do not like to be involved. Another controversy is that although there is often an assumption that classes that are inclusive assist in the promotion of the social acceptance of learners with disabilities among their peers who are not disabled and advance social justice however the practice contradicts the assumption. The absence of social acceptance by peers may create grave long-term mental health and academic success consequences that may negatively impact the effectiveness of inclusive education. Therefore, to promote equality among learners who are able and disabled the main preconceptions and negative attitudes held by the teachers and learners should be addressed without which isolation and exclusion of learners with disabilities will continue. Sometimes teachers can intentionally or unintentionally foster prejudices by the kind of attention they give to the learners with disabilities, through their actions towards them, and the expectations about the levels of their potential to do activities. These give a message to learners who have and those who do not have disabilities in the classroom on the conditions of the learners with disabilities and how they ought to be treated. Consequently, studies found four variables that are essential in creating a ground for a social experience that benefits both learners with and without disabilities namely gender, age, experience, and knowledge. Girls were found to be more accepting in inclusive environments than boys; older learners than younger learners; those with an

experience in inclusion are more accepting than pioneers; and individuals who know the causes and effects of impairments are more accepting than those without awareness (Wapling, 2016).

2.8.0 Summary

This section discussed contradictory views on the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in mainstream classrooms. This complexity creates an environment where inclusive practices are met with mixed feelings hence an institution might be successful or fail in providing inclusive education depending on the perceptions of individuals available at the institution. Positive attitudes toward the inclusion of learners with disabilities promote inclusive education while negative attitudes towards the same create barriers to the success of inclusion practices. Different attitudes are found among teachers, learners with or without disabilities, and guardians. To improve the individuals' attitude in favor of the learners with disabilities training and the provision of awareness of issues that relate to disability were found to be essential. Therefore, this study will find diverse views on inclusive education due to the different ideas that individuals possess about the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in mainstream schools. Practices in the institutions are dependent on what type of attitude is presented as one of the influencing factors and the need for training and awareness cannot be overlooked.

In conclusion, this chapter first discussed the theoretical framework of Vygotsky's theories of Social constructionist epistemology and dysontogenesis to guide the study as they focus on the strength and the social inclusion of learners with disability. These theories emerged to be a framework of Special Needs Education methodologies for Russia and a framework for inclusive education in the contemporary field of education. The three models namely the medical disability model, social model, and human rights model that guided the study have been discussed. These models will be used to bring about the understanding of the biological construction and its

implications for learners with disability and guide in identifying the barriers that are socially constructed to explore strategies for redressing the challenges faced by learners with disabilities considering their fundamental rights. The identification of the potential of individuals with disabilities, be it personally or assisted and the role of society will be explored using the models.

The chapter also discussed conceptual framework with a focus on challenges in inclusive practices in providing education to all learners irrespective of their learning needs that may result from a disability or otherwise. Since the success of inclusive practices is dependent on various factors including acceptance, giving learning opportunities to all, adapting the curriculum to fit the learning needs, driving resources and support towards the inclusive program, and having the political will of the leadership. This study focused on a dependent variable (DV) inclusive education which is influenced by the independent variables (IV) challenges related to learners, teachers, classroom, institution, curriculum, and policy in investigating how the challenges influence the effectiveness of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning.

Lastly, this chapter presented a critical analysis and synthesis of various studies, articles, and scholarly books with a focus on highlighting themes emerging from previous studies on the challenges of inclusive education. Hence the analysis of the history of inclusive education indicates a systematic development of education agendas, strategies, and policies both on the national and international levels. There is an adequate platform for declarations, policies, and agendas internationally like the Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD), Education For All (EFA), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and Salamanca declaration. These stipulate standard requirements for the promotion and implementation of inclusive practices, hence Malawian strategies do not work in isolation which informs this study that lessons can be drawn from other countries implementing inclusive education in higher learning institutions. Therefore,

this study will investigate challenges in inclusive education in institutions that provide higher learning despite the commitment made by the government and support structures from other countries with a common agenda and then explore strategies for addressing them.

Malawi as a signatory to various agendas that promote inclusive education developed substantial strategies and policies on the ground like the National Education Sector Plan (NESP), Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP), and National Strategy on Inclusive Education, Disability Act 2012, Constitution of Malawi and National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) minimum standards. However, these various strategies are not explicit on inclusive education which created challenges to the expected standards and a basis for implementing and assessing inclusive education efforts in institutions that provide higher learning. It is based on this that this study will investigate challenges in inclusive education in institutions that provide higher learning, that emanate from the absence of or lack of explicit policies to provide guidelines for implementing inclusive education and identify ways to redress the identified challenges. Research indicates that higher learning institutions do not explicitly state the granting of access to learners who have disabilities in their admission policies. Challenges created by the lack of explicit institutional admission policies were investigated and solutions were explored to address the challenges.

Studies have indicated that inclusive education is confronted with challenges in implementation due to a lack of capacity. The majority of teachers in mainstream schools are regular teachers who are entrusted with learners with diverse disabilities. These teachers face challenges in creating a teaching and learning environment that is suitable for all learners due to inadequate knowledge and skills in methodologies relevant to diverse learners and a lack of knowledge of various disabilities. Research also indicated that those teachers who have skills in special needs only possess skills and knowledge about one of the focused three disabilities namely,

hearing, visual, or learning difficulties. A teacher who may be specialized in hearing impairment may be confronted with multiple disabilities beyond his or her specialization creates a challenge. Hence, this study investigated challenges emanating from a lack of or inadequate knowledge and skills and identify strategies to redress the challenges.

Infrastructural and structural challenges that affect the teaching and learning process for learners who have disabilities were analyzed and synthesized. These create barriers to access to information, resources, and infrastructure. This study investigated these barriers and identify ways of addressing them.

This study also investigated challenges originating from the assessment criterion used by institutions that provide higher learning as studies have indicated that the assessment standard is challenging to standard learners. Other challenges indicated by studies are infrastructure, structure, and perceptions which create barriers to enrolling and retention of learners who have disabilities in mainstream schools. This investigation focused on the implication of these challenges in higher learning institutions, on learners who have disabilities, and identify strategies to address the challenges.

The following chapter 3 will discuss the methodology that will be used in this study. It will present the study design, approach, target population, sample size, sampling design, data collection tools, and data analysis strategies.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate challenges affecting inclusive education in higher learning institutions in Malawi. Using a mixed study approach, qualitative and quantitative data was collected through a survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews with learners, teachers, institutions of higher learning administrators, and government officials. The goal of this study was to establish factors affecting inclusive education in institutions that provide higher learning in Malawi and solutions to the challenges. This investigation revolved around the assessment of the enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions that provide higher learning; the nature of disabilities that institutions accommodated and the perceptions of inclusive education. Therefore, Chapter Three introduces the research methodology to be used, by explaining the philosophy guiding the study, approach, and design bringing perspective to this study. An explanation of the research sample and the strategies to determine the participant sample, data collection methods, and analysis employed will be discussed.

3.2 Research Approach and Design

3.2.1 Research Approach

In this study an abductive research approach was used for it is rigorous in its investigation and provides useful knowledge on phenomena that appear not to be well defined. The researcher, therefore, used an abductive research approach because the nature of the problem is partly known and not well defined (Mitchel, 2018; Martins, Fontes, Rodrigues, and Silva, 2020) as opposed to other approaches. The research approach provides a connection between theory and the study as theory provides the foundation for social inquiry and a rationale for the study at hand. The researcher chose abductive among the three approaches that researchers choose from namely inductive, deductive, and abductive (Awuzie & McDemott, 2017) because the

approach is compatible with this study that is of the mixed design. An abductive approach was necessary for this study to address the qualitative and quantitative data elements used in the study.

The choice to use inductive, deductive, or abductive is dependent on the researchers 'approach of either starting with data collection to develop theories based on the collected data or using literature to identify theories used to test the data collected by the researcher.

Inductive is defined as making sense in a study through an application that moves from subjective particular to general when making empirical observations about an occurrence of interest and whereby forming theories and concepts based on them; while deductive refers to the orientation that moves from general to particular, whereby to understand a situation one starts from a theory, stemming hypotheses from it, testing the hypotheses, and revising the theory (Jaana & Urs, 2018).An inductive approach is used to develop a theory from the conducted study and its reasoning fits with circumstances that demand specific interpretations or quantities to come up with wider conclusions, generalizations, and theories. The inductive approach develops focus from the researcher's working title as opposed to the theory existing in the literature. The research process starts with the research questions that determine the type of observation to be made and then descriptions for analysis ending in the theory development. If there is little literature existing on the topic of study the use of inductive is essential. This approach best suits studies that use an interpretivistic research philosophy (Malango, 2019).

According to Martins et al. (2020), the goal of inductive-oriented studies focus is to generate new theoretical perceptions from the data that is empirically generated. On the other hand, studies with a deductive orientation target the testing of the hypothesis empirically resulting from the existing theories. The deductive approach to perception originates from theory leading to the development of research questions, data collection, and findings that may

confirm or reject the research questions (Malango, 2019). However, studies with an abductive orientation are different from those with a deductive mode in such a way that they begin with empirical findings, as opposed to starting with theory, without denying the role of existing theoretical knowledge in creating a context in searching for a most reasonable explanation. Compared to induction which implies a type of semiautomatic generation of generalization of theories or data patterns, abduction goes beyond employing a skillful development of theoretical explanations with the aid of all that is identified theoretically and empirically about the question that is under examination. Researchers use the abductive approach to develop explanations that are theoretically informed. Therefore, in this study, the researcher used the abductive approach as opposed to the inductive or deductive approaches.

The researcher, therefore used an abductive research approach because the nature of the problem is partly known and not well defined. The study demands both deductive and inductive approaches hence the abductive approach to understand and seek answers to questions (1) What is the enrolment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning? (2) What type of disability is accommodated in the institutions of higher learning? (3) What perceptions do individuals have toward inclusive education? (4) What challenges affect the implementation of inclusive education in institutions of higher leaning. Since the abductive approach fits well with the pragmatic philosophical view of the study, the researchers applied the pragmatic philosophy.

Research usually adapts to a category among the four main ones namely: positivist/postpositivist; social constructivist; pragmatic and participatory depending on their orientation. These categories are referred to as paradigms. A paradigm is defined as a set of plain beliefs or philosophical expectations that direct the researcher's actions and describe the researcher's worldview that is used to explain shared generalizations, values, and beliefs on the

nature of reality and knowledge. Different paradigms focus on different perspectives in regards to axiology referring to value, ontology referring to reality or existence, epistemology referring to knowledge, methodology, and research rhetoric. Post-positivism paradigm is associated with quantitative methods and is highly formal rhetoric with a focus on precision, reliability, generalization, and replicability. Researchers that use post-positivism view inquiry as a sequence of logical steps that are related and make knowledge claims that are objective, standardized grounded on deductive reasoning and control. Another paradigm is constructivism which is related to qualitative methods and is informal rhetoric whereby the researcher depends much on the views of the participants and develops meanings of subjective phenomena. Therefore, constructive studies are shaped from the bottom as they develop from individual perceptions to general patterns and finally to general understanding. Post-positivist and constructivist research subjective paradigms are two opposite paradigms. On the other hand, pragmatism is a paradigm that claims to connect the gap between the scientific method and structural orientation of post-positivist and constructivist approaches and the practical methods and is a more open approach to research. Pragmatism is grounded on assumption that researchers use methodological or philosophical approaches that work best for a specific problem under study. A pragmatic paradigm may engage both formal and informal rhetoric and focuses on the consequences of the study and research questions than on the methods. It creates relationships among things and occurrences especially backgrounds and consequences while considering the role of the social actors to create a practical approach. Therefore, this philosophy is recommended as relevant because it is designed to address the pragmatic orientation of practical problems in the real-world (Kaushik & Wash, 2019; Malango, 2019.)

The practical significance of using a pragmatism research paradigm in a mixed method study is argued through the study examples of crime scenes, the examination of criminal data, and their interpretation in the court as quantitative and qualitative research methods are employed. The mixed method also exploits the intrinsic dualism of the analyzed data. Hence, Feilzer (2010 as cited in Mitchel, 2018) makes a case in support of using pragmatism for a study using mixed methods and multiple approaches to the analysis of data.

Dudovskiy (2016) argues that whether the researcher uses one or both the observable and subjective meanings, the knowledge provided can be acceptable depending on the research questions that are answered. Therefore, mixed research methods should be viewed as complementary to the traditional research methods of qualitative and quantitative. Hence pragmatism suits to be a philosophical partner to the mixed method. Mitchel (2018) reviews the pragmatic wars incompatibility theory and indicates common elements in quantitative and qualitative research. Data is collected and analyzed by the researchers in a quantitative study in form of statistical data and the narrative data for a qualitative study both address the research question(s). Hence the mixed method is considered to be an extension as opposed to a replacement of quantitative and qualitative approaches drawing strengths from both while minimizing their weaknesses (Mitchel, 2018). This study used a mixed method, employing pragmatism with an abductive orientation for complementary purposes.

The researcher's philosophical view reflects that of Mpu and Adu (2021) that challenges affect inclusive practices in developing countries like Malawi, but how each challenge affects inclusive education is not clearly defined. The nature of the research problem in this study is arguably partly known but not well defined, hence pragmatism, which is part of the realism

research paradigm a research philosophy that will guide the researcher in designing the study in terms of collection and analysis of data.

İlik and Sarı (2017) reported that individualized education programs for learners with disabilities are implemented as formalities but are not effective due to a lack of skills and training to work with learners who have disabilities, and Bartels, Vierbuchen, Thies, and Hillenbrand (2020) viewed that lack of qualified teachers in inclusive education and un-conducive learning environment affect inclusive education. It is in this understanding that the researcher tends to hypothesize that challenges affecting effective inclusive education in Malawi might be individual, systemic and emerging from policy, social, and the context of the learning environment. Hence, the pragmatism research philosophy helped the researcher to(1) establish the enrolment of learners with disabilities in accessing higher education, (2) understand the nature of disabilities accommodated at institutions of higher learning, (3) identify perceptions towards inclusive education in institutions of higher learning; and (4) identifying the challenges affecting inclusive education in institutions of higher learning in Malawi. Mitchell (2018) and Kaushik and Wash (2019) recommend pragmatism as a philosophical partner to mixed methods and capable of producing essential knowledge that would serve as a rationale for rigorous research when complemented with abductive reasoning.

3.2.2 Research Method and design

A mixed research method following an exploratory design was employed to investigate challenges in inclusive education for higher learning institutions in Malawi. Research design is defined as a whole strategy that which the researcher opts to incorporate the diverse study components in a rational, coherent manner to ensure that the problem is addressed effectively. It also creates the blueprint for data collection and analysis (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). A

researcher can use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed research design depending on the research problem. The use of exploratory design is based on the nature of the problem that is not clearly defined hence the choice in this study.

Qualitative research deals with the exploration of people's perceptions, actions, and experiences through instruments like focus groups and interviews. Usually, the researcher gets into contact with fewer participants but the duration of the contact tends to be longer to acquire in-depth information on the attitudes, behaviors, and experiences. Qualitative research uses paradigms that are subjectivism, interpretivism, or constructivism orientation. The methodology that is used in qualitative studies is usually subjective and the study may be grounded in ethnography or a case study. The grounded theory aims at the generation of a new theory through the experiences of the participants during the process of investigation and is subjective. Ethnographic research studies the entire culture while case studies which may be used in both qualitative and quantitative aim at providing subjective information subjective by capturing a variety of variables to classify the complex subjective set of conditions that come together to produce a particular phenomenon, situation, or event. Qualitative data is collected using methods that are usually small-scale, interviews, observation, and document analysis (Hickman, 2015). In their study, Mosito et al. (2017), on "*enhancing reading abilities of learners with intellectual impairments through computer technology*", opted for the use of a qualitative approach for the reasons that their focus was to explore how individuals who are intellectually disabled learners tend to respond to computer technology hence an assessment on the strengths of computer technology as a mediating artifact was conducted. They used action research to explore the participants' perceptions of the technology affecting performance. Implied in this study, perceptions of inclusion and the relationship between/among the

challenges in inclusive education were explored hence the qualitative element of the study. However, this study used a case study approach.

On the other hand, quantitative research generates statistical data using large-scale survey studies through instruments like questionnaires or structured interviews. Through quantitative research, the contact is with many individuals however the contact time with those individuals is much less and quicker than that of qualitative studies. Quantitative studies use paradigms that have a positivist or empiricism orientation. It uses methods that are scientific and has objective and generalizable orientations. Studies are conducted on a large-scale and are general surveys collecting quantitative data (Hickman, 2015). For instance, Salvia (2020) used the quantitative approach to survey the attitude of teachers toward inclusion. The quantitative approach enabled the researcher to establish the association between the attitudes and other variables toward inclusion. As implied in this study, the relationship between the challenges in inclusive education was determined through the quantitative approach. Hence, a mixed research method was used in this study as an appropriate approach.

A mixed research method is referred to as a type of study that employs combined elements from qualitative and quantitative research approaches in the problem, collection of data, analysis, and inference techniques for the general purposes of comprehensive understanding in corroboration of in-depth and breadth. This method allows the collection of direct and indirect information with the use of multimedia instruments. The goal of using mixed methods is to expand or strengthen the conclusions of the study hence contributing to the published literature. A mixed method, therefore, heightens the knowledge and validity of the study. Results from one method are used to substantiate the findings from the other method hence subjective the two complements each other throughout the study processes (Hickman, 2015, Schoonenboom

& Johnson, 2017; María Consuelo Sáiz-Manzanares, Gutierrez-Gonzalez, Rodriquez, Lourdes Alameda Cuenca-Romero, Calderon, and Queiruga-Dios, 2020).

Elison-Chang, (2018)used subjective mixed methods in his study to allow the consideration of diverse parts of information, to complement a comprehensive understanding of the process of gathering data using different tools. The process enriches rigor to the study which is essential in validating the results and contributes to further understanding of the issue under investigation. A mixed method provides room for individual insights into data which Elison-Chang (2018) considers essential and instrumental for studies in the field of inclusive education. Surveys, a quantitative tool, are used to allow the researcher to have a broad range of data collecting points efficiently and this allows the researcher to employ statistical analyses to define the importance of specific variables or factors. Thereafter, the qualitative element explains the numerical results through the data that is collected through tools such as interviews or focus group discussions.

The core benefit of using a combined design was that it would not only help to quantify the attitude of the population under study but also explore insights into the motives behind their attitude. Maria Consuelo Sáiz-Manzanares et al (2020) felt that using a mixed design enables the analysis of information and connection among different variables. In this study, the design was not only used to understand how challenges affect the implementation of inclusive education but also to explore how challenges relate to each other. In this regard, the researcher triangulated descriptive survey, case study, and ethnography research strategies to investigate the challenges affecting inclusive education by obtaining quantitative and qualitative data. The use of a survey aided the collection of a wide range of data which was statistically analyzed while the interviews provided explanations for the data that was statistically derived from the study. The qualitative and quantitative methods in this mixed method approach complemented

each other to give an understanding of the challenges and explain their relationship to each other. Therefore, this study used a mixed research design to investigate the challenges affecting inclusive education in institutions of higher learning.

3.3 Population and Sample of the Research Study

3.3.1 Study Area, Target Population and Sample Frame

The area of study is not the total geographical location of Malawi but institutions providing higher learning within Malawi boundaries. The institutions that provide higher learning are distributed all over the country stretching from the Northern, Central, Southern, and Eastern Regions of Malawi. Hence, the main target population for this study included learners, lecturers or tutors, institutional administrators, and government officials (policymakers) from stakeholder educational institutions. The study also had an incidence of institutions. The sampling frame for the study was based on the main target population consisting of learners, lecturers, and policymakers from all institutions of higher learning as summarized. There are about 50 institutions of higher learning in Malawi with an estimated target of more than 57, 000 members (National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), 2020).

3.3.2 Sampling Design and Sample Size

Sampling is defined as a process that is used in statistical analysis whereby a specified number of participants are taken from a larger population. The method that researchers use to determine a sample from a larger population is dependent on the type of analysis being performed. Studies may use either probability or non-probability sampling methods to determine a sample. Probability sampling methods involve the use of a random selection of participants and allow the researcher to come up with statistical inferences about the study population. Probability sampling provides equal chances of the section to members of the population. Four main types of probability sampling methods, used in quantitative studies are systematic, simple random, stratified, and

cluster sampling methods. Simple random sampling gives an equal chance of selection to every member and uses random number generators or other techniques that provide a chance. Systematic sampling is similar to simple random but differs in that every member is allocated a number and the choice is made at regular intervals. Stratified sampling requires that the population be put in subpopulations or groups, referred to as strata, based on relevant characteristics like gender, age range, or income bracket. Sample choice is based on the overall proportions of a group and is done using random or systematic sampling. This type ensures a representation of all subgroups. Cluster sampling also uses subgroups, however, each group has similar characteristics to the entire population, and sampling is done not on individuals but the group (Taherdoost, 2016; Etikan & Bala, 2017).

On the nother hand, non-probability sampling uses non-random selection that is based on a particular criterion or convenience and allows the researcher to easily collect the initial data. Non-probability sampling is regularly used in investigative and qualitative studies. It aims to test the hypothesis on a broad population and develop a primary understanding of the population under study. Convenience, purposive, voluntary response, and snowball are non-probability sampling types. Convenience sampling selects individuals who are most available to the researcher. It is convenient and economical however there is no assurance whether the sample is representative of the population hence results cannot be generalized. Voluntary response sampling is similar to convenience, the only difference is that the researcher does not choose the participants, they volunteer to participate. Purposive sampling also known as judgment sampling uses expertise to select a sample that is of great use to the study purposes. It is commonly used in qualitative studies to gain detailed knowledge of a specific phenomenon under study. Snowball sampling is used when the population is tough to contact hence participants are selected through other participants.

The sample is specified by the number of people the researcher gets into contact with (Taherdoost, 2016; Etikan & Bala, 2017).

In this study, the researcher used probability and non-probability sampling methods to select all elements of the study. Probability design or randomized sampling was used to provide equal chances of being selected to the participants in the survey (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2017). The researcher used simple random to select learners and stratified sampling to select lecturers or tutors. The study also used non-probability sampling to select members not based on probability. The researcher used the purposive sampling method to select administrators and government officials. The researcher was in a position to identify the visible set of players appropriate for the interview (Tansey, 2007).

The researcher also used simple random and purposive sampling methods to select the 10 institutions from which the sample was drawn. A list of accredited universities compiled by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) indicates that there are 22 universities in Malawi, of which 4 are public and 18 are private which are spread all over the nation with the majority in Lilongwe. There are two agriculture colleges, 7 technical colleges, 9 nursing colleges in Malawi, and 3 other colleges in Accountancy, Information Technology, and Journalism. Colleges were included in the sample since they fall into the category of higher education institutions (National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), 2020). This study targeted 4 public universities, due to their long history in tertiary education and direct mandate in providing education, as the mandate to provide education relies on the government through the Ministry of Education that works through public institutions whose efforts are supported by the private institutions; 2 private universities institutions that support government efforts in providing education services in higher education;2 colleges of which 1 is technical and the other is a nursing college as colleges provide

higher education from certificate to diploma and others degree level. The eight institutions are representative of the Malawian institutions of higher learning in all regions of Malawi and the categories of public and private, universities of diverse statuses or backgrounds.

Based on a total sampling frame of 57, 000 members (50, 000 students, 5,500 Lecturers, and 1,500 Policy Officials), an ideal sample size would be 4000 to 5000 members considering the 10% rule from Creswell and Creswell (2018). This study however used Cochran's formula that uses two key factors to calculate its sample. The factors used are the margin of error and the alpha level which are the risk that the researcher is prepared to accept in the study and the probability that differences are made evident. It has been proposed to be used because it takes into account the researcher's limitations in terms of budget, time, personnel, and resources. Shara (2018) argue xx`d that adequate resources are required to support an appropriate sample size. The researcher assumes that 90% of the target population is of the view that inclusive education in institutions of higher learning is not effectively implemented. At a 95% level of Significance (Z = 1.96) and a 5% margin error (α = 0.05), an appropriate sample can be calculated using the Cochran Formula (Cochran, 1977).

The Cochran sample size given below is where **"Z"** is the Z- values from Normal Distribution Tables, **"e"** is a desired level of precision (margin of error), and **"p"** is the estimated proportion+* of the population with inclusive education attributes and where **"q"** is $(1 - p)$:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

The Sample Size is therefore calculated by $[(1.96^2)\ (0.9)\ (0.1)\ /\ (0.05^2)]$ = **138.** The researcher, therefore, planned a sample of 130 with a composition of 90 learners, 30 lecturers, and 10 administrators and government officials. However, a total of 125 members, which consisted of

116members participating through a survey and 9 members through face-to-face interviews to collect quantitative or qualitative data, participated successfully. The participants were a majority of 90 learners who are from the larger part of the target population and beneficiaries of educational services, followed by lecturers 26 who are service providers, and nine (9) administrators and government officials who are policymakers.

This study did not use a census for small populations as a formula to get a sample as this approach uses the whole population as a sample which would be very expensive and time-consuming as the study population of 57,000 is huge. However, this sampling method eliminates sampling error and gives information on all individual participants in the study population. To achieve the required level of precision for this approach the population needs to be sampled in manageable groups which are treated equally. Another option was to use a sample size that was used in a similar study, however, this risks repeating the errors that were made in determining the sample size used. Reviewing literature in the area of study guides the normal sample sizes (Taherdoost, 2016).

The third option was to use published tables to determine the sample size. The published tables give a sample size based on a set of criteria that is essential for the given combination of precision, confidence levels, and variability. However, the sample sizes reflect the number of responses that are obtained not planned, and this number is mostly increased to compensate for the non-respondents. The published tables also assume that the attributes being measured have a particular distribution and when the study does not meet the criteria results might be affected. Although published tables can provide an essential guide in determining sample size, in this study, the option was to calculate the necessary sample size to meet the different combinations of precision, confidence, and variability levels. The fourth approach to determining sample size uses

an application of one of the several formulas for calculating sample size. The researcher opted for Cochran rather than Yamane formula for calculating a sample size as Cochran provides room for scarce resources and time challenges to be considered in reducing the sample size (Cochran, 1977; Taherdoost, 2016).

3.4. Materials/Instruments of research tools

The study design is mixed and the researcher used questionnaires, and interviews as the main data collection tools. Mixed methods combine qualitative and quantitative research approaches through their perspectives, data collection, analysis, and study techniques that are employed to broaden and deepen the understanding and corroboration (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). Johnson & Christensen (2017) state that mixed methods research aims at strengthening the study's validity and knowledge and hence can achieve multiple validation and legitimacy.

Therefore, the overall goal of using mixed methods is to expand or strengthen this study's conclusions and, contribute to the published literature. Studies use mixed methods to contribute to answering one's research questions.

Survey questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from 90 learners and 26 lecturers. A structured survey questionnaire was used to enable the establishment of the capacity for the enrolment of learners with disabilities. The nature of disabilities accommodated at each institution was determined to be understood through the data collected using the survey questionnaire. Using the survey questionnaire promoted the understanding of how challenges affect implementation in inclusive education based on the opinion of learners and lecturers were acquired. The study used key informant interviews which were administered face and by telephone to collect qualitative data from institutional administrators and government officials (from 9

policymakers) regarding policy issues and challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education.

3.5 Operational Definition of Variables

3.5.1 Study Setting

The conceptual framework depicts that challenges in institutions of higher learning are Independent Variables (IV) and inclusive education practices as the Dependent Variable (DV). The researcher intended to therefore manipulate the Independent Variable and measure the Dependent Variable. In other words, the researcher treats challenges as Independent Variables (IVs) that would predict changes in the implementation of inclusive education practices. These challenges were categorized into three namely core challenges that related to teachers, learners, and institutions; auxiliary challenges related to teachers, learners, and the institutions; and other challenges which may be cultural, political, or religious and also affect the teachers, learners, and the institution. The effects of the Independent Variable (IV) on the Dependent Variable (DV) were to be indicated by the performance, attitude, behavior, teaching methods, and skills (Chilumba & Penda, 2019).

The researcher was also aware of the Moderator Variables (MV) that existed in the form of Extraneous Variables (EV) and Confounded Variables (CV) were to influence the Dependent Variable (DV) because Mazzoti, Rowe, and Sinclair, (2016) argue that research findings are not always an influence of the independent variable but other variables. In this study, the economy, culture, and size of the institution were to be treated as Extraneous Variables and were to be controlled not to influence any change in inclusive education practices. The researcher was, on the other hand, not able to control the effects of Confounded Variables such as the effects of Covid 19 and other unforeseen factors in this study. This study was limited to institutions of higher learning,

learners with disabilities, inclusion in education, and challenges related to inclusive education. The research questions were limited to the enrolment of learners with disabilities, types of disabilities accommodated in institutions of higher learning and perceptions of inclusive education. The literature, theoretical and conceptual framework, problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions addressed inclusive education and its challenges. Hence, the scope of this study did not include primary and secondary schools, and other disadvantaged groups but those with a disability; and inclusion was limited to the education sector (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019).

3.5.2 Operational Definition of Variables

An operational definition of a variable describes how to take an abstract concept, and measure it in tangible ways. An abstract concept, in a quantitative study on financial literacy, is measured objectively (Remund, 2010). The variable to be measured in this study is inclusive education a Dependent Variable (DV) to challenges which are Independent Variables (IV).**Variable 1:** Inclusive education emerged from Special Needs Education (SNE) as an innovative strategy for incorporating learners who have a disability in the mainstream classroom. The concept of inclusive education presents a perspective of schools that accommodates all learners with no segregation while focusing on disadvantaged learners so that their educational needs are met. Unlike Special Needs Education which was isolating learners with disability for special education, inclusive education focuses on having the basic standards that facilitate learning for all categories of learners without individual differences and are not grouped in terms of race, religion, or disability (Kiuppis, 2016).

Gauthier (2018) defines inclusive education as learning for learners who have and do not have a disability in the mainstream classroom. Inclusive education takes into consideration the effect of both the disability and the impairment on the learners with disabilities whereby providing

a holistic view of the circumstances surrounding the learners in their academic endeavors and social life (Gordon & Salyutov, 2017).

Inclusive education, worldwide, is regarded as a practice that takes into consideration the diverse learning needs of children, young people, and adults. Inclusive education that is considered to be successful is the one that provides for participatory learning by diverse groups and individuals in an integrated education structure considering the groups that are disadvantaged which continue to be excluded from educational institutions or are not supported by the existing system to the level that would enable them to perform to their full potential. Inclusive Education's viewpoint presents that the child has potential regardless of disability but it is the educational system that creates barriers that are expected to adapt to all individuals (Artiles et al., 2015). As implied in this study, the barriers that affect inclusive education are considered to be the variable, challenges under investigation hence the operational definition of challenges is any barrier to comes in the way of effective inclusive education.

Variable 2: Special Needs Education-: Since inclusive education emerged from Special Needs Education (SNE) there has been an interchange in defining the two as the same. The results of a qualitative study that was conducted in Malawi on inclusive education indicate that the change in the provision of education to learners with different learning needs away from a traditional approach, using an approach from special needs in the inclusive education system was facilitated at the national level through the revision of laws and forming new policies. However, inclusive education is stated as a government's commitment in only a few education policy papers. The term inclusive education is prudently and seldom used as a common reference to Special Needs Education. Contradicting views were found in the promotion of the introduction of the Special Needs Education module in teacher training rather than inclusive education and there were no clear

procedures on how resource centers would be used in the provision of inclusive practices. Ministry of Education Science and Technology refers to learners who have special learning needs including those with socio-emotional and behavioral difficulties, and vulnerable children referring to those in poverty, abused, neglected, or orphaned. However, measures supporting special needs focus mainly on those with sensory and motoric disabilities hence the use of sign language, braille materials, and assistive devices connecting the special needs perception to disability. National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development (NESTED) developed in 2011 does not refer to inclusive education and special needs are rarely mentioned despite the 2007 mandate from the National Policy on Special Needs Education to make Special Needs Education mandatory in teacher training (Artiles et al., 2015). This study will use an operational definition of Special Needs Education as providing educational services to learners who have disabilities in a separate environment, by teachers trained in Special Needs Education with resources supporting the teaching and learning process. Inclusive education is defined as a different aspect referring to the provision of education to all learners irrespective of their ability or disability in the mainstream classroom while providing the necessary support to meet individual learning needs for those who have diverse disabilities.

Variable 3: Other variables to be operationally defined are disability and impairment. The terms are sometimes used interchangeably however; Social Model Theory describes disability as a social construction element. Disability is regarded as something that is imposed on people with impairments by society to disable them from being effective. Disability is therefore defined as a hindrance or a limitation caused by a social organization in its little or no regard for the individuals with impairment leading to their exclusion from mainstream social activities. Alongside this definition, impairment is described as lacking a part of a mechanism of the body. Hence, according

to Social Model Theory disability is regarded as social oppression while impairment is a biological orientation (Silva Bampi et al., 2010; Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2013). Applied to this study, the operational definition of disability is synonymous with impairment whereby the term learners with a disability refers to learners with impairment.

Variable 4: Another variable to be considered is challenges which are independent variables (IV). The hindrance and limitations imposed by the social organization on learners with disabilities are referred to as the challenges which in turn are seen to affect inclusive education. The hindrances or limitations might be physical, psychological, academic, political, social, or otherwise emerging as challenges towards inclusive education. The challenges explored ranged from broad challenges to specific challenges concerning the provision of inclusive practices in institutions of higher learning. According to a qualitative study conducted by Chimwaza (2015), there are environmental, cultural, technical skills, and resource challenges affecting learners with disabilities. The influence of the teacher's perceptions was found to be critical in a qualitative study conducted by Ballard and Dymond (2018). A positive attitude creates trust while negative perceptions cause a lack of trust in learning hence affecting inclusive education. Sonhe (2019) explored challenges faced by learners with disability in accessing library services as this service is critical to university education for learners both with and without disabilities. This is due to the aspect of independent learning at the tertiary level of education and for research purposes. The barriers that were established ranged from lack to inadequate resources that are appropriate to the learners with a disability to inaccessibility to library rooms. This study regarded all the types of barriers, hindrances, and limitations as challenges that affect inclusive education.

3.6 Study Procedures and Ethical Assurances

3.6.1 Study Procedures and Ethical Assurances

Ethics in research is fundamental and necessary to guide the smooth execution of the study. Ingham-Broomfield (2017) defines ethics as moral principles, standards, and rules that direct and regulate the behavior of a society. Ethics emanate from the beliefs of what is right or wrong which may have a social, philosophical, or professional base and Johnstone (2016) considers that ethics and morals are the same as there is no philosophical distinction. However, Atkins, de Lacey and Britton (2014) state that the two, ethics and morals, are different in that, morals are considered to be beliefs or expectations that seem to be like rules that individuals consider to be ethical. Therefore researchers need to conduct themselves and do their study ethically following acceptable standards that protect all participants from any physical, emotional, psychological, moral, interpersonal, and social harm or danger.

Therefore, the researcher sought and obtained ethical clearance from the UNICAF Research Ethics Committee (UREC), and consent from the institutional management as well as the target respondents. The researcher also used a gatekeeper letter to obtain permission from management and a consent form for participants to sign. Other ethical considerations that the researcher took into account included seeking voluntary participation from learners and lecturers participating in the study, designing the questionnaire not to harm respondents, and debriefing administrators and government officials before and after the interview. Overall, the researcher ensured that all ethical rules and codes were followed and adhered to following the ethical requirements of undertaking the study in Malawi.

3.6.2 Validity and Reliability

During the study, the researcher ensured that quality data is collected irrespective of the various instruments used in this study since validity and reliability are essential in determining the quality and rigor of the study process. The validity and reliability of data instruments enabled the researcher to collect consistent, coherent, precise, and homogeneity of data because validity in Zhou, Huang, and Zhong (2018) is more about the completeness, correctness, and compatibility of data, and in Lobiondo-wood and Haber (2014) validity is what the data instrument intends to measure.Hence validity refers to the level to which the study measures what was intended to be measured. Reliability refers to the potential of the data instruments to produce similar results when an investigation is repeated (Alderete & Davies, 2019). This refers to the standardization of the students for data collection. Therefore, to address the validity and reliability of the study the researcher used data collection instruments expert review, training of research assistants, supervision during data collection, information triangulation among different sources of data, and member checks.

3.6.2.1 Data collection Instruments Expert Review

The development of the data collection tools was subjected to expert assessment, also known as peer review, by the engagement of independent specialists qualified to provide a critical and consultative appraisal of the study method and results (Almohana, Win, Meedya, and Vlahu-Gjorgievska, 2022). To guarantee the produced instruments' content validity, it was required to enlist the help of experienced reviewers. The research supervisor, other doctoral researchers, and other specialists in inclusive education were consulted for advice on how to make the data-gathering tools better. Feedback was gathered for the instrument improvement by continuous email with the supervisor and consultative meetings with other researchers and specialists in inclusive

education. Throughout the study, the researcher had additional opportunities for inspection through study presentations given during the UNICAF International and Malawi National Visual Conferences. The procedure of expert assessment helped to ascertain the questions' clarity and applicability to the study. To verify that the instruments measured what they were intended to measure, adjustments to the instruments were made based on the expert review feedback.

3.6.2.2 Recruitment and Training of Data Collectors

The collection of both qualitative and quantitative data necessitates the reliability of researchers. To assure the quality of the research method and results, it is crucial to carefully choose and train the participants in the data-gathering procedure (National Statistics Office, 2017). The training of data collectors often referred to as research assistants, ensures the uniform collection of the desired data, claim Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, and Namey (2017). To assure the collection of relevant and high-quality data, they also emphasize the necessity for the researchers to have experience, skills, and interests that are pertinent to the phenomenon.

The research team of this study comprised a Doctoral student, who was a lead researcher, and 2 data collectors who were a Master's student in community development with previous experience in data collection and a lecturer with a Master's degree in Education working with one of the universities in Malawi. The two research assistants were selected based on their knowledge of education, previous experience in quantitative data collection, good interpersonal and communication skills (both verbal and written), and knowledge about the research topic. The two research assistants were responsible for data collection from learners and lecturers in three institutions of higher learning. The research assistants were paid a compensation fee for the airtime used during the data collection time.

Before beginning data collecting, the doctorate researcher instructed the two research assistants for a single day. The training addressed the goals of the study, how to choose eligible study participants based on the group, an introduction to the data collection tools, obtaining informed consent, supervision and guidance on filling out the survey, and data management. The training included hands-on exercises so that the data collectors could utilize the instruments and become familiar with the material.

3.6.2.3 Pilot Study and Supervision during Data Collection

Instruments for data collection were pilot tested at Nkhoma University to ensure reliability and consistency. Data was collected from 5 learners, 2 lecturers, and one administrator. The pilot test was essential in allowing the doctoral researcher to identify problem areas in the design of the questions. During the pilot test, the researcher tested the questionnaire in terms of flow, clarity, ambiguity, and hard questions. The experience and findings of the pilot study informed the revisions that were made to the data collection tools. The revisions included rephrasing and re-organization some questions. The doctoral researcher supervised the pilot and main data collection to ensure adherence to ethical requirements and quality data. All field notes and field questionnaires were checked at the end of each day. Data collection reached saturation point evidenced by the repetition of themes from participants.

3.6.2.4 Triangulation

Triangulation, as defined by Turner and Turner (2009), is the use of alternative views to support, refute, or extend the study. They divide triangulation into two categories: hard triangulation and soft triangulation, where hard triangulation contests the results and soft triangulation supports them. They draw attention to the fact that triangulation can take the shape of techniques, theories, investigators, or triangulation of data. According to Turner and Turner, triangulation ensures that the study assesses what is intended to be measured, giving it validity and

credibility. The use of different methods in a single study complements the individual limitations while enhancing their respective benefits. Additionally, the use of a mixed method design provides rigor and credibility to the study by enabling the researcher to fully understand the experiences of the people and the context under study. In this study, triangulation was employed through methods and theory. Both qualitative and quantitative research designs were employed through a survey among learners and lecturers and in-depth interviews among institution administrators and government officials. Through this diverse viewpoints and experiences were verified against others creating a rich picture of the main issues under scrutiny based on the contributions from a range of people. Theory triangulation was employed by triangulating Vygotsky's theory of Social Construction epistemology and dysonto-genesis to provide both the social and the biological perspective of disability. These theories were complemented by a triangulation of disability models of social, human rights, and medical to provide an in-depth interpretation of disability from the social and biological perspective. This enriched the study by providing a complete picture of the study phenomenon.

3.6.2.5 Member Check

The credibility of the findings will determine whether or not a qualitative study is of high quality (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell and Walter, 2016). Member checks, also known as respondent validation and informant feedback, are an approach that Birt et al. say is primarily used to improve the validity, correctness, trustworthiness, and transferability of the findings of qualitative research. Additionally, they mention that the procedure includes a validation step that enables study subjects to assess if the researchers have accurately or completely documented their experiences. They contend that the procedure guarantees the accuracy of the data gathered during the interviews and that it is a continuous process for gathering qualitative data.

In this study, member checks were carried out using follow-up questions and probing to elicit detailed data. Researchers employ the follow-up asking approach as a way to get participants to elaborate or clarify what they have said (Birt et al, 2016). The researcher may also revise the inquiry or refer back to issues already brought up by the informant to gather related information through revised inquiries. This is crucial for spotting lies and inconsistencies. After data collection, member checking can also be done with specific participants or by having several researchers examine the data. Individual member checks were done both during and after data collection in this study. Research assistants' data were triangulated with the primary researcher's data, and no differences were found.

3.7 Data Collection

3.7.1 Data Sources

The study obtained its data from secondary and primary sources. The researcher used document analysis to access policy information related to the implementation of inclusive practices. The study however relied on primary sources to obtain first-hand information.

3.7.2 Data Analysis

3.7.2.1 *Quantitive Data Analysis*

Quantitative data for this study was analyzed using SPSS. Firstly, exploration of data and manipulation was conducted. The exploration of data was done to check the nature of data and variables missing. Following the exploration the raw data was manipulated into usable form to address the research questions of this study. This step involved combination and collapsing variables to develop variables of interest. The step also involved the management of multiple responses, exclusion or inclusion of missing variables. The variables were coded to either 1 or 2 representing Yes or No and other relative codes depending on the number of outcome variables

available. Quantitative data was entered into the computer for further analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Program to ensure that different variables are analyzed.

Secondly, descriptive analysis of the demographics was done to determine the characteristics of the participants in institutions of higher learning and stakeholder institutions. Descriptive statistics were generated using frequencies, percentages and cross tabulation. Data from the descriptive analysis is presented in the results chapter in tables, graphs and charts. Then the third step was to conduct an inferential analysis on the enrolment data in relation to the effectiveness of inclusive education. The linear relationship between the rate of effectiveness of inclusive education and enrolment rate of learners with disability indicated a strong statistical significance of p-value $= 0.018$.

3.7.2.1 *Qualitative Data Analysis*

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Recorded was transcribed and coding was done systematically and using a code book in excel data was managed and organized. The analysis was done in five stages. The first stage involved going through the transcripts to get familiar with the data. This included making short notes on transcripts and highlighting key words and statements within the text. Secondly, codes were drawn out from the text to generate initial codes. Thirdly, sub-themes were created through sorting and category grouping of codes. Fourthly, analytical themes were generated and named. These became the source of the primary data. Lastly, data was analyzed using content analysis which involves an in-depth evaluation of thematic variables based on conceptual and relative analysis. Yeo and Lowry (2020) and McDonald, (2020) report that quality and integrity processes used in data management demonstrate that records are complete, authentic, and accurate. Hence, the qualitative data were

analyzed using Content Analysis which involves an in-depth evaluation of thematic variables based on conceptual and relative analysis (Yockey, 2016).

Therefore, it is for this reason that the researcher ensured that the data that was collected was complete, accurate, and trustworthy. An effort was made to ensure that the presentation of data in this thesis is done in a manner that allows anyone to understand so that individuals can engage with the data presented and make independent decisions that affect their lives and welfare (McDonald, 2020).

3.8 Chapter Summary

The goal of chapter 3 was to present the measurement, collection, and analysis of data in support of an appropriate philosophy, approach, design, sampling design, data collection, and analysis plan that was used in this study. The study used pragmatic research philosophy, abductive research approach, and mixed research design because the nature of the problem is partly known but how challenges affect the implementation of inclusive education is not well defined. In this study, the researcher planned a total sample size of 130 participants consisting of 90 learners, 30 lecturers, and 10 administrators and government officials who were to be selected using simple random and purposive sampling methods. The researcher also planned to use questionnaires, interviews, and observation to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was planned to be analyzed with the help of software packages while qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis. The study was planned in a way that conformed to all ethical rules and standards that are within the constitutional provision of the country of Malawi. Data presentation and findings from this study are presented in the following Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This study's focus was on the investigation of challenges concerning the provision of inclusive education in institutions that provide higher learning in Malawi. Previous chapter 3, discussed the methodology employed leading to a collection of data. The study used a mixed method approach to collect data using a survey questionnaire from 116 participants, lecturers, and students from institutions of higher learning and in-depth interviews with 9 participants, administrators, and government officials. The study participants were drawn from 10 institutions. The purpose of this study was to investigate challenges encountered in inclusive education in higher learning institutions. The study was guided by study objectives intended to establish the enrolment of learners; the nature of disabilities accommodated and analyze challenges encountered in the implementation of inclusive education in institutions providing higher learning.

Chapter 4 presents the trustworthiness of the collected data to establish that the data which were collected is credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. A discussion on data reliability and validity was done to establish the study's potential to generalize the findings to the larger population and also explain the consistency of the measurement instruments used in the study (Alderete & Davies, 2019). The results of the study will be presented in this chapter following a systematic order of the research questions. The presentation of results in this chapter will follow mixed method processes. Tables and graphs will be used to present the results drawn from the data collected. Descriptive presentations using thematic areas will be used to provide adequate information on findings to enable the reader to make independent judgments about the interpretation. An evaluation of the study findings will be provided at the end of chapter 4with a brief report on the interpretation of the findings. Interpretations will be made in consideration of

the theories that guided this study and the conceptual framework that was identified (Alderete & Davies, 2019). This section further explains whether the results generated were expected or unexpected.

4.2 Results of Findings and Graphical Illustrations

4.1.1   Demographic Characteristics

4.1.1.1 Participants distributed by category

The data indicated that 72 percent (90 out of 125) of the participants were learners from the sampled institutions of higher learning. Participants were asked to indicate their gender and among the 90 participants, 53 were male, and 37 female. The lecturers/tutors' participation was at 21% (26) among whom 22 were male and four (4) were female. The participation of administrators in institutions of higher learning constituted six percent (7) of the study participants among whom five (5) were male and two (2) were female. Two percent (2) of the participants were drawn from government ministries that are key to inclusive education. There was one male and one female government official who participated. Out of 130 sampled individuals, 125 successfully participated in the study. Among the participants 81 were male and 44 were female. The number of female participants was low. Since schools were closed due to Covid 19 strict measures, the majority of learners, who were accessible on campus had returned to write examinations, were male but for lecturers and administrators, the majority in those positions were male. Learners and Lecturers/Tutors participated in the individual interview survey using a questionnaire while government officials and institutional administrators participated in key informant interviews.

4.1.1.2 Learner Participants distribution by Institution

The learners were asked to indicate the name of their institution and gender when participating in the study. **Table 1** below represents a distribution of learner participants in the seven institutions of higher learning by gender.

Table 1: *Learners' Participants in the institution of higher learning in Malawi*

Institution	Gender		Total	Percentage
	Male	Female		
Institution 1	8	5	13	14.4
Institution 2	5	8	13	14.4
Institution 3	7	5	12	13.3
Institution 4	6	7	13	14.4
Institution 5	8	5	13	14.4
Institution 6	13	1	14	15.6
Institution 7	6	6	12	13.3
Total	**53**	**37**	**90**	**100.0**

4.1.1.3 Learner Participants by Year of Study

Learner participants were also asked to indicate the year of study. Table 2below presents categories of learner participants based on the level of study. About 36% of the participants were in Year 2 the majority of whom belonged to institution 5 as they were the only class on campus. About 24% were in Year 4 and the majority of the participants for this class were from institution 6. Twenty-one percent were in Year 1 while 19% were in Year 3. Institutions 2 and 6 were administering examinations hence only those participants who were accessed were contacted at their convenient time. Institution 5 had only Year 2 on campus while institution 7 had only Year 1 and 2 on campus.

Table 2: *Learner Participants Distribution by Year of Study*

Institution	Year of Study			
	Year 1	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Year 4**
1	3	4	4	2
2	7	1	5	0
3	2	2	2	6
4	3	3	3	4
5	0	13	0	0
6	0	1	3	10
7	4	8	0	0
Total number of learners	**19**	**32**	**17**	**22**
Percentage	**21%**	**36%**	**19%**	**24%**

4.1.1.4 Lecturer/Tutor Participation by Position

Lecturers/Tutors were asked to indicate positions they hold in the respective institutions of higher learning. The positions are indicated in Table below. However, none of the lecturer participants reported having expertise in handling students with disabilities.

Table 3: *Distribution of Lecturers/Tutors by Positions*

Staff position	Number	Percent
Head of Department	4	15%
Lecturer	16	62%
Senior Lecturer	3	12%
Assistant Lecturer	1	4%
Instructor	1	4%
Administrator	1	4%
Total	**26**	**100%**

Survey Results

4.2.1   Enrolment of learners with disabilities

4.2.1.1 Enrollment of learners with disabilities – Lecturers' Perspective

Figure 3 represents the lecturers' rating on the level of enrolment for learners who have disabilities

in institutions that provide higher learning in Malawi. The majority, 80% of lecturer participants

considered that the enrollment of learners who have disabilities in higher learning institutions was

low. The other 16% of the lecturer participants considered the enrolment rate to be fair while 4%

indicated that the enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning was high.

Figure 3: *Enrollment rate of learners with disabilities in Institutions of Higher Learning*
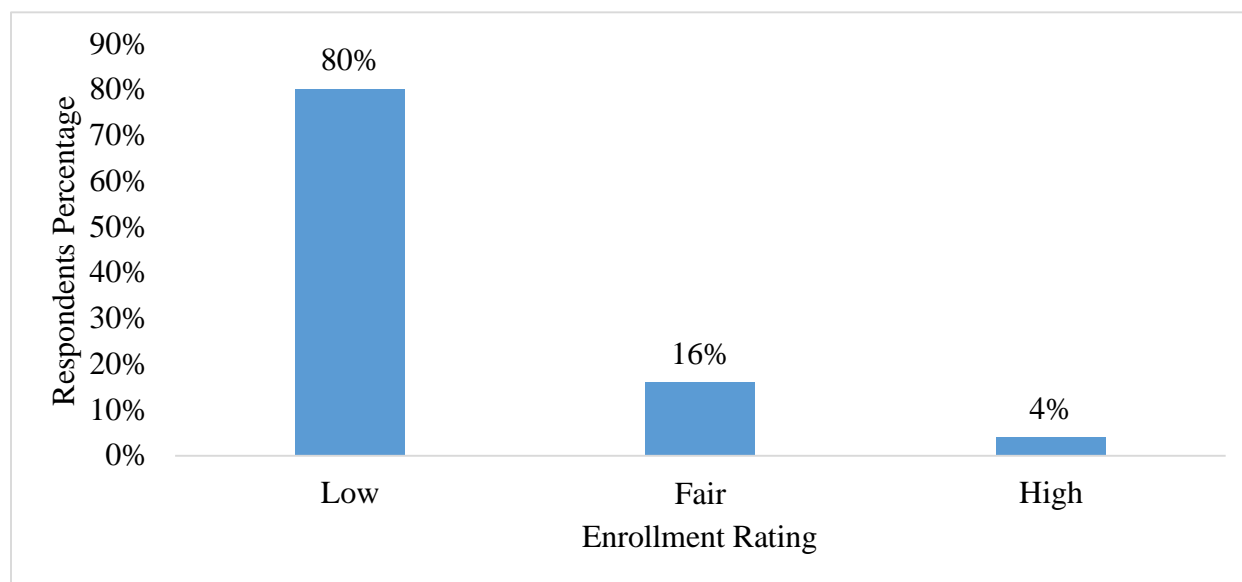
4.2.2 Type of disability accommodated in institutions of higher learning

4.2.2.1 Type of Disability Accommodated in Institutions of Higher Learning – Learners' and

Lecturers' Perspective

Learners, as well as lecturers/tutors, were asked to specify the types of disabilities

accommodated in their institutions to necessitate inclusive education planning. Physical disability

was featured as the most common disability accommodated, by both lecturers and learners, in institutions of higher learning with 69% of learners and 92% of lecturers/tutors indicating its presence. Thirty-two percent of the learners and 36% of the lecturers indicated visual impairment as being accommodated in institutions of higher learning. Intellectual disability was indicated by 27% and 12% of learners and lecturers respectively while hearing impairment was indicated by 14% and 20% of learners and lecturers respectively. Three percent of the learners indicated muteness/dumbness as being available in institutions of higher learning while no lecturer indicated the presence of such disability. Albinism and psychological were the other disabilities indicated by 19% of the learners and only albinism was indicated by 8% of the lecturers. Figure 4 indicates the graphical representation of the type of disabilities that are accommodated in institutions of higher learning.

Figure 4: *Type of disabilities accommodated at Institutions of Higher Learning*
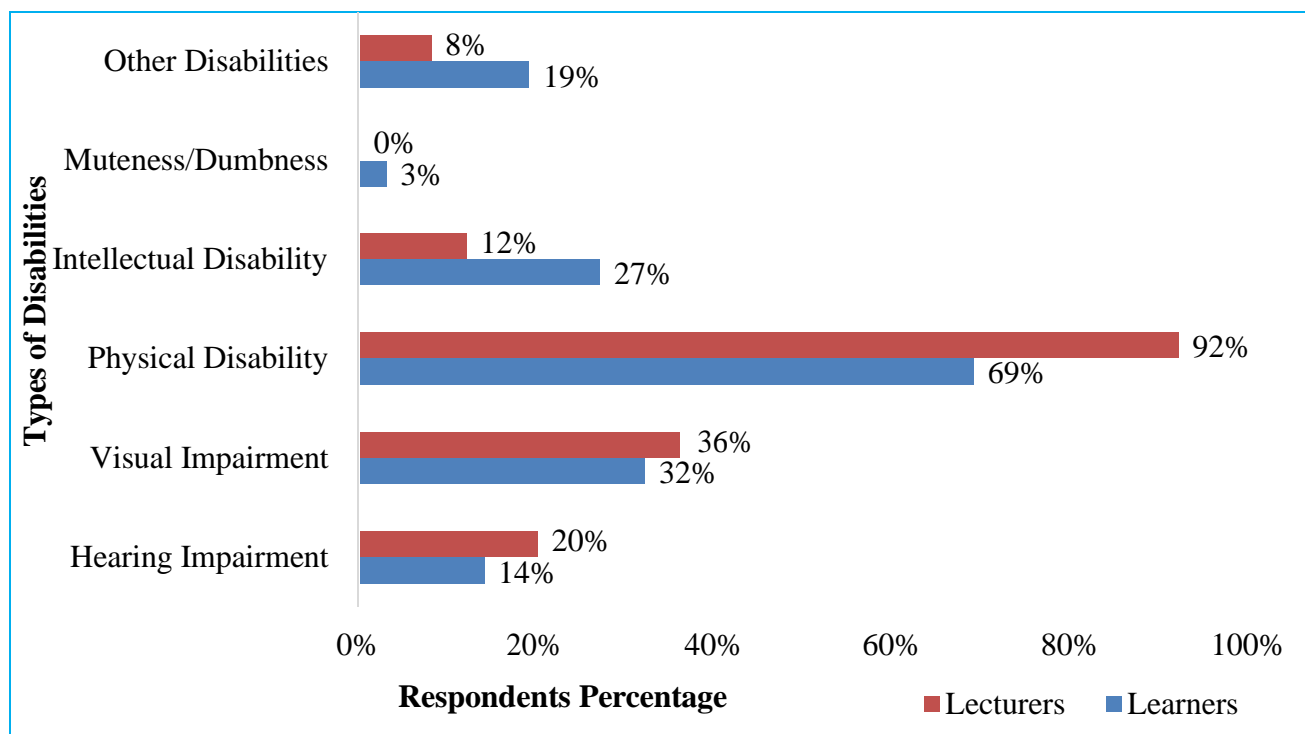
4.2.2.2   Type of Disability Accommodated Based on Institution of Higher Learning –

Learners' Perspective

Learners from all seven institutions that participated in the survey indicated that institutions accommodated learners with physical disabilities. Out of 90 learners who participated in the survey 61 indicated the presence of physical disability learners in their institutions. The disability was indicated by 8 to 13 learners per institution apart from one institution where only one learner indicated physical disability as one of the disabilities accommodated in the institutions. The low rating may indicate that the institution rarely enrolls learners with disabilities or that the disabilities accommodated were mild and hence not visible to most learners. Six institutions indicated visual impairment and intellectual impairment as disabilities being accommodated in the institutions while 5 institutions indicated hearing impairment. Four institutions indicated the accommodation of other disabilities which were albinism and psychological disability. Only two institutions indicated dumbness/muteness as being accommodated in the institutions. Figure 5 shows a graphical representation of how institutions accommodated the different types of disabilities.

Figure 5: *Disability by Institution - Learners' Perspective*
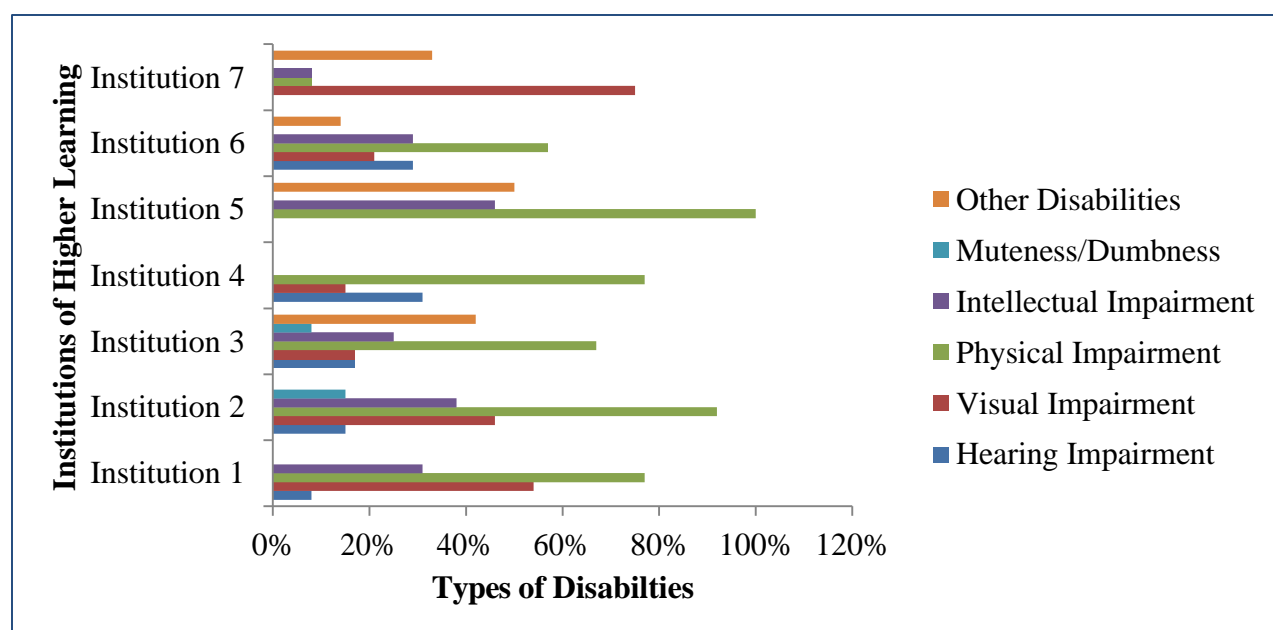
4.2.2.3 Type of Disability Accommodated in Institutions of higher learning – Lecturers'

Perspective

Lecturers' from eight institutions participated in the survey where they were asked to specify the types of disabilities accommodated in their institutions. One lecturer, although at the time of the study found at a sampled institution, providing information about the institution of previous employment hence instead of the seven institutions that participated eight institutions were represented. Out of the eight institutions, seven indicated that learners with physical disabilities were accommodated. Lecturers from six institutions indicated the accommodation of learners with hearing impairment, four institutions indicated visual impairment, three institutions indicated intellectual impairment, while one institution indicated another disability which was albinism and no institution indicated muteness/dumbness as disabilities being accommodated in the institutions. Figure 6 shows a graphical representation of the distribution of the types of disabilities being accommodated in different institutions.

Figure 6: *Disability by Institution – Lecturers' Perspective*
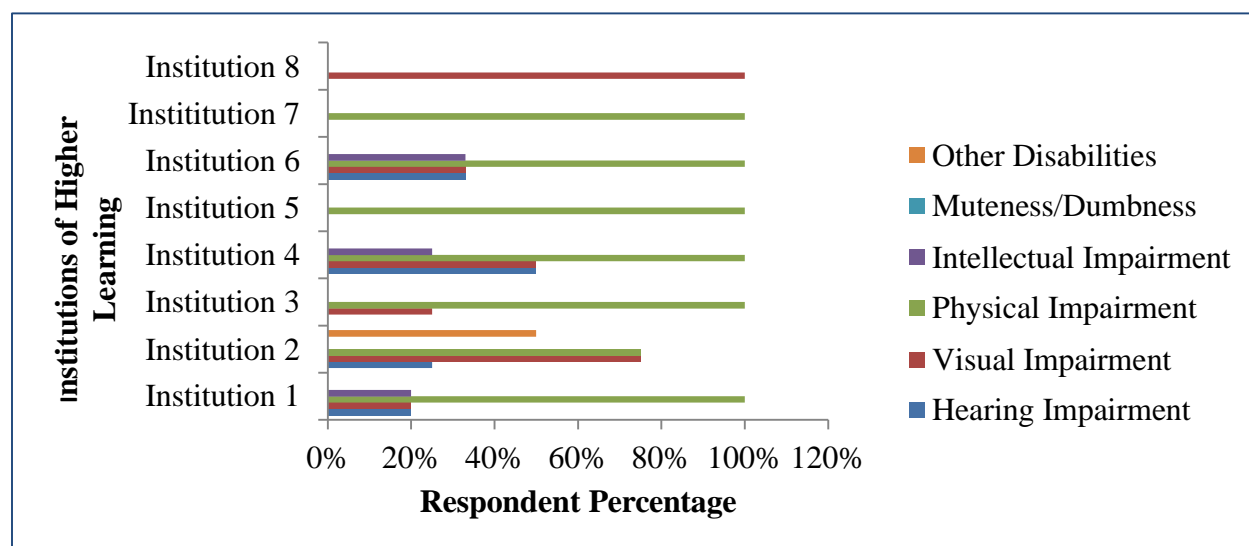
4.2.3 Perceptions of Inclusive Education in Institutions of Higher Learning – Learners' and Lecturers' Perceptions

Learners and lecturers were asked to rate the effectiveness of inclusive practices in institutions that provides higher learning. Contradictory views were indicated in that 76% of the learners considered that the implementation of inclusive education was moderate while 80% of lecturers considered it low. On the other hand, 24% of the lecturers who participated in the survey rated the effectiveness of inclusive education as moderate and 14% of the learners rated it low. The survey results also indicate that no lecturer (0%) rated inclusive education implementation highly effective while 19% of the learner participants rated it high. The majority who considered the effectiveness of inclusive education low might be due to the low enrollment of learners who have disabilities in higher learning institutions or inadequate institutional preparedness. Contrary views that considered the effectiveness moderate might be due to the improved efforts and initiatives in the institution of higher learning towards inclusion. Figure 7 shows a graphical representation of the effectiveness of inclusive education.

Figure 7: *Rate of Inclusive Education Effectiveness in Institutions of Higher Learning*
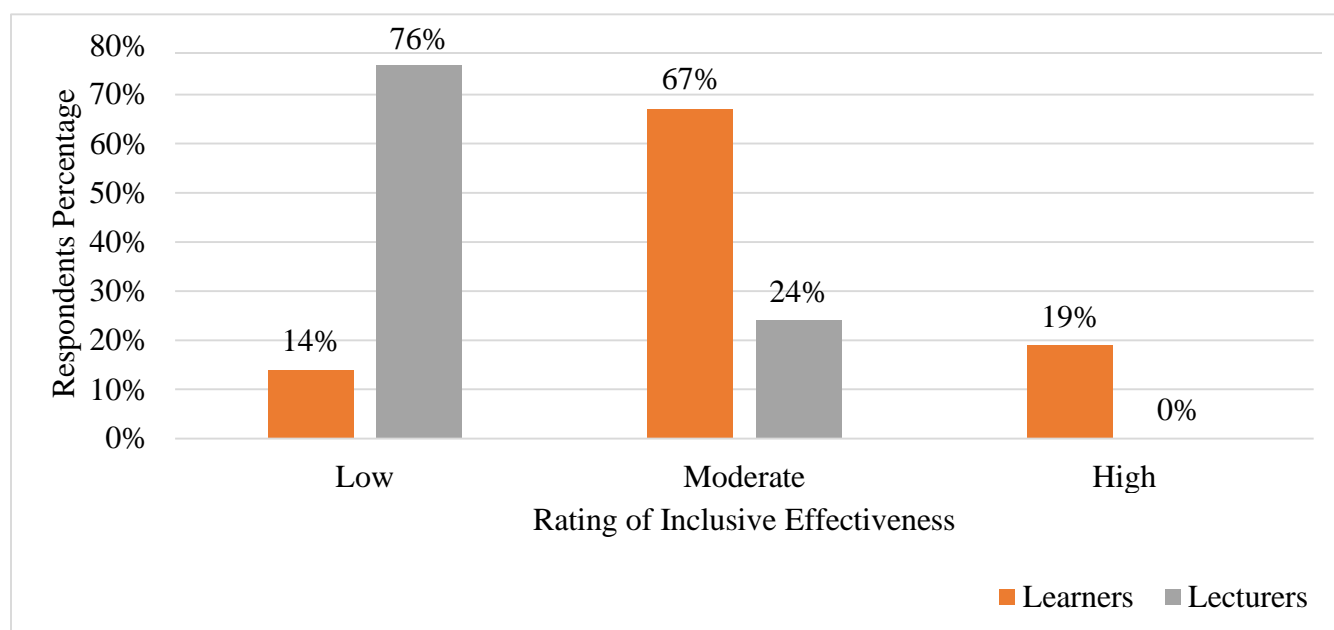
Table 4 below indicates the disparities in the rating of the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation based on institution. The majority of learners from institutions rated the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation fair as follows: Institutions 5, 100%; Institution 6, 89% participants; Institution 3, 75% of the participants; Institution 1, 62% of the participants; Institution 4, 54% of the participants; Institution 2, 46% while from institution 7, 43% of the participants rated the implemented fair. The views of the majority of learners from all institutions contradict the lecturers' views on the effectiveness of inclusive education. This might have been influenced by their knowledge of the subject, the visibility of learners with disability in their institutions, and also individuals' perception of what constitutes a disability as it is socially constructed.

Table 4: *Learners' rating on inclusive education effectiveness*

Institution	Rate of Inclusive Education Effectiveness			Total
	Low	Fair	High	
1	4	8	1	13
2	2	6	5	13
3	0	9	3	12
4	4	7	2	13
5	0	13	0	13
6	1	11	2	14
7	6	6	0	12
Total	17	60	13	90

4.2.4 The capacity of the institutions to handle learners with disabilities

4.2.4.1 From Learners' Perspective

Table 5 indicates what hinders the capacity of the institutions of higher learning to handle inclusive education. About 67% of the learner participants indicated that the institution`s lack of relevant technical support in terms of handling Special Needs Education which is a prerequisite to

effective inclusive education. This translates to a lack of technical expertise in institutions of higher learning. About 59% of learner participants indicated that the lack of learning resources to support teaching and learning in higher learning institutions is also a contributing factor to ineffective inclusive education. Forty-three percent of the participants referred to un-conducive infrastructure and 30% lacked a lecturer's academic/moral support as factors compromising the capacity of institutions of higher learning to successfully implement an inclusive education followed by 29% who indicated a lack of fellow learners' support. The majority of learners indicated a lack of relevant technical support for learners with disabilities as a challenge for institutions.

Table 5: *Institutional Capacity for Inclusive Education – Learners' Perspective*

Institutional Challenges	Percentage
Lack of learning resources	59%
Unconducive Learning Infrastructure	43%
Lack of lecturers' academic/moral support	30%
Lack of fellow students' moral support	29%
Lack of relevant technical support	67%
Other challenges	4%

4.2.4.2 Lecturers' Perspective

Table 6 indicates barriers to institutional capacity in handling inclusive education. Seventy-six percent of the lecturer respondents indicated a lack of special needs education expertise; 68% indicated a lack of inclusive education resources; 64% considered a lack of disability-friendly infrastructure; 56% referred to the limited budget line for inclusive education activities; 52%

indicated the absence of a Resource Center 48% referred to lack of inclusive education policies; 20% stated lack of political will and support, and other barriers constituted 12%. Lack of special needs education expertise was featured highly among the lecturers.

Table 6: *Institutional Capacity for Inclusive Education – Lecturers' Perspective*

Institutional Challenges	Percentage
Disability Friendly Infrastructure	64%
Limited Budget Line	56%
Lack of Special Needs Education Expertise	76%
Lack of IE resources	68%
Absence of Resource Center	52%
Lack IE Policies	48%
Lack of Political Will and Support	20%
Other challenges	12%

4.2.5   Availability of Policies in support of Inclusive Education

4.2.5.1 Learners' Perspective

Learner participants were asked to indicate the institutional capacity in terms of policies that support inclusive education. Table 7 indicates the availability of policies in institutions of higher learning that support inclusive education. Seventy percent (56) of the participants indicated that institutions had admissions policies that addressed inclusive education issues. About 48% (38) indicated knowledge of the availability of welfare policy, 36% (29) about student policy, and 30% (24) for the curriculum policy that supports inclusive education efforts in institutions of higher learning. Twenty-one percent (17) expressed knowledge of the availability of assessment policy while 13% (10) had availability for complaints management policy. Learners at one institution indicated knowing the availability of all the policies assessed. Research policy was least indicated to be available in institutions of higher learning and that it supports inclusive education.

Table 7: *Number of students indicating the availability of different policies in institutions*

Policy Type	Institution							Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Admission	4	11	7	7	13	11	3	**56**	**70%**
Welfare	6	5	8	6	9	4	0	**38**	**48%**
Student	3	0	9	6	8	3	0	**29**	**36%**
Curriculum	4	8	3	2	3	2	2	**24**	**30%**
Complaints Management	2	1	3	3	0	1	0	**10**	**13%**
Research	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	**5**	**6%**

Assessment	1	6	3	5	0	2	0	**17**	**21%**
Total	**12**	**13**	**12**	**13**	**13**	**13**	**4**	**80**	**100 %**
%		**15%**	**16%**	**15%**	**16%**	**16%**	**16%**	**5%**	**100%**

4.2.5.2 Lecturers' Perspective

Lecturers/Tutors were asked to indicate policies available in their institutions that support inclusive education. Table **8** indicates that 35% (16) knew about the availability of admissions policy that supports inclusive education initiatives. Thirteen percent (6) stated knowledge of the availability of welfare policy while 11% (5) student policy and 9 %(4) complained about management policy that supports inclusive education. The least available policies that support inclusive education indicated among the lecturers were curriculum policy 7% (3) and research and assessment policy (4% (2). About 17% of the lecturers indicated not knowing of the existence of the policies at their institutions that support inclusive education.

Table 8: *Number of lecturers/Tutors indicated availability of different policies in institutions*

Policy Type	Institution								Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Admission Policy	1	2	3	4	2	3	0	1	**16**	**35**
Welfare Policy	0	1	0	2	1	2	0	0	**6**	**13**
Student Policy	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	**5**	**11**
Curriculum Policy	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	**3**	**7**
Complaints Mgmt. Policy	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	**4**	**9**
Research Policy	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	**2**	**4**
Assessment Policy	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	**2**	**4**

Other Policies	3	3	1	0	0	0	1	0	**8**	**17**
Total	**5**	**4**	**4**	**4**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**1**		
%	**20**	**16**	**16**	**16**	**12**	**12**	**4**	**4**		

The lecturers also were asked to indicate the strategies available in higher learning institutions to enhance inclusive education implementation and also indicate the strategies institutions were failing to implement. Table 9 below shows how the institutions faired. Twenty-six percent of the respondents indicated they use teachers' inclusive teaching resources; 23% referred to the usage of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), 18% stated that institutions use learners' inclusive learning resources; 14% were using a Variety of Instructional Formats (VIF); 12% indicated the availability of inclusive education institutional policies and 4% indicated they use of Universal Design Principles (UDP). This indicated that the failure rate in the implementation of strategies alluded to by respondents was as follows: About 74% indicated a failure in the teachers' usage of inclusive resources; 77% failed in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); 82% indicated a failure in the usage of learners' inclusive learning resources; 86% failure in Variety Instructional Format (VIF); 88% for unavailability of inclusive education institutional policies; and 96% failure in implementing)Universal Design Principles (UDP. Table 9 indicates a summary of the implementation of strategies to enhance inclusive education and strategies not implemented.

Table 9: *Lecturers report on the implementation of Inclusive Education*

Principle/Policy description	Institution								Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Use of Universal Design Principles (UDP)	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	4.1

Use of Variety Instructional Format (VIF)	0	3	2	3	1	1	0	0	10	13.5
Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)	3	2	3	2	1	3	2	1	17	23.0
Teachers' Inclusive Teaching Resources	3	2	4	3	1	3	2	1	19	25.7
Learners' Inclusive Learning Resources	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	1	13	17.6
Inclusive Education Institutional Policies	2	1	0	3	0	1	1	1	9	12.2
Other Implementation Strategies	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	4.1

4.2.6 Challenges affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education

4.2.6.1 Lecturers' Perspective

Lecturers were asked to indicate the challenges that affect inclusive education. Figure 8 shows that 76% of the lecturers indicated a lack of Special Needs Education expertise as a challenge. About 68% of lecturers considered a deficiency in inclusive education resources a challenge to effective inclusive practices. The challenge of infrastructure that is not disability-friendly was pointed out by 64% of the lecturers and 52% considered the absence of a Resource Center as a challenge. Forty-eight percent of the lecturers indicated a lack of inclusive education policies and 20% regarded a lack of political will and support as a challenge affecting the implementation of inclusive practices. Twelve percent of lecturers indicated a lack of awareness about such learners by lecturers and those lecturers are not informed about their presence in their classroom as other challenges.

Figure 8: *Institutional challenges affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education*
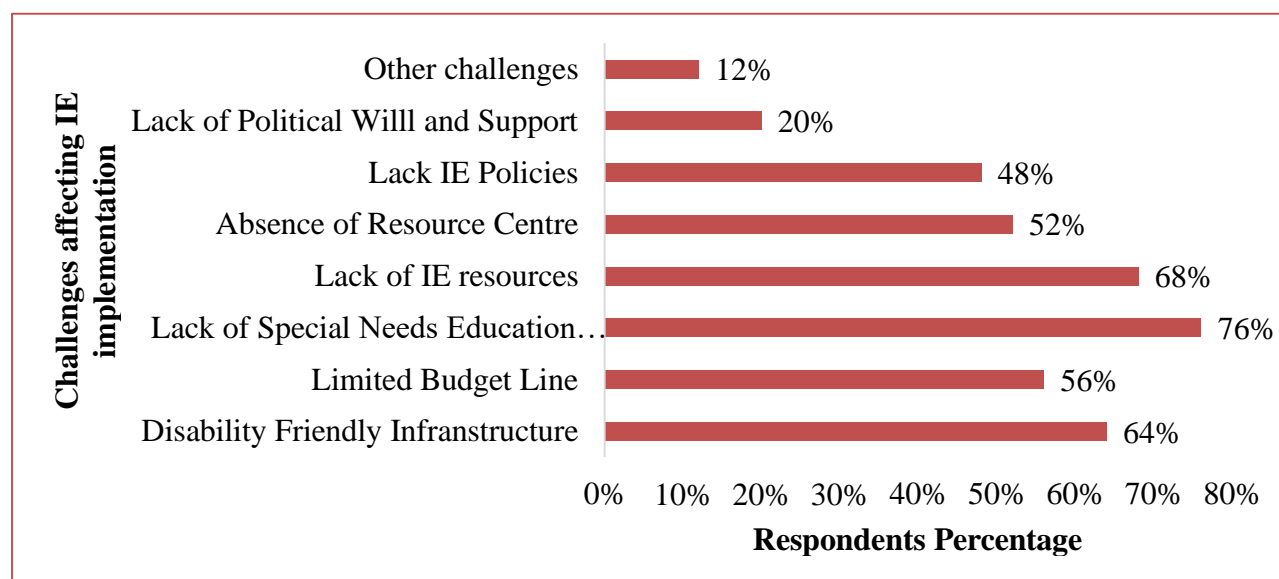
4.2.7   Challenges faced by learners with disabilities – Learners' Perspective

Sixty-seven percent of the learners considered the lack of relevant technical support a challenge faced by learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning. Lack of learning resources was indicated by 59% of the learners while un-conducive learning infrastructure was considered a challenge faced by learners with a disability indicated by 43%. Inadequate academic and moral support by lecturers and inadequate moral support by fellow learners was chosen as a challenge by 30% and 29% of the learner participants. Other unspecified challenges were indicated by 4% of the participants. Figure 9 represents a summary of the learners' views on the challenges faced by those learners with disabilities.

Figure 9: *Challenges faced by learners with disabilities*

Figure 10: *Suggested Causes of Inclusive Education challenges*
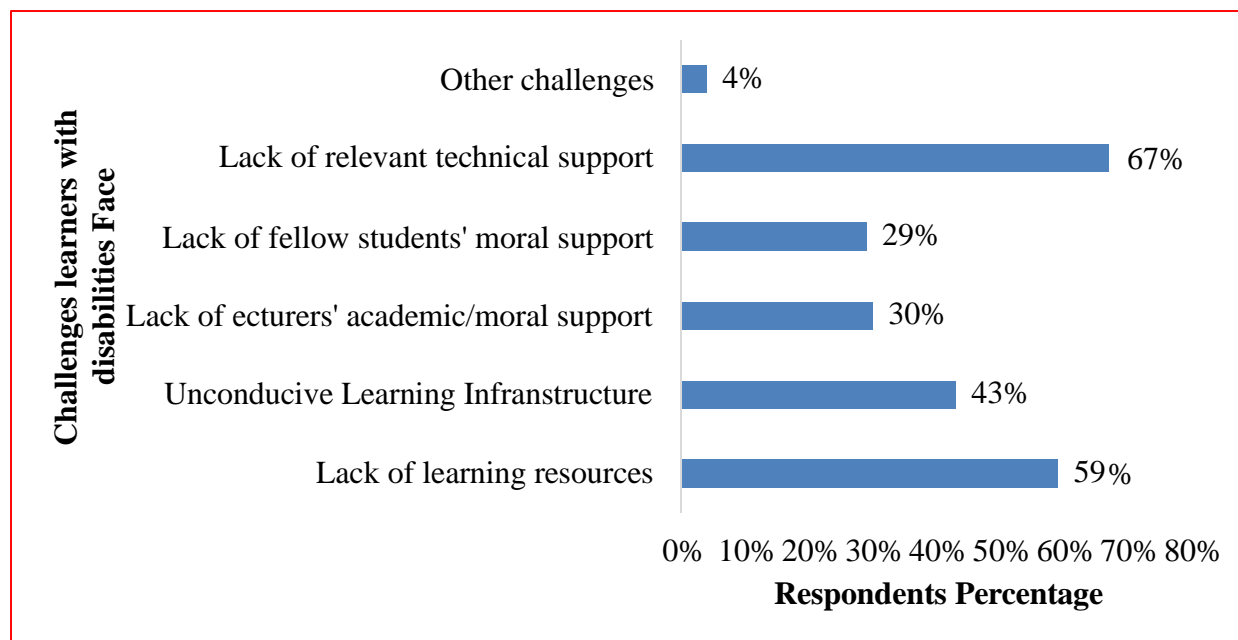
4.2.8 Suggested Causes of Inclusive Education Challenges

4.2.8.1 Lecturers' Perspective

Figure 10 represents lecturers'/tutors views on what causes challenges in inclusive education implementation in higher learning institutions. Lecturers/Tutors were asked to suggest causes that lead to the inclusive education challenges in higher learning institutions. Lack of policy direction was featured highly by 56% of the participants followed by a lack of awareness of inclusive education options tagged by 52% of the participants. 48% of the lecturers indicated that lack of institutional preparedness leads to inclusive education challenges while 8% indicated negative perception as a cause of the challenges. However, 16% of the participants indicated other causes that included (1) the nature of work, (2) not much is known about the availability of such learners and (4) lack of resources. Lack of policy direction was featured by the majority of the respondents as the cause of the challenges to inclusive education.

Figure 10: *Suggested Causes of Inclusive Education challenges*
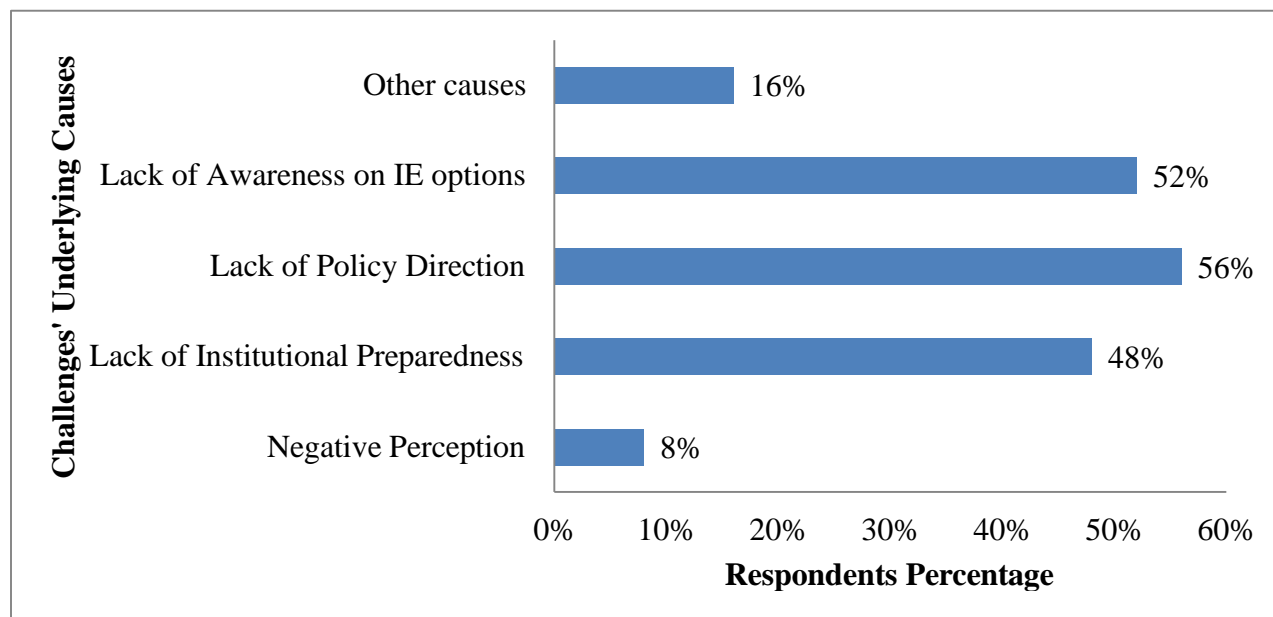
4.2.9 **Suggested Solutions to Inclusive Education Challenges**

4.2.9.1 Lecturers' versus Learners' Perspective

Figure 11 represents suggested solutions to the inclusive education challenges in institutions of higher learning from the lecturers' versus learners' perspectives. Both lecturers and learners featured technical training highly with 76% and 72% of lecturers and learners referring to it. Sixty-eight percent of the lecturers tagged the development of institutional policies and provision of inclusive education teaching and learning resources as solutions necessary to address the challenges. About 44% and 67% of the learners indicated the development of institutional policies and provision of inclusive education teaching and learning resources respectively. Sixty percent

of both lecturer and learner participants indicated awareness of disability issues as a necessity in addressing the inclusive education challenges. Redressing the institutional infrastructure was indicated by 52% and 48% of the lecturers and learners respectively. About 48% of the lecturers and 36% of the learners indicated the need for clear government and regulatory policies. Four percent of the lecturers indicated other solutions like creating an awareness of the presence of such learners to the lecturers. Lecturers indicated that sometimes they just get surprised to see that they have a learner or learners with a disability in their classroom while 1% of the learners indicated other unspecified solutions.

Figure 11: *Suggested solutions to Inclusive Education challenges*
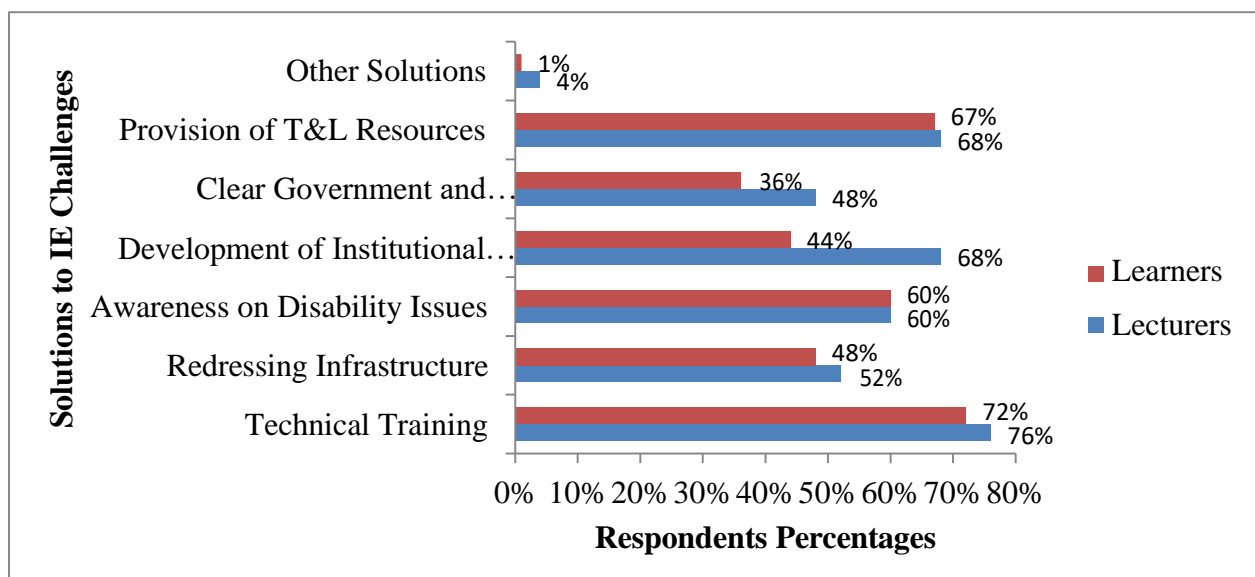
4.2.10 Regression Analysis

4.2.10.1   Relationship between the effectiveness of inclusive education and enrollment of learners with disabilities

The regression results indicate that R^2 was 21.9% which implies that the enrolment rate of learners with a disability could only explain 21.9% of the variation in the rate of effectiveness of inclusive education. Table below represents a relationship between the rate of effectiveness of inclusive education and the enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning. The analysis of variance p-value was 0.018, then the slope of the regression line was not zero hence there was a significant linear relationship between the rate of effectiveness of inclusive education and the enrolment rate of learners with disability.

Table 10: *Relationship between inclusion effectiveness and enrollment*

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Significance
	Regression	.999	1	.999	6.453	.018[b]
1	Residual	3.561	23	.155		
	Total	4.560	24			

4.2.10.2   Relationship between quality of inclusive education and year of study

The regression results indicate that there was no relationship between the rate of inclusive education quality provision at the institution level and the year of study ($R^2 = 0.6\%$, p-value = 0.488). Table 11 below indicates the relationship between the perceptions of the quality of inclusive education provided and the year of study for learners.

**Table 11: `*Relationship between the quality of inclusive education and the year of study*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
	Regression	.164	1	.164	.486	.488[b]
1	Residual	29.659	88	.337		
	Total	29.822	89			

In-depth Interview results

4.2.11 Enrolment of learners with disabilities

4.2.11.1   Enrolment of learners with disabilities – Administrators' Perspective

Seven administrators were interviewed from seven institutions. The enrollment of institutions 6 and 7 was ten learners with disabilities in each one of them, while the other institutions had an enrollment of zero as in the case of institution 3, five for institution 5, 11for institution 2, 19 for institution 4, and 53 for institution 8. All (100%) administrators agreed that there was a low enrollment of learners with disabilities in the respective institutions of higher learning. The enrollment revolved between zero and nineteen apart from one institution which was an outlier, as it had an enrollment of 53 because it was earmarked for inclusion by the government of Malawi as such learners with disabilities are intentionally enrolled in the institution. The results from interviews complemented the survey results which defined the enrollment of learners with disabilities as being low.

Among the administrators, 14% claimed that the institutions they belonged to could not enroll learners with disability due to the nature of their training which requires practical or hands-on fitness and that any disability would compromise the effectiveness and the success of the trainees. Hence, it was stated that inclusive education "*is a good concept, but because we expect the students whom we are grooming now to become health workers who will provide services to the nation, to*

the community, hence they should be able to do everything. But not if this student has limitations, he or she may fail to do the other assessments the way the others do. To assess him with others who are able, may be unfair to this particular individual. It is good that they can learn together but it goes a long way for strategies have to be put in place." Therefore, the type of disabilities that were available at the institution were mild disabilities that require no support in the process of learning. Another 14% indicated that the enrolment does not go beyond four learners with disabilities in an academic year. The administrators reported that other institutions do receive learners with disability by surprise as during the application these learners do not indicate their disability. These circumstances do not provide the institutions with a chance to prepare for the coming of learners who may have various disabilities hence, these institutions handle the cases as they come and in a way prepare to accommodate them. Another 14% of the administrator indicated that the enrollment of learners with disabilities is not consistent as in some years the institutions may enroll and other times may not have the learners with disabilities enrolled. "*we have had a blind student before and we don't have any now. Yeah, we haven't had any in a wheelchair but we have put structures in our building for access to those with wheelchairs. The other disabilities we had were just like those we had probably with one leg short but they could walk and we have some albinos.*" The results from interviews explained why there were disparities in the numbers and types of disabilities enrolled in institutions of higher learning. The results indicated that the capacity of an institution determined the type or types of disabilities and the numbers to be enrolled.

Public institutions have an arrangement whereby one institution of higher learning is earmarked to accommodate learners with disabilities and those that indicate are directed to the college which has a large number of learners with disabilities enrolled. It was reported that the choice of inclusion

of learners who have disabilities in one public university was an arrangement that was mandated by the Ministry of Education to enhance the enrollment number of learners who have disabilities in the tertiary education system. Technical Colleges in the Tevet system also were reported to have earmarked some colleges and capacitated them for inclusive education; therefore, those that make their way to other technical colleges are managed case by case but when the disability is extreme then the learner is referred to the college where resources are available for inclusion. Describing how the enrolled are handled, the administrator stated that *"here we accommodate all kinds of disabilities that we come across because each intake has a different kind of students with disabilities. We make amends to the situation as it comes since each disability has its challenges. Normally here we have an open-door policy since each recruited group is filtered through and once we come up with a disability that students have and we work out based on the nature of the disability that the student has to ensure that the affected person can get the training comfortably up to the end. For example, we have had students who had challenges with mobility. We made sure that the course that he or she had chosen, whenever she comes for class each morning, she or he should be comfortable. Where we have seen that there was a hindrance somewhere, we make sure we remove that hindrance so that the student can be able to move straight to his or her class. Inside the classroom, we make sure that he or she sits in a position where she or he can access the lesson easily. Again, we have challenges with students with limbs, and hands, that cannot write their notes fast, with such students we provide them with printed notes to save their time because their hands cannot cope with the normal speed of copying the notes. During examinations, we have lobbied with the examining board for the challenged students if they may be considered for extra time during examinations. In short, all that I am saying is that we are sensitive in being inclusive on disability issues."* Despite the government's mandate for specific institutions of higher learning

to accommodate learners with disabilities, survey results indicated that all institutions regardless of the mandate limitations accommodated diverse disabilities at different levels. One administrator indicated that inclusion is challenged due to a lack of policy at the institutional level stating that *"There are no policies for that because I was contacted by some colleagues in the lower department who were telling me that it is high time we develop policies for the people with disabilities"*.

The total number of learners that were enrolled in the sampled institutions, at the time of the study, was 26,403 among whom 108 were those learners who had different disabilities. The enrolment of learners with disabilities constituted 0.4% of those enrolled in the sampled institutions. Figure below presents a graphical representation of the total enrolment number of learners and the number of learners who had disabilities enrolled in higher learning institutions at the time of the study.

Figure 12: *Enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning*
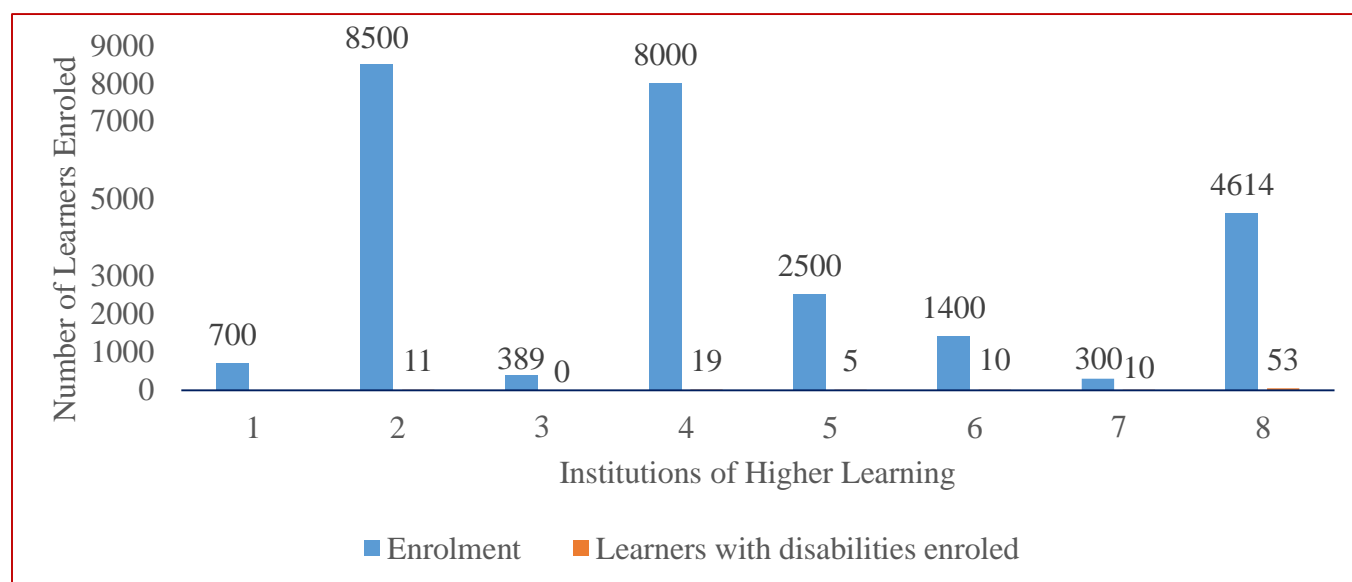
4.2.11.2   *Enrolment of learners with disabilities – Government Officials' Perspective*

Government officials during an interview were asked to explain the role of government regarding enrollment in inclusive education. One hundred percent (100%) of the respondents from the government ministries agreed on the role of the two ministries in policy planning and direction ensuring inclusive education policies in institutions, creating intervention plans through planning inclusive education programs that include stakeholder awareness, capacity building, and conducting an assessment on the implementation of inclusive activities. However, data indicated that the Ministry of Education is responsible for procuring and providing inclusion resources at all levels of education. The Ministry of Gender ensures access to education, services, and participation for learners with disabilities. It is also responsible for ensuring that the curriculum standards are regulated and the physical structures are accommodative for learners with disabilities. This was a new perspective that was not reflected in the survey results.

All (100%) government officials also agreed on the low enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning confirming the survey results. The awareness programs are provided to the stakeholders in inclusive education to build stakeholders' capacity, like teachers and communities on the need to grant the learners with disabilities their right to education. While 50% of the respondents stated that the awareness was necessary "*because such children are in the communities so leaving them in the communities without capturing them then they will not be assisted. The challenge is sometimes there are elements of stigma and discrimination where a parent with two children abled 7yrs and 10yrs disabled may opt to send to school the one who is 7yrs other than the one who is 10yrs. Several factors contribute to such kind of thinking sometimes elements of overprotection they think schools are not safe places for that child to go and learn but sometimes it's the thinking that this child may be will not cope with school*

life they better stay here at home. So there are those kinds of mixed feelings in the community so it is also our task to bring awareness to all stakeholders and the members of the community – parents – everybody, that everybody has to go right to school and imagine how that particular child feels older than the one sent to school that child is harmed by the decisions that we usually take". The low enrollment of learners with disabilities was influenced by the perceptions and the choices that are made by guardians who doubt the ability and the security of their children in schools or regard the abled to be more fitting for educational support than the disabled.

4.2.12 Types and degrees of disability accommodated in Institutions of Higher Learning

4.2.12.1   *Type of Disability Accommodated in institutions of higher learning – Administrators' Perspective*

Seven administrators were interviewed on the types of disabilities accommodated by their institutions. Five administrators representing 71% of the respondents indicated that their institutions accommodate Visual Impairment; four (57%) indicated the accommodation of Physical Disability; three (43%) albinism; two (29%) Learning Difficulties and one (14%) indicated Hearing Impairment as being accommodated in the institution. Visual impairment and physical disability came out as the most common. The severity of the disabilities accommodated in institutions of higher learning ranged from mild to acute disabilities while the types differed from one institution to another depending on the institutional deciding factors. One response stated the following: "*When we talk about Special Needs Education, there are four categories of them and these are, visual impairment, hearing impairment, learning difficulties, and deaf and blind but those that we accommodate here are of three categories; visual impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) and learning difficulties (LD).*" On the other hand, other institutions receive learners with disabilities unintentionally. Another administrator had this to state: "*Unfortunately,*

because of infrastructures, we are not given opportunities to select students because we don't have infrastructure that is friendly to people with disabilities. The students who are disabled and were selected here are the ones that did not disclose their disability during selection. So we have two albinos, those with mild visual impairment, mild hearing impairment, and one student with a physical disability". Yet another administrator indicated that the intake of learners with disabilities was never beyond four per academic intake however there was an increase in enrollment. The interview results confirmed the diversity in the types of disabilities accommodated in different institutions.

4.2.12.2 Degree of Disability Accommodated in institutions of higher learning – Administrators' Perspective

All administrators indicated the varying degrees of disabilities that their institutions accommodate intentionally or unintentionally. One administrator indicated that their institution has had to accommodate mild disabilities stating that:

"The students who are disabled and were selected here are the ones that did not disclose their disability during selection. So we have two albinos, those with mild visual impairment, mild hearing impairment, and one student with a physical disability. "

Another administrator elaborated on the institutional experience in accommodating mild disabilities stating that:

"We accommodated any kind of disability in this college; however, we haven't encountered acute disability as we haven't received any student in a wheelchair. Currently, we have received students with visual impairment and hearing impairment, and last we have someone who is generally slow in perceiving information. But all these students can walk and do other things for themselves."

Two administrators declared that it would be challenging for their institution to accommodate learners with acute disabilities due to the nature of their infrastructure and limited resources for inclusion. Yet others were already managing acute disabilities with strategies in place to provide academic and social support to learners with acute disabilities. One administrator explained how their institution manages learners with acute disabilities indicating that:

"We have recruited one who was trained specifically to assist those with visual impairment. But for those that have wheelchairs, we have assigned some workers to take care of them in addition to their colleagues by assisting them on how they can move from one place to another. We have also allocated them to the hostels that are closer to their classrooms as well as to the library".

4.2.13 Perceptions of Inclusive Education

4.2.13.1   *Perceptions on Inclusive Education – Administrators' Perspective*

During interviews, the administrators were asked to provide their perceptions of the incorporation of learners with disability in the mainstream education system as perceptions affect enrollment. One hundred percent of the administrators agreed that inclusive education is necessary for providing opportunities for individuals who have disabilities to be admitted to educational institutions and reduces discrimination. One response indicated that inclusion is "*fine, they need to be included; they need to have their field be leveled with their friends so that their disabilities should not disadvantage them from getting what others are getting."* The administrators also indicated that it was necessary to include learners with disabilities in the mainstream education system as it reduces stigma and discrimination and promotes co-existence. One administrator stated that *"It is good that we treat them inclusively because what I have noticed is that if you give*

them special favor they feel discriminated and start thinking that they are really disabled and they are different from the rest"

However, they indicated that what creates challenges is that most infrastructures in institutions are not disability friendly. Among the administrators, 14% stated that the idea of directing learners with disabilities to one institution, and one said *"was defeated knowing that if all disabled students are taken into one college, it means we are not promoting inclusive education. So, the government must capacitate institutions with resources for them to handle those students selected for those colleges. It is high time that inclusive education must be promoted just like the gender policy in institutions of higher learning*." This is believed to affect the promotion of inclusion of learners who have disabilities in higher learning institutions. However, there were other relative views in terms of implementation and other factors. Some considered inclusive education as challenging when it comes to implementation since policies are not in place and institutions are not ready for it. Usually, learners with disabilities are redirected to courses that institutions regard as fitting for them unlike the areas of their choice. Public institutions are limited to embracing inclusion as only one institution of higher learning among the universities is earmarked for inclusive education hence government needs to capacitate the institutions with resources to promote inclusive education implementation. Another administrator stated that *"Inclusive education is a good concept but health workers are service providers to care for others and serious disabilities would create great limitations for them to fit in."* Some administrators felt that the institutions do not have the necessary expertise to handle inclusive education. These ideas confirmed the challenges of inclusive education that compromises the institutional capacities as indicated in the survey results that the challenges affect the effectiveness of inclusive education.

4.2.13.2 Perceptions on Inclusive Education – Government Officials' Perspective

Among the government officials, 50% emphasized the necessity of inclusive education but also had relative perceptions on incorporating learners who have disabilities in mainstream education. The perception of the necessity for inclusion was argued based on that life is about inclusion hence no need for special schools as they make integration into society difficult for individuals with disabilities. It was argued that inclusion promotes acceptance and support from friends. Socialization, support, and co-existence are enhanced through inclusive education. The respondent was of the view that inclusive education *"is a good thing for the fact that life is about inclusion it's bizarre to say that let the blind stay alone there because when we advance special schools where learners with disabilities learn alone it will be difficult for them to integrate into the society. Another advantage of inclusion is that other students get used to their colleagues and accept them and also provide support to them. These other children fit into the bigger group of people that have no disabilities, and socialization, support, and co-existence are enhanced. So I condemn special schools because they enhance discrimination which is not the way we live in life."*

The perception of the other 50% of the officials was that there was a political will for inclusive education but it was not supported by the budget. On the inclusion of the learners who have disabilities in mainstream schools, this was stated *"I would like to see parents championing the inclusion of children, I would like to see Malawi moving into the world of advocacy for people with disability and fighting for freedom of the people with disability. Even parents should stand up for children with disability and demand duty bearers like us to know what should be done. They can also form associations to fight for their children's rights and demand better and quality services for their children. They can also be soliciting funds on behalf of their children. There should also be early intervention, if we intervene early, we might mitigate the whole essence of*

disability, or we might reduce the impact of disability." However, 100% of respondents argued that the management of inclusive education is very expensive due to the need for extra human resources, specialized technologies, and adaptation of the curricula. The respondents also indicated the presence of some barriers to effective inclusive education such as a closed attitude toward persons with disability; when people see individuals with disabilities as lacking potential to succeed in various areas of their academic and social lives; and low self-esteem displayed by individuals with disabilities themselves which derails a learning opportunity was also a barrier that was spotted. It was stated that sometimes the individuals with disabilities themselves lack the confidence to believe in their potential and abilities which renders them with low self-esteem. The respondent argued that "*the persons with disability themselves, not all of them have a free mind to appreciate that they can be in every place like any other person, they feel pity and have low self-esteem. This derails the whole opportunity of learning, even if the environment opens up for them, they cannot learn*".

4.3.14 Challenges affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education - Administrators' Perspective

All (100%) administrators interviewed from the seven institutions of higher learning indicated lack of funding as a major challenge for institutions concerning inclusive education. One administrator stated the following: "*We lack the provision of resources and human support. If we are funded adequately, we would be able to handle these students. So the greatest challenge is funding.*" While from the survey results indicated lack of Special Needs Education technical expertise came out as a major challenge. Forty-three percent of the administrators (3) indicated a lack of disability-friendly infrastructure as a challenge towards inclusion as most of the buildings used in the institutions were constructed long before the introduction of inclusive education; 29%

(2) of the administrators indicated a lack of special needs teachers. Although only 29% of the administrators mentioned a lack of special needs teachers as a challenge among the seven institutions that were interviewed four institutions indicated to have had no teacher with technical expertise in handling learners with disabilities although the institutions had recruitment of learners with disabilities. Three institutions indicated to have had teachers with expertise in the management of learners who have disabilities, two institutions had one teacher with expertise each while one institution had six teachers who had expertise in handling learners who have disabilities. Other relative challenges are mentioned as follows: another 29% also indicated lack of specialized equipment as a challenge since the equipment is not locally found and hence very expensive; another 29% also indicated lack of government policy challenges the mandate and the procedures to implement inclusive education, and 14% indicated that the Ministry of Education's decision to exclude other institutions from implementing inclusion was a contradiction to implementation promotion in inclusive practices. One administrator indicated that at one of the meetings for administrators of public institutions the issue of earmarking one institution as a recipient of learners with disabilities was raised and the *"idea was defeated knowing that if all disabled students are taken into one college, it means we are not promoting inclusive education. So, the government must capacitate institutions with resources for them to handle those students selected for those colleges. It is high time that inclusive education must be promoted just like the gender policy in institutions of higher learning"*. The willingness to accommodate learners who have physical disabilities but not those with hearing impairments is also indicated as a challenge encountered in inclusive education. The challenges raised through the interviews confirmed the challenges that were defined by the survey results.

4.3.15 Availability of Policies in support of Inclusive Education

4.3.15.1   *Administrators' Perspective*

In an interview with administrators, 86% of the sampled institutions did not have an inclusive education policy while 57% did not have any institutional strategic documentation on the inclusive education.14% of the sampled institutions had a written policy on inclusive education, although the document was available, it was stated that it might take time for the institution to be considered as being effective in implementing inclusive education as the readiness is not there yet. Another 14% of the institutions indicated having written guidelines that were used to direct the course of inclusive education activities, and yet for another14% of institutions, it was indicated that the process of developing a policy had started with a concept note available at the time of the study. However, it was reported that some use public policies and others treat cases of inclusion as the learners with disabilities emerge in the institutions depending on their disability. One administrator indicated the absence of an institutional policy stating that "*Actually when we talk about a policy that has been talked about for a long time. I don't think we have policies for people with disabilities. In my view, I haven't seen any policy concerning people with disability. There are no policies for that because I was contacted by some colleagues in the lower department who were telling me that it is high time we develop policies for people with disabilities. So I am a bit sure that such policies are not yet there.*" The administrators indicated the need for institutions to have policies to support inclusive education implementation. The need for policy agrees with the survey results which indicated that the absence of policy was an underlying cause for the challenges in inclusive education.

4.3.15.2   *Government Officials' Perspective*

Government officials, from the two ministries that are stakeholders of inclusive education, during an interview, were asked to stipulate the specific policies or strategies, that the government

of Malawi had put in place, to support the implementation of inclusive education. All (100%) officials agreed on the availability of an Inclusive Education Strategy that guides relevant stakeholders in the realization of inclusion in Malawi. It was indicated that the document is accessible to all key stakeholders like Education Division Managers, District Education Managers, and other teachers to ensure inclusive practices. The ministries had relative policies and strategies that support inclusive education. For instance, one ministry indicated the availability of the Education for All (EFA) strategy, and the Education Act as key to supporting inclusive education efforts.

Fifty percent of the official respondents indicated that there was no policy on inclusive education but efforts to develop the policy were underway in partnership with Reading for all Malawi (REFAM) which had started with stakeholder consultations at the time of this study. Despite the absence of the policy, one indicated that "*Malawi is a signatory to several protocols, and policies. Education policies are also talking about the same, the Education Act is also talking about nondiscrimination of any sort. Certainly, there are a lot of documents that are binding and hinting that education must be provided to everybody regardless of the situation and it should be the conditions that should be modified to fit the children and not the children suiting the conditions no. So we have no choice if the teacher doesn't know how to provide support to a child who has a disability and has to find means and ways of learning how that can be done not the child says how can I learn forced to learn but stakeholders should find ways of supporting everybody so there are documents that are talking about that education must just be provided without any discrimination.*"

On the other hand, another 50% of the official respondents indicated that Malawi had legal frameworks such as the Disability Act 2012, the National Policy on equalization of opportunities

of persons with disability, the National Disability mainstreaming strategy, the National Action Plan for persons with albinism, Malawi growth, and development strategy, Malawi National strategy policy, National Education Development Strategy, Handicapped Act 1971(which was developed by MACOHA), United Nation Convention Right for people with Disability (UNCRPD). These legal frameworks refer to issues concerning individuals with disabilities including their education. The survey results also alluded to the need for policy since its absence led to challenges encountered in inclusive education.

4.3.16 Challenges faced by Institutions

4.3.16.1   Administrators' Perspective

Administrators were asked to indicate challenges that affect higher learning institutions in the implementation of inclusive practices. (1) Out of seven administrators interviewed, 86% (6) stated that their institutions had no inclusive education policy in place and only one institution had an inclusive education policy in place approved by the institutional council; (2) 86% (6) were found to have lack of technical expertise to handle learners with disabilities was another institutional challenge that was mentioned. Four administrators indicated that their institutions had no staff with technical expertise in Special Needs Education (SNE) which is necessary for handling inclusive education, and three administrators stated that their institutions had staff with Special Needs Education technical expertise to facilitate inclusive education. However, two of the three institutions with Special Needs Education technical expertise staff had one staff each and the other one had six specialists; On the improvement or provision of expertise in inclusive education diverse views were presented. One administrator indicated that *"We have in our plans to have staff members trained in general special needs. But as I have said, normally what triggers training someone is the nature of special needs. So far, maybe by chance, we had no very unique challenge*

that we have failed to assist special students." Another administrator indicated that "*We are providing expertise in Special needs education relevant to the numbers. We have recruited one who was trained specifically to assist those with visual impairment. But for those that have wheelchairs, we have assigned some workers to take care of them in addition to their colleagues by assisting them on how they can move from one place to another. We have also allocated them to the hostels that are closer to their classrooms as well as to the library. We have also recruited less like maids who look after them. Most of these students with disabilities come for educational programs.*" However, for other institutions, the situation is different, one administrator responded to the question of having technical expertise by saying *"No we don't have but it is in the strategic plans hoping that in the next three years we will have expertise in terms of special needs education, support staff, library facilities, but for now no we don't have".* Another challenge that was raised by administrators was the lack of infrastructures that are disability-friendly; (3) 57% (4) indicated challenges in disability-friendly infrastructure: two stated that their institutions had no disability-friendly infrastructure, and the other two indicated that the institutions had provided lamps only to facilitate the mobility of the physically disabled, and the other three administrators stated that their institutions had disability-friendly infrastructure; (4) 57% (4) also indicated no provision of a budget line for inclusive education activities was also stated as a challenge. Two administrators indicated that their institutions did not have a budget line for inclusive education activities, two others stated that their institutions were using the normal budget to cater to inclusive education activities as they emerge while three administrators indicated that their institutions have a budget line allocated; (5) 14% indicated lack of institutional preparedness; (6) another 14% indicated lack of disclosure by applicants during the application process was also indicated as a challenge as institutions are taken an awareness when they receive a learner who has a disability without an

advance knowledge; (7) another 14% also indicated the technical nature of the courses offered by institutions as limiting inclusion options. Three administrators indicated that the technical nature of the courses also determines the possibility of accommodating learners with disabilities or not. One administrator stated that "*the problem would come on the practical area where we would want them to show and demonstrate that she or he can do what was taught in class. So, because we don't have that expertise to teach these students, it means we also need separate learning for them which can be equally to discrimination as well*"; (8) 14% also mentioned dependence on school fees which limits the institutional activities especially in the case of private institutions as a challenge and (9) another 14% also indicated the challenge of lack of sensitization on inclusive education issues as it results in discrimination and inability to provide the necessary support due to lack of knowledge. The majority of the administrators referred to a lack of institutional policy on inclusive education and inadequate expertise in handling learners who have disabilities.

4.3.16.2   *Government Officials' Perspective*

One hundred percent of government officials 'respondents agreed on three challenges affecting inclusive education namely expensive inclusive education resources, limited budget, and lack of expertise. The highly specialized inclusive education resources and assistive technologies are not locally found but imported from other countries, for instance, Perkin's brailler, braille paper, white cane, hearing aid, and phono forms. This renders inclusive education resources very expensive. On a limited budget inclusive education activities, the government has a limited budget for inclusive education activities hence it becomes challenging for the department to provide the necessary resources that are very expensive and scarce too. The lack of expertise on inclusive education issues is another challenge that is associated with teachers graduating from teacher education institutions having scanty knowledge of inclusive education.

Fifty percent of the government official respondents indicated that Malawi was failing to use the Assistive Technology strategy to compensate for the disability because they were very expensive. Other strategies that might be put in place were the use of sign language interpreters in lectures and lecturer records. Sign language interpreters aid learners with deafness to understand the signs while the lecturer record provides learners with an opportunity to revise the lesson after class. Although Assistive Technologies are stipulated in the policy, there is no reinforcement however; a survey had been done across the nation in conjunction with the University of Malawi to have what WHO refers to as an Assistive Technology priority list. Another 50% indicated a challenge of poor coordination between policy developers and implementers where all ministries and stakeholders are expected to be involved and coordinate as inclusive education is a cross-cutting issue. Lack of awareness of disability acts and policies also came up as a challenge. The respondent argued that inclusive education was facing persistent challenges since there was *"poor coordination between policy developers and policy implementers. The issue of disability cannot be housed in one ministry it's cross-cutting to all ministries, e.g. in labor, some people are employed and they need to know these acts and policies so that these people when they go to work they need to have facilities that support them. So as a department of disability, we have disjointed efforts with other ministries for different actions as things happen, and we come to know very late. We have also not moved in to be proactive to bring awareness to different institutions so that they can be ready to handle such students when they are enrolled in their colleges."*

4.3.17 Causes of challenges in inclusive education- Administrators' Perspective

Administrators presented relative views on what caused the challenges in inclusive education. The following causes were raised (1) lack of disclosure during the application process that creates challenges for institutions to prepare for the needs of the incoming learners; (2) the

nature of technical courses creates challenges due to the demands of some courses that force the institutions to redirect the learners with disabilities to courses, not of their choice; (3) low enrolment of the learners with disabilities which does not necessarily create a pressure to the institutions; (4) dependence on school fees leading to the tight and strict budget which cannot fund inclusive education supplies which are usually very expensive; (5) lack of expertise which defeats the ability to provide effective inclusive education; and (6) lack of sensitization which is necessary for the creation of the basic knowledge on disability issues. The administrators indicated that the challenges relating to inclusive education emerged from different circumstances that might be unique to the institution. Contrary to survey results which pointed out to lack of policy as a leading cause of the challenges of inclusive education, the interview results presented related causes.

4.3.18 Suggested solutions to the challenges in inclusive education

4.3.18.1 Administrators' Perspective

Administrators stated relative solutions to the inclusive education challenges in their institutions. The solutions suggested included (1) the inclusive education policy which was in place in one of the institutions would be instrumental in dealing with inclusive education challenges and provide the necessary guidance. (2) Some felt that there was no current need but may be in the future strategies may be needed to deal with inclusive education issues. (3)The development of the concept paper into a policy for inclusive education for the institution would be instrumental in addressing inclusive education challenges. (4) The institution had not reached the point where it would be stated that it was failing to implement inclusive education activities. (5) There was a need for donor and government support on inclusive education budgets. (6)There was a need to train special needs teachers to provide expert services in institutions. However, since the education system had earmarked some colleges for inclusive education, encouraging referrals to the colleges

was considered to be necessary as inclusive education resources are channeled to those centers. (7)The need to sensitize people in conjunction with the Ministry of Gender in various ministries and institutional stakeholders to create awareness would provide a basis for making informed decisions. Interview results presented relative solutions to the challenges of inclusive education while the survey results indicated technical training for teachers as a priority, and the provision of teaching and learning resources, to support the teaching and learning process, in inclusive education for learners who have disabilities. However, some of the relative views agreed with the provision of technical training for teachers and the provision of resources for inclusive practices.

4.3.18.2 *Government Officials' Perspective*

One hundred percent of government official respondents agreed on the need for institutional preparedness as a strategy to address the inclusive education challenges. However, relative solutions from both the officials included the following as solutions to the challenges: (1) the inclusion of inclusive education courses in the teacher training programs to equip teacher trainees with inclusive education knowledge and skills; (2) the promotion of access to institutional infrastructure to deal with the challenge of mobility barriers for the learners with disabilities; (3) development of inclusive education policy to facilitate implementation of inclusive activities; (4) development of institutional budgets with inclusive education budget line for active implementation; (5) provision of assistive technologies to institutions as it would be challenging for some institutions to purchase them due to exorbitant prices. Government officials also presented related solutions unlike the survey results however some of the solutions agreed with the need for technical training and the provision of resources.

4.3.19 Conceptual Map

The conceptual map in Figure 13 indicates themes drawn from in-depth interviews with institutional administrators and government officials. On the enrollment of learners with disabilities issues that were drawn out included institutional preparedness reflected by lack of disability-friendly infrastructure, lack of teacher expertise, and inadequate teaching, and learning resources. The enrollment status was reflected in the absence of institutional and national policy, low enrollment, and limiting government policy. Themes on accommodation of learners with disabilities included limited institutional capacity evidenced through a lack of finances, teacher expertise, policies, and assistive technologies; but also through the diverse types of disabilities that were being accommodated, whether mild or acute, in institutions of higher learning which require diverse interventions. The map also indicates the themes drawn from different stakeholders namely, lack of policy at national and institutional levels and challenges in inclusive education that include lack of national and institutional policies and inclusive education challenges in teacher expertise, assistive technologies, infrastructure and teaching, and learning resources. Figure 13 is a pictorial representation of the conceptual map of inclusive education.

Figure 13: *Conceptual Map for Challenges in Higher Education Inclusive Education*

CONCEPTUAL MAP

Challenges in Higher Education Inclusive Education

Enrollment or learners with disabilities

Stakeholder Perceptions

Limited Institutional capacity

Disability Accommodated

Institutional preparedness

Enrollment status

Infrastructure non friendly, lack of teacher expertise, teaching, and learning resources

No Institutional policy, low enrollment, limiting government policy

Lack of policy

IE Challenges

Lack of Expertise, infrastructure, resources

Types of disabilities

Lack of Finance, teacher expertise, policy and assistive technologies

Degree

Mild, Acute

National and Institutional

Lack of Training and assistive resources

Diverse disabilities

Diverse interventions

4.3.20 Hypothesis Test on the effectiveness of Inclusive Education Implementation

4.3.20.1   Learners' Perspective

The null hypothesis for this study was that the implementation of inclusive education in institutions of higher education in Malawi is not effective. The learners were asked to rate the level of enrolment of learners who have disabilities in higher learning institutions. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that the enrolment rate was moderate. The learners' perspective indicated that Inclusive Education implementation was fair through the enrollment rating.

4.3.20.2   Lecturers' Perspective

Lecturers were asked to rate the enrolment rate of the learners who have disabilities and the effectiveness of the implementation of inclusive education in institutions that provide higher learning. Eighty percent of the respondents indicated that the enrolment rate was low while 76%

indicated that the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation was low. Therefore, the hypothesis was proved that the implementation of inclusive education in institutions that provide higher learning in Malawi was not effective.

4.3.20.3 Administrators' Perspective

Administrators were asked to indicate factors that were compromising the implementation of inclusive practices in institutions that provide higher learning by indicating strategies that institutions were failing to discharge. The administrators indicated a lack of institutional preparedness, lack of inclusive education policies, and dependence on tuition fees in the absence of funding for inclusive education activities.

4.3.20.4 Government Officials' Perspective

Government officials were asked to indicate the challenges that affect the implementation of inclusive practices in institutions that provide higher learning. Respondents cited deficiency in expertise, the absence of inclusive education policy, and the high prices of assistive technologies as challenges compromising the implementation of inclusive practices in institutions that provide higher learning. These views proved that the implementation of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning in Malawi was not effective.

4.4 Evaluation of Integrated Findings

This study has revealed that there was a low enrolment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning thereby indicating limited access to higher education by learners with disabilities. This implies the existence of intellectual inequalities for learners with disabilities. Some factors resulting in low enrollment included the existing education system where the government has specific institutions designated for learners with disabilities; unavailability of policy at the national and at the time of the study the country was using the National Inclusive

Education Strategy and the Disability Act hence the challenges in the implementation of inclusive education. The status of institutions of higher learning at the time of the study, in terms of infrastructure, teacher expertise, policies, guidelines, and funding, presented systematic discrimination against learners with disabilities.

Low enrollment translates to limited access to institutions of higher learning for learners with disabilities. Literature has indicated that an unequal opportunity for learners with disadvantaged backgrounds, including those with disabilities, widens the social gap by rendering the individuals void of the empowerment that the institutions of higher learning offer. Limited access to institutions of higher learning for learners with disabilities indicates a limited platform provided by the tertiary industry for the eradication of intellectual inequality. This leads to undeveloped capabilities to develop personal potentials and societies that place the grouping at a low level on the social ladder occupying second-class positions in society (Walker, and Wilson-Strydom, 2017). Individuals that are excluded from the empowerment that educational systems offer end up being citizens that are dependent on the nation for support and sometimes they are prone to deviant behaviors that are costly for the societies and the government too. The gap that is created from the educational perspective has long time effects on both the individual who has no self-reliance and development and the society as it receives no positive contribution from the individual (Andrews, Robinson, and Hutchinson, 2017). Thus the institutions present an indication that learners with disabilities are not following the necessary intellectual justice, as a result, the levels of academic attainment would not be comparable to those without disabilities, therefore, the established trends of discrimination in access to higher education.

Studies show admission into higher education institutions for learners who have disabilities is evidenced by according equal and just opportunities, to access and participate in higher

education institutions concerning individual learning needs. Wide access and participation are demonstrated by the numbers or the ratio of learners who have disabilities to those without disabilities in the institutions that provide higher learning. The low enrollment established in this study indicates the persistence of the common disadvantages encountered by individuals with disabilities that are drawn from the complex type of institutional discrimination, described by the Social Model, which is rooted in the Human Rights Model. The social construction of disability and limitations that individuals who have disabilities are presumed to have is subjective to individuals; so too the potential and lack of potential to award learners with disabilities the necessary opportunity and support that would enable them to display their abilities is also subjective to individual persons or groups (Ludeman., 2022).Therefore, the findings, of this study, indicate intellectual inequalities leading to a wide social gap of individual groupings in society and apparent trends of complex institutional discrimination evidenced through low enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning.

According to the National Planning Commission (2020), the intellectual inequalities that lead to the widening social gap contradict the national efforts of developing "an inclusively wealth and self-reliant nation" in the fulfillment of the vision for Malawi 2063. To create a Malawian nation that is accommodative for everyone, one enabler is human capital development which focuses on having a motivated human resource through the promotion of inclusiveness. Therefore, the exclusion of individuals with disabilities from accessing higher education is a negative contribution to the national agenda.

This study also established that institutions of higher learning were accommodating learners with diverse disabilities though some were comfortable with mild disabilities. There was selective inclusion in institutions of higher learning based on the types and degrees of disabilities

to be accommodated presenting a negative perception of inclusive education in the form of institutional discrimination. The results indicated that institutions of higher learning accommodated learners with diverse disabilities and the types that were being accommodated varied from one institution to another with each institution having multiple disabilities. However, physical disability was the common type that was found in all institutions. The institutions accommodated learners with hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning disability, physical disability, and albinism. However, the disabilities that were being accommodated ranged from mild to acute disabilities. Some institutions were comfortable with minor disabilities due to the courses offered which were considered to be very technical. The results also indicate that institutions enrolled three to six types of disabilities dependent on institutional capacity and preparedness. Hence, all institutions were found to be implementing inclusive education.

Literature has shown that the biological differences in impairments demand diverse care and support. Vygotsky's theory of dsynto-genesis refers to the biological anomalies that create disabilities of different types depending on the biological anomaly requiring specific attention. This theory which is also known as the theory of distorted development offers a framework for analyzing the mechanisms that can enable change and improvement for learners with a disability as it focuses on emphasizing an individual's strengths than weaknesses. Vygotsky offers a practice-focused model for learners with special needs that create a favorable societal view of individuals who have disabilities by directing the focus on solidification and empowerment in individual skills, as opposed to an emphasis on weakness or non-conformities. Suggestions from the Medical Disability Model that disability is biologically constructed and that challenges encountered by individuals who have disabilities emanate from biological make-up provide a perspective for supporting unique disabilities based on the challenges they present to individuals.

The provision of assistive technologies that are tailor-made to specific disabilities to facilitate positive inclusion in institutions of higher learning. Assistive technological support would be needed to provide learners with disabilities with a chance to have access to the reading and learning materials highly demanded by the processes of higher education. The increase in access and participation, through the use of assistive technologies to assist learners who have disabilities in institutions that provide higher learning, would decrease the inequalities that come as a result of the exclusion of limited access to the reading and learning materials which puts the learners with disabilities at a disadvantage in the academic competition (Cleophas, 2019). Even though Malawi, like other African countries, is prone to suffer from limited access to the internet even in some institutions of higher learning; economic constraints given the fact that assistive technologies are very expensive; and a lack of coordination in the area of assistive technologies for the learners who have disabilities among the higher learning institutions; and the provision of free –open access assistive technologies can be explored. Technological challenges affect the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in Malawian higher learning institutions.

The inclusive education approach is rooted in Vygotsky's theory of social constructionist epistemology, which is a foundation for models in special education, and inclusion that is based on positive differences. The roles played by parents, instructors, peers, and the general society on the learner with a disability are recognized as essential to the effective learning process (Rodina, 2006, Anastasiou and Kauffman, 2013; Mosito et al.,2017). Studies indicate that effective inclusion requires remodeling the teaching strategies, curricula, learning environments, assessments, and learning outcomes to suit the learning needs of individuals. Bates (2019) asserts that teachers who have the potential to use multiple strategies that appeal to the learners' diverse abilities promote effective and efficient teaching and learning. Therefore, remodeling requires

administrators and policymakers to provide social justice without compromising the quality and relevance of academics and professionalism. For higher education, inclusive education means that there is equal and equitable treatment for all individuals in a diverse learning environment that offers multiple benefits as a result of different capabilities, strengths, and viewpoints. As such, selective inclusion in the type of disabilities being accommodated by institutions of higher learning presents glaring institutional discrimination that also reflects negative perceptions toward inclusive education as it is considered expensive (Ludeman, 2022).

Therefore, the study established that institutions of higher learning accommodate learners of diverse types of disabilities. However, there is selective inclusion that presents discriminating tendencies as some types of disabilities are not favored in other institutions, and the consideration that inclusive education is very expensive as compared to other initiatives incorporated into the education system. The presence of diverse disabilities in the institutions, based on Vygotsky's theory of dysonto-genesis presents biological differences in the impairment of the learners with disabilities requiring unique strategies and approaches for effective learning and support. Thus technical expertise in handling learners who have disabilities needs to be diverse to appeal to the different learning needs based on different impairments that are a basis of diverse barriers to learning as suggested by the Medical Disability Model. Therefore, the participation of the parents, peers, teachers, and guardians in the social environment is critical in providing support for the effective learning process. Linked to Vygotsky's theory of social constructionist epistemology the potential of learners with disabilities is escalated with social support.

This study also established that there were different views between key stakeholders on the effectiveness of inclusive education concerning learners with disabilities. Learners and lecturers considered the implementation of inclusive education as being fair and low respectively. The

disparities were also evident in institutional choices in the types and degrees of disabilities to accommodate. The reasons for the diverse perceptions on rating the effectiveness of the implementation of inclusive practices are ascribed to the social model theory which indicates that disability is socially constructed. Therefore, the definition and the assessment of the presence of learners with disabilities in an institution may also be dependent on the individual views about what disability is and what constitutes impairment. The lecturers might have made considerations about the institutional trends and the requirements of inclusive education management. Hence, the fluidity of what constitutes a disability and its proper management may have contributed to the disparities. The understanding of this concept may have also resulted in bringing about contradictory responses whereby learners felt that the provision of inclusive education was moderate based on their perceptions of how learners with disabilities might be handled in the institutions. The visibility level of the learners with a disability might also have contributed to the diverse views as enrollment from the administrators' perspective indicated that some institutions had no such learners while others accommodated mild disabilities. The social construction of what constitutes a disability, as defined by the social model, led to the fluidity of individuals 'views and attitudes toward the effectiveness of the implementation of inclusive education. These views might have been influenced by the level of awareness of disability issues and training on inclusion. In this study, most learners were found to lack awareness of disability and inclusion issues whereby lecturers were found to have a better understanding of the issues of inclusion, as, at the time of the study, the Ministry of Education promoted inclusion from the primary school through secondary school and college level. Hence, lecturers knew what constitutes inclusion and were able to rate its status based on the informed assessment.

Results also indicated a lack of expertise in handling learners who have disabilities in higher learning institutions as one of the challenges that were affecting the implementation of inclusion. This was evident from the fact that four of the sampled institutions had no staff with expertise in handling learners with disabilities, two institutions had one staff with expertise each and one institution had six staff with expertise. The institution which had six staff with expertise was found to be a public institution that was earmarked by the government for inclusion purposes. These results complete the survey findings on the challenge of expertise affecting both learners and teachers in institutions of higher learning.

It was also indicated that inclusive education implementation was affected by a lack of institutional preparedness for inclusion. This was reported to be evident in most institutions with a lack of disability-friendly infrastructure. However, in other institutions, there was a presence of lamps for the learners with disabilities, caretakers for the disabled, and strategic placement of classes for the ease of movement of the learners with disabilities. The level of preparedness for inclusion was different from one institution to another, as some institutions had started to rework the infrastructure. On the other hand, there were extreme cases where there were not even lamps or any initiative for inclusion.

Other challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education also indicated were lack of funding, lack of policy direction, and lack of disclosure during the application process as institutions were taken by surprise when the learners with disabilities show up at the institutions. The results indicated that policies, funding, and sensitization on disability issues are solutions to the challenges affecting inclusive education implementation. Lack of special needs expertise and lack of disabilities-friendly infrastructure were challenges that were indicated both in the survey and interviews.

Findings also indicated that implementation in inclusive education was affected by lack of expertise; lack of highly specialized inclusive education resources; absence of sign language interpreters in institutions of higher learning, poor coordination between policy developers and implementers, and no provision of capital for the disabled trained in vocational centers. Suggested solutions to these challenges were to have an inclusive education training program for teachers; promote access to infrastructure for learners with disabilities; develop inclusive budgets, develop an inclusive education policy and provide assistive technologies. The survey results and the interview results agreed on a challenge of expertise in institutions that provide higher learning and the need for training as a solution to the challenges.

Literature has indicated that effective inclusion needs the remodeling of the teaching strategies, the curricula, the learning environment, assessment, and learning outcomes so that the focus is on meeting contemporary learning needs. The need for technical expertise can never be underestimated in the implementation of effective inclusion practices coupled with the provision of social justice without compromising the quality and relevance of academic and professional requirements. Teaching holds the central place for the transformation of individuals in higher learning institutions. It is through instruction higher learning institutions develop alternative imaginations in the real world through the cultivated personal and social potentials. Thus effective instruction is just needed to appeal to diverse learners regardless of their learning needs. This pedagogy requires technical expertise that is in limited supply in the Malawian institutions of higher learning as teacher training institutions only offer a module on Special Needs Education but not a program for expert teachers. Ensuring the consideration of the diverse learning needs in modifying the teaching and learning strategies and the learning environment for effective inclusion is essential hence apart from the technical requirements the presence of a disability-friendly

environment is also necessary. Studies indicate that most institutions operate on an infrastructure that requires redressing to suit inclusive purposes (Chimwaza, 2015; Walker & Wilson-Strydom, 2017; Ludeman., 2022).

This study finding indicated that the challenge in teacher expertise, resources, and infrastructure that is not disability-friendly compromises the implementation of inclusive education. Ineffective inclusion reflects the social gap that is widening as few individuals that are accorded access to participate in higher education institutions do not effectively participate to develop their full potential to compete on the higher social ladder. The basis for the inability to realize one's potential is the barriers that hinder learners who have disabilities to receive technical support. This result from a lack of expertise in handling inclusion in higher learning institutions, inadequate or sometimes the absence of resources necessary for effective teaching and learning for these individuals, and an environment that is not conducive to their learning. The absence of technical expertise, resources, and a friendly environment defeats the provision of equal and just opportunities for all learners and there is an academic competition based on the unleveled ground that leads to the social gap.

Literature has indicated that most buildings the world over are not disability friendly. This means that15% of the world's population has an infrastructure challenge in social, economic, and academic endeavors (Department for International Development (DFID), 2019). Among this population are learners with disabilities confronted with infrastructures that are not disability friendly inaccessible and a barrier to studies. Inhibited access to essential areas like halls of residence, libraries and classrooms compromises the effective learning process for the learner with a disability. Consequently, the improvement of infrastructure is paramount to the provision of equal access and participation in higher education institutions to benefit learners who have

disabilities. The lack of disability-friendly infrastructure in institutions of higher learning signifies the prevention of access and participation in higher education for learners with disabilities. Barriers to mobility and access to essential buildings negatively impact the social and academic life of the learner who hasa disability at the institution. It also means that learners who are enrolled in the institutions do not receive effective services which might lead to low performance, easy life, and dropping out of school. Institutions can improve access and participation in higher education institutions, through infrastructural adjustments to promote positive inclusion for individuals who have disabilities. The need to improve infrastructure in the institution can never be overemphasized if equal opportunities are to be offered and no one is to be left behind in the socio-economic development of the nation.

The findings, of this study, also revealed that the challenges leading to the low effectiveness of inclusive education implementation were mainly caused by a lack of policy direction. The study results from interviews with administrators and government officials also confirmed the policy challenge as only one institution among the sampled ones had a policy while two had guidelines or developing a concept note, and the other four had none. Malawi had no policy on inclusive education at the time of the study. The survey results indicated a lack of policy direction as a leading cause of the challenges encountered in providing inclusive services and interview data provided evidence of the absence of the policy. This indicated the need to address the causative agent of the challenges by developing a policy on inclusive education as it was found to be essential to providing direction for effective implementation.

Other causes leading to the challenges affecting inclusive education implementation indicated were a lack of awareness of inclusive education options and a lack of institutional preparedness. To address the challenges, the findings indicated the need to provide technical

training for teachers in inclusive education; provision teaching and learning resources for learners who have disabilities, development of institutional policies, and awareness of inclusive education issues. Therefore, the training of teachers in inclusive education was found critical in addressing challenges encountered in the implementation of inclusive education. Both learners and teachers also agreed on the need for creating awareness of inclusive education issues.

Literature has indicated that educational policy reform plays a critical role in facilitating the necessary change. Policy reform that is informed by the native socioeconomic, political, academic, and developmental needs requires wide participation that includes stakeholders in the field of education. Mere adoption of external policies has proved to be detrimental to addressing the challenges that are faced locally as they lack knowledge on the social issues that are critical to Malawi as a nation. However, the challenges in human capital and resources necessary to design and implement policy had mostly led Malawi to adopt external policies to access funding and resources for implementation. Lately, processes to align external policies with national agendas and needs have been explored through the wider participation of both local and international policy designers and stakeholders to ensure that the adopted policies address the national problems (Chapola, 2016). Studies indicate that huge strides have been made in the areas that policy reform has focused on. Therefore, the absence of a national policy on inclusive education is a huge setback for effective implementation as government and stakeholders' efforts are not coordinated or reinforced. The absence of synergy in promoting the inclusive education agenda defeats the success of inclusion and challenges the redress of barriers due to a lack of strategic approach. The absence of institutional policies on inclusive education entails the basis of the challenges confronting the implementation of inclusion emerging from the absence of a national policy to provide strategic guidance and mandate for implementation.

Studies have also shown that participants in the education system have a potential role in aiding policy development. Stakeholders can bring positive influence through projects targeting the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in higher learning institutions or advocate for equal access to higher education institutions. Individual and stakeholder contributions to policy development can be done short of any violation of institutional procedures but by making use of the opportunities that present themselves to strategically lobby or support the improvement of inclusion in the education system (Silver, 2019). Therefore, the uncoordinated efforts in the implementation of inclusive education practices are also a challenge to inclusion.

Based on interviews, the administrators provided relative suggestions on the solutions to the challenges in inclusive education. Two indicated the need for policy; two deferred the need for solutions; other solutions indicated the need to train special needs teachers; create awareness among people and ministries on disability issues; the need for donor and government support on inclusive education. The respondents from the government agreed on the need for the institutions to be prepared to implement inclusive education strategies. Other relative solutions included the inclusion of inclusive education in teacher training programs; promotion of access to institutional infrastructures; development of institutional budgets with a budget line on inclusive education; development of an inclusive education policy to provide direction on inclusive matters; and the provision of assistive technologies to institutions to support the teaching and learning of the learners who have disabilities.

Literature has supported policy formation as one of the practical ways to increase access to higher education institutions. The Free Primary Education policy, although developed without considering other critical factors brought about a huge increase in the enrollment of learners in primary education and secondary education, the targeted areas (Chapola, 2016). The policy

provides strategic direction for implementers hence the need for policy, as indicated by the findings of this study. The provision of training in inclusive education is critical in addressing the challenges faced in inclusion however policy development is overarching as it has the potential to address all issues relating to effective implementation when properly designed to appeal to the needs of the target group. Therefore, the policy has the potential to address challenges in admission to higher education institutions, technical expertise, resources, and infrastructure for the effective implementation of inclusive education.

The findings, of this study, proved the null hypothesis true that there is no effective inclusive education implementation in higher learning institutions. Findings have indicated low enrolment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning. This establishes limited access emerging from institutional segregation, due to the exclusion of learners who have disabilities in accessing and participating in higher education institution activities. The exclusion indicates the intellectual inequality resulting from a lack of equity and equality in educational opportunities granted among learners who have disabilities and those without disabilities. This trend widens the social gap as learners with disabilities are denied the empowerment that institutions of higher learning equip individuals with to enable them to climb the social ladder and make positive contributions to society and develop personal capabilities.

The selective inclusion of the types of disabilities being accommodated due to technical, financial, resource, and infrastructural challenges also render inclusive education ineffective hence supporting the null hypothesis. Findings from the data have shown the enrollment of diverse types of disabilities in institutions of higher learning and cases of redirecting learners to other programs or institutions than the program or institution of their choice citing the technical nature of the program in question. This restriction seems not liberating for individuals with disabilities. Learners

with disabilities that are admitted to institutions of higher learning are exposed to teachers with limited expertise, as not all disabilities are the same, and in most cases, the institutions were found with no teachers with relevant expertise to handle learners who have disabilities. Findings from data hence rated the implementation of inclusive education practices low and hence ineffective.

Prevalent challenges in inclusive education emerging from lack of policy, institutional unpreparedness, and lack of technical expertise rendered the implementation of inclusive education not effective. The efforts in promoting inclusive education were found to be void of strategic coordination and reinforcement. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that the implementation of inclusive education practices is not effective was proved true. On the other hand, the alternative hypothesis stating that the implementation of inclusive education was effective is effective was disapproved.

4.4.2 Summary

Chapter 4 covered a discussion on data trustworthiness, reliability, and validity detailing data collection processes and ethical considerations. The findings of this study were presented and interpreted highlighting the enrolment of learners who have disabilities and the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation. The presentation on enrolment of learners who have disabilities rated low while there were diverse views on inclusive education effectiveness as the learners rated moderate while lecturers rated it low. The administrators too indicated that the institutions' enrolment of learners with disabilities was low. The government ministries agreed on the role of the two ministries in policy planning and direction ensuring inclusive education policies in institutions, creating intervention plans through planning inclusive education programs that include stakeholder awareness, capacity building, and conducting an assessment on the implementation of inclusive education activities.

The nature of disabilities accommodated in institutions that provide higher education was also discussed in this chapter. Physical disability was featured as being highly accommodated by both learners and lecturers. Among the administrators, visual impairment was featured as the most common disability followed by physical disability. The perception of both administrators and government respondents is that inclusive education is a necessity.

Challenges that affect effective inclusive education implementation were also discussed. Lack of special needs education expertise as a challenge was featured highly among lecturers. The majority of learner respondents indicated a lack of relevant technical support as a challenge faced by learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning. The majority of the administrators referred to the lack of infrastructures that are disability-friendly as a challenge while government respondents mentioned relative challenges ranging from lack of expertise and budget line to lack of resources. The causes of the challenges were also discussed based on the results and the lack of policy direction was featured highly among lecturers. The administrator respondents indicated a lack of institutional preparedness coupled with the absence of policy direction as instrumental in creating challenges in the implementation of inclusive education. Lecturers and learners featured technical training highly as a solution to the inclusive education challenges. Relative solutions from administrators' perspectives were discussed ranging from the development of inclusive education policy development, training of teachers in Special Needs Education, and creation of awareness on inclusive education issues were referred to as solutions to inclusive education challenges. The inclusion of inclusive education courses among modules offered to teacher trainers, improvement of infrastructure, development of inclusive education policy, and provision of assistive technology were also considered solutions to inclusive education challenges. Lastly,

the hypothesis was analyzed and proved true that there is no effective inclusive education implementation in institutions of higher learning.

The following chapter 5 will focus on the discussion of the implications of the study, recommendations, and conclusions. Logical conclusions of the study will be drawn and any limitations that might have affected the results will be discussed. Results will be placed into the context of the study to describe how the results responded to the study problem, and purpose, align or not align with the conceptual framework, and indicate the significance and contribution to the existing literature. This will be followed by recommendations for actions, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study revolved around the investigation of challenges into inclusive education in higher learning institutions in Malawi. Literature indicates that the inclusion of learners who have disabilities in institutions that provide higher learning is implemented with diverse challenges some of which stem from the barriers that are encountered by the learners with disabilities which include but are not limited to, lack of knowledge and skills in teaching learners with a disability; inadequate communication skills, resources, frequent absenteeism, poor infrastructure, and discrimination (Mgomezulu, 2017). According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Malawi(UNICEF Malawi) (2020), 99% of learners who have disabilities do not

have access to higher learning institutions despite the increase in the number of learners who are enrolled in primary and secondary school categories. Data from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) reports (2009 -2018) indicated a 0.4% enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning mainstream classes, 0.1% in Special Needs classes, and 0.2% in special classes within the regular schools. It was based on this background that an investigation into the challenges of inclusive education in institutions that provide higher learning in Malawi was conducted.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to conduct an investigation into the challenges of inclusive education services in institutions that provide higher learning in Malawi. The researcher used a mixed method design to quantify the nature of the challenges affecting inclusive education, through quantitative data, and complement with the qualitative data, for a thorough understanding of how challenges affected the implementation of inclusive education practices. Hence, qualitative data was used to explain the quantitative statistics drawn from the study. The data analysis was done using SPSS for quantitative data and content analysis for qualitative data. The key findings from the study indicated: the low enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning; institutions accommodating learners with diverse disabilities and multiple challenges in inclusive education rendering it ineffective.

Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the study based on key findings. A discussion on how the study results addressed or did not address the study problem, purpose, and conceptual framework and demonstrate the significance of the results has been made. Further discussion on study implications based on the findings, recommendations for application to map a way forward recommending what can be done to address the gaps unveiled, referencing areas for potential studies, and conclusions of the study will be made.

5.2   Implications

The study results imply that learners with disabilities are systematically discriminated from institutions of higher learning and this would lead to continued intellectual inequalities resulting in increased social gaps emanating from denied empowerment. This is evidenced by the low enrollment rate of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning. Despite the reported low enrolment, institutions enrolled learners who had different types of disabilities. On the other hand, the presence of learners with disabilities might be more visible in some institutions than in others dependent on the level of enrollment and the degrees of disabilities enrolled.

Kamchedzera's study (2015) reported that institutions registered between one to 10 learners except for one institution that registered over 50 learners with disability in an academic year. Statistics from the "*Education Sector Performance"* report confirm the reasons for the disparities in the rating of enrollment. The report indicates that in 2018 to 2019 academic year the enrollment of learners who have disabilities, in public and private institutions that provide higher learning, was 117. Among the 117 learners, 82 were from the University of Malawi with the majority of 42 enrolled at one of the public institutions (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2020). The reported trend was established from data collected through interviews with the administrators.

Based on the in-depth interviews with institutions of higher learning administrators during the study, there were disparities established in the enrollment of learners with disabilities as the enrollment numbers ranged from zero (0), 4, 10, 11, 19, and 53 being the highest and an outlier enrollment record. The highest number of 98 enrolled learners who have disabilities was recorded in public institutions that provide higher learning with the majority of 53 enrolled at one of the colleges that has a mandate, from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, to enroll

learners with disabilities. The administrators considered that the enrollment of learners with disabilities was low. The low enrollment of learners with disabilities was attributed to a lack of financial capacity to support the inclusion program. The teaching and learning resources were stated to be very expensive and not locally available hence institutions could not procure the required resources. On the other hand, some public institutions received learners with disabilities by default as there were earmarked institutions for inclusion as the one institution that had enrolled 53 learners who have disabilities, at the time of the study, was one of the earmarked institutions for inclusion.

However, in comparison to the national statistics for the 2018 and 2019 academic cycles, the statistics from this study indicated an increase in enrollment as 108 learners who had disabilities were from the seven sampled institutions while 117 were from all institutions that provide higher learning in Malawi. Improvement was also established from the highest recorded enrollment increase of 42 in the 2018/19 academic year from one institution to 53 in the 2020/21 academic year in one of the sampled institutions. Apart from the one institution, public institutions of higher learning also reflected an enrollment increase through the sampled five institutions with a record increase from 82 from all public to 98 from the sample. This study indicated an improvement in the enrollment of learners with disabilities in some institutions of higher learning as some recorded no enrollment. Hence, for some institutions, the enrollment would be considered fair while in other institutions it would be considered low. Regardless of the trends of increase in the enrollment of learners with disabilities the results from this study indicated that it was low which means that the increase was not satisfactory. Another reason for the unsatisfactory increase is the increasing trend as compared to primary and secondary progress which more than doubled (Ministry of Education (MoE), 2020) while less than one percent of learners who have disabilities

get access to institutions that provide higher learning. The enrollment of one percent of the learners who have disabilities in the combined institutions of higher learning leaves 99% of learners with disabilities with no access and denied participation in higher education institutions. This reflects the widening of the social gap between the abled and the disabled in society as the majority that is left out of higher education do not receive the much-needed intellectual empowerment that provides individuals with skills and knowledge for self-dependency and positive contribution to society. This trend implies that the majority of individuals with disabilities occupy the lower social ladder due to a lack of university education that provides a bridge to positive levels on the social ladder.

Findings from interviews with government officials indicated that there was low enrollment. The respondents' ascribed the low enrollment to perceptions that parents, guardians, teachers, and peers have about individuals with disabilities considering them to have no potential to excel and be successful in their studies. As a result, the learners with disabilities were being denied the opportunity to be enrolled or supported in school for the resentments that were created by the guardians and teachers who consider school not to be a safe place for the disabled. The results of this study imply that learners who have disabilities have limited admittance into higher education institutions; which implies a continued social gap between individuals who have disabilities and those without disabilities in society; as societies consider schools not a safe place for individual who has disabilities; hence limits the potential of learners who have disabilities to compete in an academic intellectual battle. Hence, perceptions towards inclusion negatively contribute to the low enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning. Since tertiary education empowers individuals for their contribution and placement in society therefore the inclusion or exclusion of groupings from tertiary education has an impact as it creates a social

gap between those included or excluded. The long-term outcomes of the exclusion originating from the educational attainment gaps are socially orchestrated by differences in social backgrounds where the disadvantaged end up dependent and sometimes deviant while the affluent reach the top of the educational attainment self-reliant and effectively contributing to society (Walker & Wilson-Strydom, 2017; Andrews, Robinson and Hutchinson, 2017). It is, for this reason, that goal number 4 of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and Malawi 2063 through enabler number 5 promote inclusive education for all individuals to narrow the social gap in developing an inclusive and self-reliant society (United Nations, 2019 and National Planning Commission, 2020). Inclusion is expected to take into consideration all individuals and even those with disabilities, as they are part of the population for inclusion, although they tend to suffer from exclusion from education. The exclusion and in some cases selective enrollments limit the potential individuals with disabilities who may have aspirations to join higher education. Limited access and participation in tertiary education entail less empowered individuals who have disabilities with the ability to contribute to the socioeconomic development of the nation. Those that do not get into the institutions of higher learning do not get the exposure that is necessary for individuals to develop themselves to the levels they can be self-dependent and also contribute to society in a meaningful manner.

Another implication is that there is limited awareness of learners with disabilities among institutions of higher learning stakeholders which was reflected by the fluidity of views on what constitutes a disability and effective implementation. The different perceptions of what constitutes a disability and the potential and the capabilities of the individuals/learners with disabilities as evidenced by the disparities in rating the status of enrollment in institutions of higher learning. The social model alludes to the fact that disability is socially constructed therefore, it also matters how

people perceive disability. Hence, the fluidity of the perceptions regarding the status of the enrollment of learners who have disabilities in institutions that provide higher learning is based on individual construction of what constitutes a disability and fair enrollment.

The enrollment numbers from the sampled institutions confirm low enrollment implying unequal opportunities for learners with disabilities as compared to other learning in access to higher education. This implies the continued wide social gap between individuals with disabilities and those without disabilities since the exclusion from higher education denies them the opportunities for intellectual development that is necessary for self-development and social contribution leaving them below the social ladder to occupy second-class positions in society. Low enrollment is a sign of a lack of equity and equality in offering educational opportunities which require redress to close the social and educational gap.

This study also revealed that despite the low enrollment rate of learners with disabilities, the institutions accommodated multiple disabilities. The most common disability in institutions of higher learning was found to be a physical disability as was reported in a survey by 92% of the lecturer respondents and 69% of the learner respondents. Results from the survey showed that physical disability was common in all seven sampled institutions. Six institutions indicated visual impairment and intellectual impairment as disabilities being accommodated in the institutions while 5 institutions indicated hearing impairment. Four institutions indicated the accommodation of other disabilities which were albinism and psychological disability. Only two institutions indicated dumbness/muteness as being accommodated in the institutions.

Therefore, the data showed that the institutions of higher learning apart from physical disability accommodated other types of disabilities at different levels namely visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual impairment, muteness, and albinism. Some institutions

accommodated all types of disabilities while others had no enrollment of learners with visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, muteness, and albinism. The survey indicated that learners with disabilities were present in all institutions of higher learning however the types of disabilities accommodated were dependent on the nature of technical education provided by the institution and its capacity to accommodate them. Kamchedzera (2015) reported that learners who have disabilities at one of the higher learning institutions in Malawi had disabilities that ranged from visual impairment, hearing impairment, and physical impairment to albinism. Results from the survey study established the presence of these disabilities but also intellectual impairment and psychological disability. The results imply that institutions are to be prepared for inclusion since all institutions are likely to enroll learners with disabilities whether intentionally or unintentionally regardless of the disability types that are accommodated.

The interviews with higher learning institution administrators indicated the accommodation of learners who have different disabilities in institutions. Out of seven institutions five accommodated learners with Visual Impairment, four accommodated Physical Disability, three accommodated albinism and two accommodated learners with Learning Difficulties. Visual impairment and physical disability came out as the most common differences from the survey results which indicated physical disability as being common in all institutions. Different from literature too in that one of the institutions accommodated learners with visual impairment, and hearing impairment but also learners with learning difficulties. Regardless of the inclusion of the learners who have disabilities in higher learning institutions disability severity accommodated ranged from mild to acute disabilities. For instance, some institutions accommodated learners with mild visual impairment while other institutions could accommodate acute disabilities.

The results imply that institutions of higher learning need capacity building to ably accommodate learners with disabilities. Diverse types of disabilities were admitted through planned or not planned enrollment. The efforts toward deliberate inclusion were not found in most institutions apart from those designated by the Ministry of Education to enroll learners who have disabilities. Therefore, institutions need to prepare for the planned enrollment of learners with diverse disabilities to avoid drastic challenges affecting the teaching and learning of learners who have disabilities. The different disabilities also require different resources and expertise for their effective management and learning as biologically the impairments are different. The diverse biological impairment would require specific expertise and resources for effective support. The severity of the disability is a determinant of whether the particular learner with the level of disability is suitable for inclusion in the mainstream classroom or is fit for special needs education. The selection of the degree and types of disability alludes to the fact that some institutions are not comfortable with other degrees and types of disabilities which might be due to their capacity or segregation.

The absence of teachers with expertise or the limited number of teachers with specific expertise implies that most learners with disabilities are not provided with an effective learning experience due to the absence or limitation in the expertise of the teachers available at the institution. The requirement for the training of expert teachers in handling learners who have disabilities is necessary to support diverse disabilities that are found in higher learning institutions. The training of expert teachers needs to be complemented with the provision of resources that are regarded to be expensive. The lack of assistive technologies compromises the quality of learning. The inability of the majority of institutions to acknowledge the lack of expertise as a challenge despite indicating the inadequacy or absence signifies elements of non-commitment to inclusive

education. However, literature has indicated that in institutional segregation the implementation of other programs is considered to be costly while others are mainstreamed into the system. The trends of institutional segregation have been apparent in the findings as data indicated that inclusion was considered to be expensive due to the resources and also that institutions were not enrolling all types of disabilities but those that were deemed convenient to the institution. Hence, a systematic selection of the type of disability to be accommodated was shown. Dealing with the apparent institutional segregation, which is evidenced by selective inclusion and the isolation of inclusion programs as standalone programs hence deemed expensive would address some of the major challenges in inclusive education.

This study also revealed contradictory views on the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation. Learners considered that there was moderate effectiveness of inclusive education implementation while lecturers felt it was low. The low effectiveness might have been rendered due to the challenges that were related to learners, teachers, and institutions providing inclusive services. The survey indicated that 67% of the learner participants referred to lack of technical expertise in handling inclusive education as the most challenge affecting learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning while 58% indicated the challenge of lack of learning resources for inclusive education. Lack of special needs expertise was indicated by 76% of lecturers as a challenge related to both teachers and institutions while 68% of the lecturers indicated lack of learning resources for inclusive education as a challenge for teachers and institutions too. However, based on the social model, the fluidity of individuals' views was dependent on their perception of what constitutes proper management of inclusive education. In this case, lecturers might be more knowledgeable than the learners and the majority who rated it moderate were in their second year of higher education institutions. Furthermore, the visibility of learners who have

disabilities in institutions also contributed to this disparity as some institutions registered no enrollment while in other institutions there were learners who have disabilities in different numbers with different degrees of severity of the disability. Institutional segregation might have contributed to this trend. Institutions might also have different definitions of what effective inclusive education services could be based on the social disability model which asserts that disability is socially constructed and hence subjective. Therefore, whether the teaching and learning of the learners are considered effective or not is subjective to individual interpretation. Hence, the fluidity of inclusive education being effective and ineffective is based on the disparities in social construction concerning disability.

Administrators indicated that institutions had challenges that were affecting the implementation of inclusive education services. One challenge that was indicated by all administrators during the in-depth interviews was the lack of or inadequate staff with technical expertise in handling learners who have disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Administrators indicated that four out of the seven sampled institutions had no teacher with technical expertise in handling learners who have disabilities while two others had only one person with technical expertise. One institution was an exception with six teachers who had expertise in handling learners who have disabilities. The institution had the majority of teachers with expertise in Special Needs Education because it was earmarked for inclusion, through government mandate, hence supporting and intentionally recruiting staff for inclusive education. Data from interviews indicated the disparities in institutions having teachers with technical expertise in handling learners with disabilities. Although all institutions were found to have accommodated learners who had disabilities of one type or another not all of them had teachers who had expertise in the management of learners who have disabilities. For institutions, without staff with technical

expertise, means that learners with disabilities were exposed to the teaching and learning process that did not meet their learning needs leading to ineffective Inclusive Education. On the other hand, institutions with inadequate staff with technical expertise provided the necessary technical support to learners with disabilities, the only challenge being that it would be challenging for them to provide effective services as they would be overwhelmed with work and responsibilities. This would leave some learners unattended while others would receive limited support leading to low effectiveness. The need for expert teachers can never be overemphasized as effective implementation of inclusive education practices is dependent on teachers who can handle learners who have diverse disabilities and learning needs in the classroom.

Variations in the challenges that are faced by different institutions that provide higher learning are dependent on different statuses in individual institutions whose capacities and potentials are diverse. Some institutions with a healthy financial muscle or support are flexible to offer educational services that are above the basic with limited challenges while other institutions with lean finances are seen to encounter acute challenges. Therefore, the type of challenges that mostly affect institutions are not equal but are dependent on the institution of higher learning in question.

Literature supports the need for teachers with expertise in inclusive education. Chimwaza (2015) reported that Montfort Special Needs Education College was used to train Special Needs Education (SNE) teachers for primary school education but could not train teachers to satisfy the needs of all primary schools in Malawi. This created a persistent need for an improved capacity to train teachers across the country so that more teachers could be trained in Special Needs Education (SNE). The training of teachers is dependent on funding from the government and inclusion would be possible with teachers who are trained in Special Needs Education (SNE) for mainstream

schools. The capacity challenges in the area of teachers 'knowledge and skills in inclusive education issues at primary and secondary levels in Malawi were also established in institutions that provide higher learning through this study. These challenges reflect the need for teachers with technical expertise to handle learners who have disabilities in higher learning institutions. The absence of teachers with technical expertise in the majority of the institutions and the inadequate teachers with the relevant expert for inclusion compromised the implementation of inclusive education practices in the institutions that provide higher learning.

Chitiyo et al. (2019), in a study that was conducted in Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, reported a shortage of teachers who are equipped with skills and knowledge to provide a learning experience that is appropriate for learners who have disabilities or special needs as a barrier. Although the target group for this study was not institutions of higher learning it was expected that the findings to reflect the challenge of technical expertise as much as it exists in primary and secondary schools. Hence, the results validated the assumptions that were made based on the study that was conducted although it targeted basic education. The provision of a module on Special Needs Education (SNE) as a mandatory course during the pre-service training for teachers provides only basic skills on the management of learners with disabilities but not the expert knowledge and skills for effective inclusive education management. Hence, expert teachers in handling learners with disabilities are those that are trained to teach in the primary section, in this case affecting the effectiveness of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning.

Another challenge related to all, learners, teachers, and the institutions, as indicated from the interviews, was the lack of inclusive education practices teaching and learning resources. Lack of inclusive teaching and learning resources connected to the fact that the resources were not locally found and were very expensive. This made it difficult for institutions to procure them. The

only institution that was equipped with resources was the earmarked one, which had a resource Center and materials to support the teaching and learning of learners who have disabilities. The reason earmarked institutions would have resources for inclusion services was that the resources were provided by the Ministry of Education. However, the majority of institutions had no Inclusive Education resources to support the teaching and learning of learners who have disabilities. Other challenges indicated included a lack of disability-friendly infrastructure as most of the infrastructures in the institutions were old since they were erected before the emergence of Inclusive Education and institutions were trying to catch up with the requirement. Lack of institutional preparedness for inclusion was another challenge that was indicated to negatively affect the implementation of inclusive education practices in institutions that provide higher learning. This entails that at the time of the study the institutions of higher learning had the inadequate capacity to implement inclusive education hence learners with disability were not guaranteed of effective learning environment and experience. Regardless of expertise, learners with disabilities were subjected to the classrooms for the learning experience. The lack of staff with technical expertise in handling learners who have disabilities compromised the quality of inclusive education services. This coupled with inadequate inclusive education resources made the teaching and learning process of learners with disabilities challenging. Specific public institutions earmarked to accommodate learners were somehow prepared for the inclusion of learners who have disabilities while enrollment in both other public and private institutions was not intentional hence compromising the institutional preparedness in terms of resources and expertise to handle such learners effectively.

Literature indicated that a lack of technical expertise on the use of resources for learners with disabilities affects the effectiveness of their teaching and learning process (Chataika et al.,

2017; Trollor, et al., 2018). Bhardwaj (2018) reported that the lack of trained staff to provide services to learners with visual impairment compromised the services offered. The lack of technical expertise in inclusive education is directly related to the usage of Inclusive Education resources. Lewis et al. (2019) argue that despite the worldwide interest to implement inclusive education which has led many countries to embark on inclusion activities to incorporate learners with disabilities into mainstream education there has been no match with essential processes, expertise, and legislation to produce significant impact following the implementation. Teachers in the inclusive education system have received inadequate training to produce the necessary change. The short in-service training and workshops have proved to be not helpful. The one module on Special Needs Education in teacher training institutions does not seem to solve the problem of teacher expertise. Thus equipping teachers with realistic learning opportunities that empower them with the necessary problem-solving and critical-thinking skills to enable effectively handle inclusion is necessary.

This translates that the challenge of expert teachers in inclusive education would affect the use of inclusive education resources in institutions that are privileged with the resources for learners who have disabilities. However, the majority of the institutions did not possess the resources as the resources were not locally found and were also very expensive. The absence of expertise and technical resource for the learning of those individuals with disabilities lack institutional preparedness for inclusion activities hence institutional segregation as the majority of institutions were found not ready to accommodate individuals with disabilities although there was an enrollment of such individuals. Expert teachers possess the skills to analyze the learners' needs inclusive of impairments, orientations, perceptions, and intelligence to be considered in the provision of the learning experience that considers the individual needs. Learners with disabilities

that are enrolled in institutions likely receive limited participation in the learning process which widens the education gap as the competition is not on level ground with those without disabilities. The unequal opportunities and platforms render the individuals with disabilities lacking in their academic capabilities forgetting that the absence of the needed support creates a barrier to success for them. Support from technical personnel, peers, and guardians complemented by the availability of resources would open up the hidden potential in learners with disabilities.

The persistent challenge in teacher expertise as evidenced by the study results is detrimental to the implementation of inclusive education. Technical expertise is a requirement for teachers if inclusion is to be effective such that teaching methodologies employed should be tailor-made to appeal to the diverse needs of different learners in the classroom. Without expertise in handling learners who have special needs, teachers have no clue about the need and usage of assistive technologies to support the teaching and learning processes for learners who have disabilities and this compromises the provision of services in inclusive education. Therefore, given that majority of higher learning institutions do not have adequate teachers with technical expertise in handling learners who have disabilities, and others do not even have any teachers with expertise, the inclusion practice is rendered ineffective. On the other hand, the absence of expert teachers in some of the institutions of higher learning where learners with disabilities are incorporated is a recipe for disaster in inclusive education as the learners are not exposed to quality education and equal platform and opportunities like the abled learners.

This study also established challenges affecting inclusive education practices in higher learning institutions that originated from other challenges. According to the survey results, 56% of the participants indicated that challenges in the implementation of inclusive education practices were caused by a lack of policy direction. Interviews with the administrators explained the lack of

policy direction as a cause for the challenges. One among the seven sampled institutions had a policy on inclusive education and two were either using institutional guidelines or developing a concept note on the implementation of inclusive education; while the others had no policy. This explained the survey results which indicated that a lack of policy direction led to the inclusive education challenges. Although the institutional policies are expected to benchmark the national policy, interviews with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Gender respondents indicated that, at the time of the study, there was no National Inclusive Education Policy. However, the government, through the Ministry of Education, had preliminary initiatives in the development of an inclusive education policy while institutions there were mixed initiatives ranging from having a policy in place to operating using guidelines for Inclusive Education implementation. Despite that the Malawi government under the Ministry of Education had a department of Inclusive Education; there was no Inclusive Education standalone policy apart from commitments, declarations, and other policies that are related to disability and Special Needs Education. Since the Malawi government, through the Ministry of Education had earmarked institutions for Inclusive Education, the other public institutions had no formal mandate to implement Inclusive Education while for private institutions there was no clear mandate for Inclusive Education implementation. This created challenges in inclusive education implementation in higher learning institutions, especially private institutions. This translated that the ineffectiveness in implementing inclusive education practices emerged from challenges learners encountered, institutional challenges, and also national challenges. To improve the implementation of inclusive education practices challenges should be addressed at all levels as it was established that these challenges were negatively affecting the effectiveness of inclusion. Hence, one way to do that

would be to provide a clear policy direction and mandate for Inclusive Education that would provide standards and yardsticks for implementers and assessors.

One of the contributing factors to the lack of institutional policy could be that the minimum standards for setting up an institution that provides higher learning, according to the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), do not demand institutions to have an Inclusive Education policy. Although institutions are expected to have infrastructural buildings accessible and a non-discriminatory admission policy, the absence of the mandate for an Inclusive Education policy created a gap to enforce inclusion in institutions that are engaged in higher learning (NCHE, 2015). Literature projects that higher learning institutions were to report the absence of inclusive education policies due to a lack of mandates from the governing bodies like the Ministry of Education, National Council for Higher Education (NCHE),and the Department of Teacher Education Development (DTED) which created no reinforcement to the government commitment. The lack of policy direction in institutions emerged from the national status.

The absence of an inclusive education policy, at the national level, as indicated by the Ministry of Education during the interviews. Literature from a study in Malawi and Guatemala through the implementation of a refie project in Malawi reported that the change in the provision of education to learners who have different learning needs from a traditional approach, and special needs approach to inclusive education was facilitated at the national level through the revision of laws and forming new policies. However, inclusive education was started as a government's commitment in only a few education policy papers. The term inclusive education was carefully and rarely used as the common reference made to special needs education. For instance, the 2012 Disability Act explicitly mentions the support of deserving learners with disabilities into the institutions of higher learning but does not clearly indicate deliberate strategies that promote

inclusive education; Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) III which points to inclusive education and National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)'s minimum standards making reference to inclusive education; National Education Sector Plan (NESP) recognized the expansion of access to quality and relevant education and improvement of administration and governing systems in institutions of higher learning; Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP) II highlighted the efforts that were started for the improvement for inclusive education in Institutions of higher learning through the passing of Higher Education Bill and the development of the Qualification Framework to facilitate quality education in tertiary education; and the National strategy on inclusive education was established by the Ministry of Education to uphold the rights of children to education and the achievement of quality education for all. According to the study on Inclusive Education in International cooperation conducted by Artiles et al. contradicting views were found in the promotion of the introduction of special needs modules in teacher training rather than inclusive education and there were no clear procedures on how resource centers would be used in the provision of Inclusive Education. The National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development (NESTED) developed in 2011 does not refer to inclusive education and special needs are rarely mentioned despite the 2007 mandate from the National Policy on Special Needs Education to make Special Needs Education mandatory in teacher training. This reflected no clear direction on Inclusive Education concerning Special Needs Education and apparent support for Special Needs Education. The absence of an Inclusive Education policy at a national level was expected to affect Inclusive Education implementation negatively (Artiles et al., 2015). The results of this study turned out as expected as it was established that the government of Malawi had no inclusive education policy, at the time of the study.

Results implied that the implementation of inclusive education still lacks direction due to the absence of a government policy on inclusive education to hold institutions accountable. Literature has shown that policy reform is critical to significant change. The absence of policy at the national and institutional level is an indication of chaos and lack of strategic direction due to a lack of coordinated efforts, and reinforcement for implementation. Lack of policy is a basis of the most challenges affecting inclusive education as implementation lacks the strategic approach that opens opportunities for being on the priority list for governmental, non-governmental, and other stakeholder agendas. As such, inclusion is void of financial and material support as it is considered to be less important. Policy development in the area of inclusive education would be a point for coordination for interested educational stakeholders forming a basis for reinforcement. Issues concerning limited access to higher education, institutional segregation, selective inclusion, lack of expertise in handling inclusive education, inadequate resources, and infrastructure that is not disability friendly are better addressed by policy reformation. The absence of a specific policy concerning inclusive education both at a national level and institutional level is a foundation for the multiple challenges affecting inclusion activities. The creation of policy is central to closing the wide social gap that is created by intellectual inequalities that put individuals who have disabilities at a disadvantage due to a lack of equity and equality in access and participation in higher education. Thus institutions of higher learning are central to either promoting the widening of the social gap by denying the learners access and participation or closing the gap by providing equal access and participation to the learners who have disabilities for higher education.

Regardless of the challenges that were negatively affecting the implementation of inclusive education the findings of this study indicated that there were positive perceptions towards inclusive education from the stakeholders, namely government ministries responsible for education,

institutions of higher learning administrators, lecturers/tutors, and learners. Government officials considered inclusive education a necessity as the world is inclusive and individuals with disabilities need to be empowered. The administrators stated that inclusive education is an essential area of education for it creates equal opportunities for all learners regardless of being able or disabled. Learners and teachers considered inclusive education necessary and needing improvement. This showed that there was potential for the improvement of the inclusive education services if staff would be trained, the budget was provided for, and resources would be made available. These findings were in agreement with Nketsia (2017) who reported that the attitude of teachers toward the inclusion of learners who have disabilities and special educational needs in mainstream classrooms is significant for inclusive education implementation. Therefore, the growing positive attitude toward inclusive education signifies a positive direction toward improved inclusion in institutions of higher learning.

The growing positive perceptions among teachers, administrators, and government entities toward inclusive education present a positive basis for the improvement of inclusion processes. Silver (2019) indicates that policy reformation over time facilitated robust implementation in activities that affect the socioeconomic, academic, or political development of individuals. Malawian policy reform has witnessed rapid adoption of strategies through policy as evidenced by the design and implementation of the Readmission policy. Policy reform can coordinate the different efforts of stakeholders in Special Needs Education, forums for the disabled, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, the Ministry of Gender, and developmental partners on inclusive education. As such multiple challenges can be addressed leading to the improvement of inclusive education practices. Therefore, the development of a standalone policy in inclusive education will consolidate efforts and resources toward effective inclusion and provide a solution

to most challenges related to inclusion. The positive perceptions are fertile ground for coordination in improving the inclusion activities in a strategic matter that allows proper mandate and reinforcement through policy. The developmental partners in education using the opportunities of access to mandates, through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, and resources for educational programs, can spearhead the inclusion activities and lobby for policy design and implementation.

The study had several limitations. Firstly, there was a sample limitation due to finances and time factors since it was self-sponsored and there was a specific time the data had to be collected. The limitation of time and finances demanded that data be collected from manageable samples within reasonable distances and be covered within the specified time. Hence, Cochran's formula was used to come up with a reasonable sample size. Cochran's sampling method was selected because it accommodates the limitations of time and financial resources, which was the case for this study, hence the sample size of 130. Another limitation was the challenge of accessing participants, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the closure of schools and students not being on campus for some time. When schools re-opened most institutions were administering exams and others were having learners on campus in turns. As a result, not all learners were on campus at the same time. Since it was difficult to get participants easily due to their schedules and in some instances only specific classes were available hence this study represented the views of the learners in the levels only were available at the time. Regardless of this limitation, there was 100% learner participation based on the target which was set.

Bureaucracy was also another limitation whereby it was impossible to collect data that was representative of all the three main groups from the institution namely administrators, lecturers, and learners. The request for permission to collect data from one institution was tossed from one

office to another for close to a year and when permission was granted to collect data from the institution it was at the very end of the data collection exercise. Due to the limitation of time and resources to travel to that particular institution, it was only possible to collect data from the administrator through the administrator's interview but by telephone too. This deprived the researcher of access to information from learners who had the primary experience of inclusive education as the institution was earmarked for inclusive education activities. It was also not possible to collect data from lecturers who had the classroom and institutional experience of an inclusive education implementation which could have enriched the study. Another bureaucratic limitation was encountered with one regulatory body. Although the government regulatory institution was critical to the study as a national regulatory body for institutions of higher learning in Malawi clearance was not given despite written communication, multiple physical follow-ups to the office and phone calls follow up which all ended up in verbal responses to wait for the approving officer. This deprived the study of the critical data on the contribution of regulatory bodies to inclusive education in institutions of higher learning the registration, accreditation, standards, and quality are under the jurisdiction of this particular body.

Overall, the results from this study supported the null hypothesis that implementing inclusive education in institutions that provide higher learning in Malawi is not effective; since there were challenges established in implementing inclusive education activities. These challenges included limited access and participation in higher education, selective inclusion, institutional segregation, a lack of technical expertise and resources, and infrastructure that is not disability friendly. On the other hand, the results did not support the alternative hypothesis that there was an effective implementation of inclusive education in institutions that provide higher learning in Malawi. This was found to be due to a lack of inclusive education policies, at the government and

institutional level, to guide inclusive education activities. The findings indicated a lack of institutional preparedness to provide inclusive education services due to a lack of inadequate technical expertise among the staff to handle learners with disabilities. Challenges in infrastructure and resources also compromised the effectiveness of implementing inclusive education practices.

The results, of this study, also responded to the problem under investigation on the challenges of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning since these challenges were drawn out as related to policy, expertise, resources, and infrastructure among others. Limited access to higher education institutions for learners who have disabilities was established through their low enrollment in institutions of higher learning. This challenge was found to be an overarching challenge as it reflected that learners with disabilities were denied equity and equality in access and participation in higher education. Thus evidence of intellectual inequality as the individuals are denied the empowerment those institutions of higher learning offer which enables individuals to effectively develop themselves and contribute effectively to society. Consequently, the excluded individuals with disabilities from higher education find themselves in a second-class position on the social ladder, having denied empowerment and hence the power to compete in the social market.

Another challenge that was established was the accommodation of diverse disabilities with limited potential to handle the learners with disabilities. The multiple facets of this challenge are that institutions enrolled learners with disabilities with no teachers or inadequate teachers with technical expertise to facilitate the learning process coupled with limited or no resources tailor-made for the learners with disabilities to learn effectively. Another element of this challenge is that the institutions that enrolled learners with disability mostly had infrastructure which was not disability friendly. On the other hand, there was an apparent selective inclusion that was evident

in the types of disabilities accommodated at institutions and reports of transfers for learners to other programs or institutions due to the disability. The discrepancies in inclusion practices and preparedness signaled the apparent chaos in the efforts toward inclusive education. Data from this study has shown that the basis for the challenges in implementing inclusive education practices lies in policy absence, lack of technical expertise, and resource and infrastructure challenges. Studies have indicated that policy is critical in robust implementation and compliance. It is through policy that challenges are strategically addressed and this study addressed the problem by highlighting that challenges relating to the implementation of inclusive education practices can be addressed by policy guidance and mandate. Through policy, challenges in technical expertise, resource, and infrastructure would be addressed leading to improvement in access and wide participation in higher education institutions for learners who have disabilities.

The knowledge of the challenges that affect inclusive education activities implementation improvement is necessary. The significance of these study results was that they would be used to inform the government about the critical policy gap that existed in the provision of inclusive education practices. Learning from the implementation of the Education For All and Readmission Policy, the Malawi government has the mandate and capacity to spearhead the effective implementation of inclusive education practices. Data, from this study, has shown that Malawi already has a department on inclusive education which was previously called Special Needs

Education and that there were initiatives to have the policy in place that was lacking concrete realization. Malawi government through, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Gender had a working relationship on promoting learning experience for learners who have disabilities, the two ministries would work towards the provision of effective policy direction for inclusive education implementation. Coordinating all stakeholders in education for input on

inclusion practices in higher education would be a starting point for the policy reform. This study emphasized the need for a policy for the provision of strategic direction in the implementation of inclusive education activities. Policy development and implementation will bring sanity into the inclusion processes clearing out the disparities in the activities, procedures, and compliances by individual institutions.

The results of this study also align with the conceptual framework that was adapted from Chilumba and Penda (2019) reflecting the challenges as an independent variable affecting Inclusive Education as the independent variable. The findings relate to the core, auxiliary and other challenges related to teachers, learners, and institutions. Core challenges included a lack of expertise for lecturers, a lack of relevant technical support, and a lack of staff with technical expertise in Special Needs Education (SNE). On the other hand, auxiliary challenges related to teachers were a lack of inclusive education resources, infrastructure and resource center, policy direction, and lack of political will; for the learners, it was a lack of learning resources, infrastructure not conducive for learning and lack of lecturer's academic and moral support, and lack of support from fellow learners; while for institutions were lack of disability-friendly infrastructure, lack of Inclusive Education resources, limited budget line, absence of a resource center, lack of policies, and lack of political will. Other challenges encountered by teachers included a lack of knowledge of the presence of learners who have disabilities in the classroom, as lecturers were not informed. The findings align with the conceptual framework in that inclusive education effectiveness was influenced by technical expertise, attitudes, behavioral performances, and methodologies used in the teaching and learning process. Results supported the government's role in training teachers as part of the process of providing inclusive education.

The results, of this study, also aligned with theories and the models that were used namely Vygotsky's theory of social constructionist epistemology; Vygotsky's theory of dysonto-genesis; Medical Disability Model; Social Model, and the Human Rights Model as follows: The Vygotsky's theory of social constructionist epistemology gives a foundation for the models in the field of special education and the promotion of inclusion that is based on positive differences. Vygotsky recognized that the social variations provide a direction for the roles played by parents, instructors, peers, and the general society on the learner with a disability. Vygotsky indicates that an individual's higher mental functions are co-constructed while sharing activities between the child and another person (Mosito et al., 2017). The results from the data that was collected indicated that learners with disabilities possess capabilities like any other individual that go up to a certain level but there is also a potential ability that is possible if they receive technical support from teachers, support from peers, and guardians to reach their full potential. Through the scaffolding process in the Zone of Proximal Development teachers have a role to support learners achieve beyond their limitations. The expectation for teachers to encourage learners with disabilities to move out of their comfort zone is critical to improved performance. It is for this reason that the need for teachers with technical expertise to support the learning process of the learners with disabilities was emphasized but also the collaborative support from peers that allows learners to learn through modeling. Teachers' expertise to establish the learners' level of knowledge and learning preferences is essential in the provision of an effective learning environment. Therefore, the results of this study aligned with the theory of social constructionist epistemology by establishing the critical role played by teachers in inclusive education practices, the need for support from peers, and the influence of perceptions, from teachers, peers, administrators, and guardians, towards inclusive education. Hence negative perceptions are a basis

for ineffective inclusion while positive perceptions are a foundation for positive inclusion and improvement.

The study results also aligned with the social model which describes disability as being entirely social and is imposed on people with impairments by society to disable them from being effective supports social constructionist epistemology theory. The human rights model agrees with the social model theory as it asserts that disability is socially constructed and aims at uplifting the status of an individual with a disability to a status with rights and privileges like any other person (Gordon and Salyutov, 2017).This study's results support the social model construction of the views regarding disability. This was evident in the disparities in rating the enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning. Fluid views were presented as some participants considered that the enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning was fair while others considered it low. These results represented that some participants felt that learners who have disabilities were given fair access and participation in higher education institutions while others felt that there was no equity and equality in opportunities for access and participation in higher education institutions for learners who have disabilities. There were also diverse views on what type of disability is accommodated in an institution where some preferred mild disability while other institutions were comfortable with some acute types of disabilities but not all natures of disabilities.

The results of the study have shown that the government selected specific institutions to enroll learners with disabilities. This perception supports the social construction that society creates a perception of the abilities and disabilities of individuals with impairments. In this case, the decision implied that the learners with disabilities would not fit in and learn effectively in other institutions of higher learning which contradicts the inclusion concepts to some extent. The idea

of earmarking specific institutions for inclusion also comes into conflict with the human rights model which fights for equal placement and benefits for individuals with a disability. Evidence of selective inclusion and institutional segregation reflects human rights issues such as segregation which is a violation of human rights. Another violation of human rights for individuals with a disability is evident in the results that revealed intellectual inequality through limited access and participation in higher education which progressively widens the social gap between individuals with disabilities and those without disabilities. The systematic placement on the second class position in the social ladder through lack of personal development and empowerment due to non-exposure to tertiary education is also a violation of human rights for individuals who have disabilities. Therefore, this study's results aligned with both the social and human rights models through social issues and the human rights issues raised through the collected data.

Vygotsky's theory of dysonto-genesis which refers to the deficiency in development is also known as the theory of distorted development and offers a framework for analyzing the mechanisms that can enable change and improvement for learners with a disability as it focuses on emphasizing an individual's strengths than weaknesses (Rodina, 2006). The medical disability model which asserts that disability is a basis for the challenges that individuals with disabilities encounter and the social differences that are created around them also points to the biological development that requires attention Anastasiou and Kauffman, 2013).This study established that institutions enroll learners with different biological disabilities and these disabilities are a result of the distortion or deficiency in the development of the biological composition of the learner's bodies. The disabilities are different and would require different support to enable effective learning to take place. The results indicate different types of disabilities ranging from physical disability referring to body impairment, visual impairment relating to sight problems, hearing

impairment relating to ear problems, muteness/dumbness relating to speech problems, intellectual disability relating to cognitive challenges, and albinism relating to genetic problems. The different natures of the disabilities are associated with different challenges and would require different strategies to support them and address the challenges to hinder their progress. The medical model alludes to the connection between the type of disability and the challenges presenting themselves to it providing a basis for understanding the different strategies to be employed in supporting each category. This also informs stakeholders in inclusive education to avoid the mistake of putting all types of disability in one category and addressing them as equal.

This study's contribution to the literature body is that it brings a perspective on the long-time effects of the low enrollments for learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning. As low enrollment has been shown to indicate limited access and participation in higher education resulting in intellectual inequality it leaves the individuals with disabilities at the second class position on the social ladder. This study brings out disparities in the fulfillment of Sustainable Development Goal number 4 where equal opportunities are to be granted to all for their realization of their full potential. Exclusion from higher education institutions, for the majority of individuals who have disabilities, denies them the opportunity to receive the necessary empowerment that enables individuals to develop themselves and contribute effectively to their respective society in a meaningful manner. This study has presented the wide gap created in both the academic and society that needs to be closed through deliberate strategies.

This study has also contributed to the literature body by establishing social and human rights issues affecting individuals with disabilities. These issues are selective inclusion and institutional segregation as reflected in the selection of what type and gravity of disability institutions are willing to enroll denying other learners an opportunity to access educational

services stating inclusion as costly. Selective inclusion is also established in the government's decision to earmark specific institutions as mandated to enroll learners with disabilities limiting access to other institutions and defeating the concept of inclusion in mainstream schools. The inequalities and lack of equity in enrolling the abled and the disabled learners in institutions of higher learning a represented as a violation of the right to education.

The need for an inclusive education policy design and implementation as a critical turning point for robust, strategic, and coordinated implementation has also been presented in this study. The possible mandate and reinforcement for inclusion activities have also been established. Challenges ranging from lack of teachers with technical expertise to handling inclusive classes, resources, infrastructure, and access are likely to be addressed by a policy that is developed with wide participation of stakeholders including developmental partners.

This section presented a discussion of the findings and implications of the study. It has highlighted inequality in providing access and participation in higher education hence creating intellectual inequality for individuals with disabilities that widens the social gap in society. Selective inclusion that presents institutional segregation was discussed as a contributor to limited access. This section also presented the basis for the majority of the challenges in inclusion as the fact that Malawi had no inclusive education policy at the time of the study while recognizing that there were initiatives at national and institutional levels. The absence of policy created a vacuum in coordinating efforts and mandates toward inclusive education hence disparities in inclusion activities. The various challenges affecting the effectiveness of inclusive education were also discussed in this section namely: Lack of institutional preparedness for inclusive education implementation in institutions of higher learning was observed evidenced by a lack of technical expertise; lack of inclusive education resources, and infrastructures which were mostly not

disability friendly. Another implication discussed was the low effectiveness rate in inclusion practice generated from the challenges and disparities in the implementation of inclusion activities. Discussing the positive perceptions towards the inclusive education concept, it was shown that positive perceptions that were based on the collected data would create a promising platform for inclusive education improvement. The section also addressed the positive alignment of the findings to the conceptual framework, study problem, significance, and contribution to the literature body.

5.3   Recommendations for Application

The previous section was a presentation of a discussion on the findings and implications of this study. Implications of low enrolment numbers of learners with disabilities, ineffectiveness rate, and the positive perceptions towards the inclusive education concept which would create a platform for inclusive education improvement were discussed. The section ended by addressing the positive alignment of the study findings to the theoretical and conceptual framework, study problem, significance, theories, models, and its contribution to the literature body. This section will present a discussion on the recommendation based on the study findings based on the framework from the literature.

5.2.1.1 To increase access to higher education for learners with disabilities

The findings, of this study, established low enrollment of learners who have disabilities in institutions that provide higher learning. Learners who had disabilities registered ranged from zero to 19 learners with an exception of one institution where the register was above 50 learners. This study found that the low enrollment was attributed to perceptions by parents, and guardians who think that schools are not a safe place for their children while teachers and fellow students think that the learners with disabilities have no potential to deal with the challenges of academics. It was found that this mindset determines the choices that are made in regards to the sending or

admission in school for learners who have disabilities which sometimes are not to their advantage. Therefore, based on the established enrollment rate that is low, an affirmative strategy to enhance the deliberate enrolment of learners with disabilities would be necessary to provide access to institutions of higher learning for learners with disabilities mandatory enrollment.

Access to higher education institutions for learners who have disabilities can be increased by creating awareness among guardians, teachers, peers, communities, and all stakeholders in disability issues and rights for individuals who have disabilities to education. Embarking on a campaign that assists communities to understand issues about disabilities and showcasing models of success for individuals with disabilities to bring an understanding of the potential and opportunities that are available for individuals with disabilities. Educate the communities on disability rights and available opportunities that can be utilized for them to access higher education.

Access to higher education institutions can be increased by effecting policy reform. Policy formulation provides a mandate and direction for institutions to implement inclusion. The policy has the potential to ignite a robust implementation of inclusive activities in institutions of higher learning. Reinforcement has its basis in policy as standards and procedures are set by it. Interested developmental partners and stakeholders support initiatives that are backed by policy as it signifies the government's priorities that are aligned with theirs. Therefore, the government can strategically increase access and participation in higher education for learners with disabilities which would lead to increased enrollment.

An improvement in access to higher education for learners with disabilities would be measured by increased number in the learners with disabilities enrolled in institutions of higher learning. The enabler of awareness to increased access would be signaled by positive attitude

towards sending learners with disabilities to school or/and accommodating them in the mainstream classroom or as peers at school.

5.2.1.2 *Policy Development and guidelines for Institutional Preparedness*

This study also established that the government had earmarked institutions to implement inclusive education while for public institutions but there was no clear and formal mandate for implementation in regards to private institutions. The challenge created by this scenario was that most institutions that provide higher learning, public and private, were not prepared for inclusive education practices implementation although all institutions were receiving learners with disabilities of multiple types. The governing bodies, like the Ministry of Education, the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), and the Department of Teacher Education Development (DTED), are required to develop clear guidelines for institutions to follow in inclusive education implementation. The development of clear guidelines is necessary to provide a basis for inclusive education implementation and monitoring of institutions. The standards and requirements set in the guidelines would provide a direction that is required to support the inclusive education agenda. Therefore, this recommendation for the development of clear guidelines on inclusive education implementation was made.

This study revealed that despite low enrolment of learners who have disabilities, institutions enroll learners with all types of disabilities. Institutions were not prepared to implement inclusive education practices due to the absence or lack of institutional inclusive education policies, technical expertise, resources, and disability-friendly infrastructure. Lack of preparedness for institutions led to ineffective inclusive education implementation. This necessitates that institutions of higher learning be prepared in readiness for inclusion which is inevitable as enrollment of learners with a disability is bound to happen intentionally and unintentionally. This

study established the presence of a diversity of disability types like physical disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, and albinism. Therefore, institutions need to be prepared for inclusion as there is a potential to enroll learners with disabilities whether intentionally or unintentionally.

The institutional preparedness would be guided by the National Inclusive Education policy, which would be complemented by clear guidelines from governing institutions like National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and institutional inclusive education policies. Therefore, it is recommended that the training of teachers in inclusive education be implemented to equip them with knowledge and skills for effective teaching and learning experience. Findings, from this study, indicated that institutions that provide higher learning were not prepared for inclusive education implementation despite the admission of learners with disabilities. Key to the institutional unpreparedness was found to be a lack or inadequate technical expertise to handle inclusive education hence requiring measures to address it.

Based on the findings of this study, at the time of the study, there was no Inclusive Education policy at a national level although there were initiatives at the institutions towards the development of inclusive education policies the government should consider the development of inclusive education policy as a top priority. Policy direction would act as a binding responsibility for institutions and stakeholders on inclusive education matters. Challenges in providing inclusive education services were found to stem from the lack of policy direction on the matter of inclusion in education. Policy development would provide standards and guidelines for operation in inclusive education. Institutions would also benchmark institutional policies based on the National Policy for coordinated efforts. In the absence of a National policy, there was no mandate and clear direction for inclusive education activities such that barriers were created for lack of direction. The

available policies, at the time of the study, should complement the National Inclusive Education policy as they do not address inclusion issues entirely.

During this study, in an interview with the Ministry of Education respondent, it was reported that the use of the Education for All (EFA) strategy and the Education Act were key in supporting inclusive education efforts in the absence of the inclusive education policy. However, a positive development was reported towards the development of the policy as the Ministry of Education in partnership with Reading for all Malawi (REFAM) had started with stakeholder consultations at the time of this study, recognizing the importance of policy direction toward the effective implementation. Supporting the efforts was also reported from the interview with a respondent from the Ministry of Gender indicating that Malawi had legal frameworks such as the Disability Act 2012, the National Policy on equalization of opportunities for persons with disability, the National Disability mainstreaming strategy, National Action Plan for persons with albinism, Malawi growth, and development strategy, Malawi National strategy policy, National Education Development Strategy, Handicapped Act 1971(which was developed by Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA)), United Nation Convention Right for people with Disability (UNCRPD). This initiative would serve as a basis for Inclusive Education policy development. Since it was established that the challenges in inclusive education that created barriers to effective implementation emerged from a lack of policy direction it was evident that one of the strategies that do address the ineffectiveness was to develop clear policy direction and guidelines to bring sanity and clarity.

The enabler of policy development and institutional guidelines to guide the inclusion practices in institutions of higher education would be verified by the presence a stand-alone policy on inclusive education at a national and institutional level. On the other hand, compliance to the

standards and guidelines would be evident by the increased and consolidated efforts towards inclusive education by institutions of higher learning through increased institutional capacity on inclusive practices.

5.2.1.3 Develop the Teachers' capacity

This study also revealed that inclusive education implementation was done in institutions at different levels depending on the institutional capacity however the level of effectiveness was rated low. The findings indicated the presence of learners who have disabilities in higher learning institutions but the provision of inclusive education services was considered not effective. The lack of preparedness was signified by a lack of inadequate technical expertise in handling inclusive education; a lack of inclusive education resources and disability-non-friendly infrastructure. All categories of participants, learners, lecturers, administrators, and government officials agreed on the lack of technical expertise as a critical challenge and institutional improvement in staff expertise as being essential in addressing the challenges in inclusive education. The lack of inadequate staff with expertise in handling learners with diverse disabilities in the institutions incapacitated the inclusive education operations and hence became catalyst for ineffective inclusive education implementation. This challenge led to teachers with no relevant expertise to handle inclusion in the classrooms, as learners with disabilities were accommodated in institutions. Therefore, it is recommended that this challenge should be addressed by building teachers' capacity through training in inclusive education practices to enable them to handle both abled learners and those with diverse disabilities but also train specialized teachers regarding the specific disability nature of disability who would provide technical support. Developing specialized education programs for teacher training institutions to develop expertise in handling specific disabilities would be recommended. Apart from that, teacher training institutions should

mainstream inclusive education throughout the levels of the training programs rather than offering a single module on special needs education. This would assist in building the capacity of teachers and also provide specialized teachers to support the effective implementation of the inclusive education program in the institutions of higher learning in Malawi.

As teachers' capacity is developed the assistive technologies resource base should be improved. Since this study revealed that the resources are not locally available and hence very expensive, the government, institutions of higher learning, and other education stakeholders need to include the resources for inclusion on their budgets but also lobby for subsidized costs. Government can remove tax on all assistive technological resources, allocate an adequate budget line for inclusive education under the Ministry of Gender and Ministry of Education, complement institutional budgets, and also lobby with developmental partners to support the initiative.

Effective inclusive education would be possible when teacher expertise and the availability of assistive resources are coupled with the inclusive infrastructure. Institutions of higher learning need to modify the old buildings to make them disability-friendly and design new buildings to accommodate individuals with a disability. Inclusive education in mainstream schools would be possible with the necessary adjustments made to accommodate individuals with disabilities.

The enabler of the development of teacher's capacity would promote the performance of learners with disabilities. The provision of technical training through in-service and pre-service would provide specialization in the management of learners with disabilities and inclusive classrooms. This would be a facilitator in the reception of the much needed technical support services for learners with disabilities in the mainstream education system hence increased performance, number of learners with disabilities completing higher education and effectively contributing to the society.

5.3 **Recommendation for Future Research**

The previous section was a presentation of a discussion on recommendations for application based on this study. This section, therefore, presents a discussion of the suggested recommendations for future research based on the findings.

5.3.2.1 The evaluation of current strategies to enhance access to institutions of higher learning for learners with disabilities

This study revealed low enrolment of learners who have disabilities in institutions of higher learning. This translates to limited access and participation in institutions of higher learning for individuals with disabilities hence widening the social gap as most individuals with disabilities would be left not empowered. Since the intellectual inequality established defines their low placement and contribution to society it is paramount that this gap is addressed. An affirmative strategy to enhance the deliberate enrolment of learners with disabilities would be necessary. Therefore, future studies could explore strategies for allocating an enrollment percentage that could be employed to enhance access to higher learning institutions for learners who have disabilities as is the case with male and female enrollment.

This study also established that the government put in place a strategy to have specific public institutions earmarked by the government to implement inclusive education but there were no specifications for private institutions. The earmarked public institutions were supported for inclusion activities while the other institutions were considered non-players in the inclusion. Hence, when learners with disabilities are enrolled in the institutions it was discovered that they were directed to specific programs of study the institutions regard to be viable for inclusion. This led to the redirection of all learners with disabilities whose preference of program of study was different from the institutional plans to be forced to change and adapt to study areas, not of their

choice. The selective inclusion and institutional segregation established by this study were to some extent a contribution from the directive to have specific institutions of higher learning mandated to enroll learners with disabilities. Although to some extent, there was an opportunity for those learners selected to public institutions of higher learning but silence on what happens in the private institutions that provide higher learning needs to be addressed. Therefore, this study established a gap that needs to be analyzed in the enrolment of learners with disabilities in various programs of study for effective inclusion. Hence, exploring the impact of earmarking specific institutions of higher learning for the enrolment of learners with disabilities would be necessary.

This study established that institutions accommodated multiple types of disabilities ranging from a physical disability which was found to be the most common in the institutions of higher learning; visual impairment, hearing impairment, and muteness to albinism which necessitates planning for effective inclusion. Therefore, since this study established that all institutions of higher learning regardless of being public or private oriented, earmarked for inclusion or not, enrolled learners with disabilities, intentionally and unintentionally; it would be necessary if future research to investigate the impact of earmarking specific institutions for inclusion. Based on this, an evaluation of the strategies operational would be necessary.

5.3.2.2 *Assess the performance of learners with disabilities given multiple challenges confronting them and the institution's limited capacity*

This study established that there is a few numbers of learners with diverse disabilities who are enrolled in different institutions of higher learning. Results have also shown that there are multiple challenges ranging from a lack of teachers with technical expertise to support the learning experience for the learners who have disabilities; to inadequate, and in some cases a, lack of resources to aid the teaching and learning for the learners who have disabilities, as it was found

that resources that are tailor-made for specific disabilities are not locally available and also very expensive; sometimes the learners who have disabilities are reallocated to different programs or institutions with programs which are considered to be compatible to their disability; to the presence of infrastructure that is not disability friendly. Given the multiple challenges confronting the learners with disability in the institution, it would be essential to investigate the number of these learners who complete their higher education. This would be essential as it would inform the literature body on the impact of the challenges on those enrolled and whether that granted access makes it to the social ladder where they can ably compete with anyone and contribute effectively to society.

This study established a lack of expertise in handling learners who have disabilities as a major challenge in implementing inclusive education practices. This renders institutions of higher learning unprepared for the inclusion processes as teachers receive their training in teacher training and professional institutions. During training, some of those that are trained in teacher education institutions are exposed to special needs module which is not adequate to provide the necessary expertise. Inadequate expertise in providing inclusive education services contributes to the ineffectiveness of inclusion as those with disabilities do not receive the necessary support in terms of learning. Teachers also may not possess the capacity to use or guide in the usage of resources that are tailor-made for specific disabilities. Chimwaza (2015) reported that Malawi Special Needs teachers are trained by Montfort Special Needs Education College however; these are not adequate and are also only Special Needs Education teachers for primary school education. This indicates that even the experts in Special Needs Education that are present in institutions of higher learning, in reality, are trained experts for basic education but not for higher education. This also presents a technical challenge that compromises the quality of higher education institutions provided to

learners who have disabilities. In the absence of higher education teachers with expertise in handling learners who have disabilities, strategies must be found to bridge the gap that is created. This study did not address how the challenge of inadequate expertise can be addressed while improving the capacity of the teachers in service. Therefore, future studies should consider exploring strategies for training expert teachers with diverse disabilities that can be used to address the challenges of inadequate teachers with expertise to handle inclusion in institutions of higher learning in Malawi.

5.3.2.3   *Role of regulatory bodies in regulating the provision of Inclusive Education*

This study established that the development of an Inclusive Education policy would be essential in guiding inclusive education implementation as lack of policy was found to be a root cause of the challenges. According to the National Council for Higher Education's (NCHE's) minimum standards for the establishment of an institution of higher learning and findings from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Gender, the regulatory bodies were short of direct guidance and reinforcement in the matters relating to inclusive education implementation. The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Gender, and NCHE are players in the provision of education that fosters inclusion in Malawi. This study's results indicated that these stakeholders are mandated to provide policy direction, but this study did not investigate further the role of these regulatory bodies in inclusive education. This study's results also indicated that effectiveness in inclusive education implementation is dependent on clear policies and regulations. Gauthier (2018) reported that inclusive education became a legal issue under the basis of the international law of 2006 which was adopted at the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This emphasizes the significance of policy in inclusive education implementation. Therefore, it is recommended

that future studies should focus on exploring the role that is played by higher education's regulatory bodies in the provision of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning.

This section discussed recommendations for future research based on the findings. The next section will focus on a presentation of conclusions drawn from the study.

5.4 Conclusions

This study was conducted to investigate challenges in inclusive education in higher learning institutions for improved implementation. The investigation was guided by research questions that sought responses to the following: (1) What is the enrolment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning? (2) What nature of disability is necessary for inclusive education planning in institutions of higher learning? (3)What are stakeholder perceptions on inclusive education in institutions of higher learning? (4) How do challenges affect the effective implementation of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning? This study used a sample of 125 participants across nine institutions of higher learning and two government ministries. The study was guided by the pragmatic philosophy of taking an abductive approach using a mixed-method design to collect data from the study participants. Data were collected using survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The analysis of data was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program for quantitative data and content analysis for qualitative data.

This study established that there was a low enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning thereby indicating their limited access and participation in higher education institutions resulting in intellectual inequalities. The limited access and participation in higher education institutions were shown to have emerged selective inclusion and institutional segregation which leads to intellectual inequality that widens the social gap among individuals in

the society. The wide social gap resulting from unequal educational opportunities denies individuals with disabilities the necessary empowerment that enables people to develop self-capabilities and make significant contributions to society. These are the attributes that place individuals high on the social ladder when absent the individuals occupy second-class positions in society.

However, the learners' perceptions from the survey reflected that the enrollment of learners with a disability was fair which was contrary to the lecturers' view. This scenario indicated the disparities in the levels of enrollment from institution to institution. The data from the interviews with administrators signified that the enrollment numbers from the sampled institutions ranged from zero (0), 4, 10, and 53 which was low apart from one institution. The findings of this study support what was reported by Kamchedzera (2015) that institutions enrolled between one to ten learners with disabilities except for one institution which had an enrollment of 58 learners with disability. This study established that there was no improvement in the enrollment numbers of learners with disabilities. This translates to limited access to institutions of higher learning for individuals with disabilities. The Situation analysis report by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Malawi (UNICEF Malawi) (2020) indicated a 0.4% enrollment rate of learners with disability and 99% of the learners who have disabilities do not have admittance into higher education institutions. Ministry of Education Science and Technology(MoEST) (2020) in the Education Sector Performance report indicated the enrollment of learners who have disabilities in institutions that offer higher learning to be 117 during the 2018/19 academic year with the highest enrollment of 42. The disparities in rating the enrollment of learners with disabilities reflected the social construction of what constitutes disability which is different among individuals and it is should by the fluidity of the perceptions where some considered the enrollment

low while others considered it fair. However, this study established that the enrollment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning was low as the definition of equity and equality to education opportunities is reflected in the ratio or numbers of the groups compared and in this case, both the ratio and the numbers were very low which represent inequalities.

Low enrollment of learners with disabilities implies that the social gap of inequalities continues to grow and limit individuals with disabilities to receive higher education which empowers individuals into becoming responsible and self-reliant. Higher education is reported to be a catalyst for bridging the social gap hence when learners with disabilities find barriers to accessing higher education it creates a basis for exclusion, and non-participatory trends in developmental activities (Walker & Wilson-Strydom, 2017). Therefore, if individuals who have disabilities are to be granted equal rights and opportunities in their communities they need to be given access to higher education institutions to enable them to acquire knowledge and skills that will make them useful.

The study also established that institutions of higher learning commonly accommodate learners with multiple types of disabilities though some were comfortable with mild disabilities due to their limited capacity. Apart from the most common physical disability being accommodated, institutions of higher learning also were found to accommodate common disabilities like visual impairment, intellectual disability, hearing impairment, and muteness/dumbness. Albinism and psychological disability were other types of disability that were found in institutions of higher learning. This study revealed that institutions of higher learning accommodated multiple disabilities intentionally but also unintentionally at the time of the study. Although there were learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning the institutions could not handle inclusive education services effectively due to a lack of institutional

preparedness. Lack of expert teachers in handling learners who have disabilities, lack of assistive technology resources to support the teaching and learning of individuals who have disabilities, and infrastructure that is not disability friendly have been found to negatively affect the implementation of inclusive education activities. These challenges have incapacitated higher learning institutions and barred them from providing meaningful inclusion as such equal access and participation in higher education institutions for individuals who have disabilities is compromised.

This study also indicated that there was selective inclusion in institutions of higher learning based on the type and degree of disability reflecting negative perceptions towards inclusive education in the form of institutional discrimination. The implementation of inclusive education at different levels depends on the institutional capacity however for public institutions it was found that selected institutions of higher learning were earmarked for inclusion. Despite the earmarking, enrollment of learners was still done unintentionally where in some cases referrals were made or learners were maintained depending on the type of disability. The findings of this study have shown traces of selective inclusion and institutional segregation that require redress. It was also evident that all institutions are potential recipients of learners with disabilities intentionally or unintentionally as institutions were found to have been receiving learners with disabilities by being proactive in enrolling them.

Regardless of low enrollment in the face of limited access and participation in institutions of higher learning, the study also indicated the presence of positive perceptions towards inclusive education from the government ministries which are stakeholders in education which signaled the potential for an improvement in inclusive education services. Perceptions have an influence on the course of activity hence the positive perception signified a fertile ground for the improvement of

inclusive education. The interest of individuals and stakeholders in education can be the basis for promoting inclusion practices.

The study also established that stakeholders, especially learners, had different views on the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation for learners with disabilities in line with the social model. These disparities were caused by challenges faced which were institutional, teacher, and learner related, and the differences in institutional capacity. Institutions were found to also have challenges such as a lack of inclusive education resources, teacher expertise, lack of disability-friendly infrastructure, limited budget line for inclusive education activities, absence of resource centers, lack of inclusive education policies, lack of institutional preparedness, and in some and lack of political will and support. This entails the inadequate capacity to implement inclusive education which created barriers to effective inclusive education implementation hence learners with disability were not guaranteed an effective learning environment. The challenges were found to negatively affect the implementation of inclusive education practices.

Results confirmed a lack of expertise in handling learners who have disabilities as a common problem in institutions of higher learning. Most institutions enrolled learners with disabilities unintentionally and tend to manage them as they progress but sometimes they are referred to other institutions or programs that are considered more fitting for their disability even if it is not a course of their choice. The institutions that purposely enroll learners with disabilities are those public institutions earmarked for inclusion. However, due to a lack of disclosure, public institutions that are not meant to enroll learners with disabilities also accommodate them. This creates challenges of lack of preparedness for inclusion. On the other hand, private institutions enroll learners with disabilities by way of no segregation. It was also found that most institutions enrolled learners with visual or hearing impairment which was mild apart from one institution. The

differences in the level of disability accommodated were dependent on the availability of teaching and learning resources to support inclusion initiatives. Institutions were void of the resources necessary for the implementation of inclusive education activities because they were not locally available and very expensive. The multiple challenges reported in the institutions compromised the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation. For instance, the absence of infrastructure that is disability-friendly creates a barrier to the mobility and learning experience for learners who have disabilities. Furthermore, challenges in expertise compromise the quality of educational services offered to learners who have disabilities due to the lack of the technical know-how to challenge them to go beyond their comfort zone and achieve their full potential. They have indicated apparent institutional segregation that regards a program as exclusive of the activities of the institution and hence considered expensive to implement.

This study concluded that Malawi and nearly all institutions of higher learning lack policies focusing on enhancing access and participation of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning. The challenges experienced in inclusive education largely emerged from a lack of policy direction. Results revealed that until the time of the study there was no inclusive education policy at a national level but institutions had initiatives on inclusive education policies. One of the institutions had an inclusive education policy developed, another one was using institutional guidelines to implement inclusive education while another one was using government guidelines specific to technical colleges' inclusion and the other four had no policy initiatives. The lack of a national inclusive education policy to provide direction in inclusive education implementation was found to be a critical challenge that was also affecting the implementation of inclusive education as there was no clear mandate from the governing stakeholder in Education, which is the Malawi government through the Ministry of Education, to reinforce standards and

protocols for inclusion. The development of an Inclusive Education policy would be essential in guiding Inclusive Education implementation through the regulatory bodies under the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Gender.

This study emphasized the need for policy reform for inclusive education since the policy is a catalyst for vigorous implementation in any activity that affects the socioeconomic, academic, or political development of individuals. Therefore, the study recommends that government brings together the different efforts from stakeholders in Special Needs Education, forums for the disabled, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, the Ministry of Gender, developmental partners, and all stakeholders towards inclusive education through policy reform can aid a major redress of multiple challenges leading to the improvement of inclusive education. This study argued that policy development would act as a major tool in addressing the multiple challenges encountered in inclusive education practice.

The results, of this study, responded to the problem under investigation on the challenges of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning. These challenges were drawn out as related to enrollment of learners with disabilities, the effectiveness of inclusion, teachers' expertise, resources, and infrastructure among others. The study revealed that the challenges negatively affected inclusive education implementation hence the low rate of enrollment and low effectiveness. The significance of these results was that inclusive higher learning would be informed of the negative effect of the inclusive education challenges prevailing in the institutions and the need to address them for improved inclusive education services. The need to strategically increase the enrollment of learners who have disabilities, to provide them with equal chances in competing in the national market, was realized. Hence, this study informed institutions of the social gap that existed between the abled and disabled and the need to address it to empower individuals

with disabilities by providing them with access to higher education. This study is also significant as it revealed the role of expert teachers in the provision of inclusive education and the challenges related to the availability of these teachers in institutions that offer higher learning, which needed to be addressed for effective inclusion. The government would be informed of the critical policy gap that existed in providing inclusive education direction. Through policy development, standard procedures would be made available for institutions to learn from.

The results of the study aligned with the conceptual framework that was adapted from Chilumba and Penda (2019) which reflected the challenges as an independent variable affecting Inclusive Education as the independent variable. The findings established core, auxiliary and other challenges related to teachers, learners, and institutions. Teacher-related challenges: core challenges included lack of expertise in Special Needs Education; auxiliary challenges included lack of inclusive education resources, infrastructure and resource center, policy direction, and lack of political will; other challenges included lack of awareness of the presence of such learners who have disabilities in classrooms as lecturers were not informed. Learner-related challenges: core included lack of relevant technical support for the learners; auxiliary challenges included: lack of learning resources, un-conducive learning infrastructure and lack of lecturer's academic and moral support, and lack of support from fellow learners Institutional challenges: Core challenges included lack of Special Needs Education expertise; auxiliary challenges included lack of disability-friendly infrastructure, lack of inclusive education resources, limited budget line, absence of a resource center, lack of policies, and lack of political will. The findings aligned with the conceptual framework in that inclusive education effectiveness was influenced by technical expertise, attitudes, behavioral performances, and methodologies used in the teaching and learning

process. Results supported the government's role in training teachers in the process of providing inclusive education activities.

The results, of this study, also aligned with the theoretical framework and the models that were used. This study argued that teachers, peers, guardians, and other stakeholders in education have a role to play in the improvement of inclusive education practices. Vygotsky's theory of social constructionist epistemology recognizes the role played by the social variations as reflected in this study through the role of fellow learners, lecturers, administrators, and government in defining an environment for learners with disabilities and upholding their rights in inclusive education.

The alignment with the social model was evident in the variations in which participants presented their views on disability. For instance, the fluidity that was apparent in considering the enrollment of learners with a disability as low for some and fair for others emerges from the individual definition of what constitutes a disability and what is fair or not fair. The disparities were also presented in the choice that institutions made on the types of disability to accommodate and the different reasons ranging from technical courses would be challenging for learners who have disabilities; inclusion is considered expensive due to requirements of special teachers, expensive resources, and the need for relevant infrastructure development.

The human rights model was reflected through human rights issues raised by the study as follows: Limited access and participation in higher education institutions reflected a compromise on right to education for individuals who have disabilities. All individuals have a right to education and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4 focuses on the provision of equal opportunities to all for the development of the individual full potential. Therefore, those individuals who have disabilities that are excluded from higher education institutions are subjected

to intellectual inequality since they are denied the opportunity to be empowered through tertiary education. Thus rendering them void of the ability to develop their self-capabilities and contribute effectively to society. This positions them in a second-class position in society where there would not compete with those who have been granted higher education and excelled high in society. The violation of human rights has also been reflected in institutional segregation, where institutions are selective in the type and seriousness of the disability to accommodate. Other institutions considered inclusion as being expensive leading to non-admission of some types of disabilities.

On the other hand, aligning with Vygotsky's theory of dysonto-genesis it has been shown that the institutions enrolled learners with different biological disabilities. The diverse disabilities are a result of the different distortions or deficiencies in the development of the biological composition of the learners' bodies. Since the disabilities are different, the requirement for different support that is tailor-made to the type of disability to enable effective learning to take place has been made clear. For instance, learners with hearing impairment would require hearing aids, sign interpreters, and teaching and learning strategies that appeal to the visual impairment. In support of the medical model, each impairment is confronted with challenges that are unique to the particular disability hence the need for unique ways to address challenges that affect different disabilities.

This study brings to the literature body a perspective to understand the long time effects of the low enrollments for learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning. Limited access and participation in higher education shown through low enrollment lead to intellectual inequality, a contradiction to human rights. This strategically places individuals with disabilities at the second-class position on the social ladder un-empowered, dependent, and unable to contribute to society. The study also points out the need to modify some aspects of the medical to recognize that unique

strategies and interventions are required for the effective inclusion of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning. The study also contributes to the body of knowledge documentation of gaps at national and institutional levels in Malawi that would inform the formulation of relevant policies and capacity building of institutions of higher learning to strengthen inclusive education. The following recommendations for application were made namely: There is a need for deliberate policies at national and institutional levels focusing on learners with a disability to enhance their access and participation. The need to increase access and participation in higher education institutions for learners who have disabilities is recommended for increased enrollment. An increase in access and participation in higher education institutions for individuals who have disabilities can be achieved through creating awareness among stakeholders in disability issues and rights for individuals who have disabilities to education. Strategic campaigns to showcase models of success among individuals with disabilities to inspire learners with disabilities to go beyond their limitations and educate the communities on the available opportunities and their participation in the education of the individuals with disabilities. Government and education stakeholders strategically increase access and participation in higher education institutions for individuals who have a disability through policy reform. Policy reform would be instrumental for the provision of a direct mandate, reinforcement, and participation of developmental partners.

Another recommendation for application is the development of policies and guidelines to prepare institutions for inclusion activities. Since this study indicated that the challenges encountered in inclusive education are mostly emerging from a lack of policy direction, therefore, it is argued that policy should be developed to address the challenges through the provision of direction, standards, guidelines, mandates, and reinforcement for the implementation of the

inclusion program. This study argues that policy is critical for the robust implementation of inclusive activities.

Based on the findings, from this study, teachers 'capacity development to enable them to address the needs of the learners who have disabilities is recommended. Teacher capacity building would be required to address the acute shortage of expert teachers in handling learners who have disabilities in institutions that offer higher learning. Therefore, the development of specialized programs for the training of expert teachers who may handle specific disabilities in institutions of higher learning is recommended. To complement these efforts, teacher training institutions are recommended to mainstream multiple courses on inclusion in all levels of study rather than a single module on special needs education. However, development programs specifically for the training of teachers in knowledge and skills in handlings learners who have disabilities would be ideal. Building the capacity for teachers through in-service training and workshops would also add to the efforts since those teachers who are already engaged in the inclusive classroom would be provided with at least the basic skills that are necessary for the management of inclusive classrooms.

The following recommendations for future studies were made: This study focused on investigating the enrollment of individuals with disabilities which was found to widen the social gap, and exploring strategies to close the gap would be necessary. Deliberate efforts to actively close the social gap through increased enrollment for learners with disabilities would be effective. Therefore, an evaluation of the existing strategies to enhance access and participation of learners with disabilities enrolled in institutions of higher education would be an area of potential study.

Another area of potential study is to assess the performance of learners who have disabilities in higher learning institutions given the multiple challenges they are confronted with and the limited institutional capacity. This would be necessary as this study has shown a low

number of learners who have disabilities are enrolled in various higher education institutions but did not explore the success rate. It would be essential to find out how many complete their studies hence able to contribute meaningfully to society. It may also be explored if the market industry is open to such individuals if given the disability that they possess.

Findings, in this study, also indicated that all institutions that offer higher education irrespective of whether public or private oriented, earmarked for inclusion or not, enrolled learners with disabilities, intentionally and unintentionally. However, it was also evident that a decision was made by the government, through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, to give a mandate to specific public institutions to enroll learners with disabilities. Given this contradiction between the government's mandate and practice, it would be necessary for future researchers to investigate the impact of earmarking specific institutions for inclusive education services.

Another area of future study would be required to explore strategies for training expert teachers to cater to specific disabilities to address the acute shortage established in the inclusion program. This study did not address how the challenge of inadequate expertise can be addressed while improving the capacity of the teachers who are already in service.

Lastly, investigating the role of regulatory bodies in the implementation of inclusive education practices is also a potential area of study. Malawi has multiple players in higher education including the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, the Ministry of Gender, and the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). These bodies have various mandates in the provision of higher education. The Ministry of Education is responsible for providing education services to Malawians whereby private schools support government efforts; the Ministry of Gender has a department that is responsible for the welfare of individuals with disabilities in Malawi; and National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) has the mandate to register, accredit

and supervise the provision of quality education in institutions that offer higher education. Therefore, a recommendation for future studies is to focus on exploring the roles played by higher education institutions' regulatory bodies in the provision of inclusive education in institutions that offer higher learning.

This chapter presented the implications of the study, recommendations for application and future studies, and the conclusions as follows:

Implications of the study

- Learners with disabilities are systematically discriminated from institutions of higher learning and this would lead to continued intellectual inequalities resulting in increased social gaps emerging from denied empowerment

- Institutions of higher learning need capacity building in terms of resources, expertise, and infrastructure to ably accommodate learners with disabilities.

- There is limited awareness of learners with disabilities among higher education stakeholders reflected by the fluidity of views on the effectiveness of inclusive education

Recommendations for application

- There is a need for deliberate policies at national and institutional levels on inclusive education focusing on learners with disabilities to enhance their access and participation in institutions of higher learning

- There is a need for awareness of disability issues among higher education stakeholders

- Teacher training institutions to build the capacity of teachers in the management of learners who have diverse needs and learners who have disabilities.

Recommendations for future studies

- There is a need for evaluation of existing strategies in place to enhance access to institutions of higher learning enrolment by learners with disabilities

- There is a need to assess the performance of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning given the multiple challenges confronting them and the limited capacity of the institutions

- Investigate regulatory bodies' role in the provision of inclusive education activities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: UREC First Approval

UNICAF UNIVERSITY

UREC's Decision

Name of Participant: Emily Grace Chiumia Mwale

Title of the Research project: An investigation into the challenges of Inclusive Education in Institutions of Higher Learning in Malawi

Date: 05/12/2019

Comments

☐ **Approved** without revision or comments.

ᵛ☐ **Approved** with comments for minor revision.

☐ **Not approved** with guidance comments for moderate revision and resubmission.

Question 14ii – should be YES

☐ **Not approved** with guidance comments for major revision and resubmission.

Appendix B: UREC Final Approval

UREC's Decision

Student's Name: Emily Grace Chiumia Mwale

Student's ID #: R1711D3906265

Supervisor's Name: Dr Martha Kamwendo

Program of Study: UUM: EdD - Doctorate of Education

Offer ID /Group ID: O20274G20237

Dissertation Stage: 3

Research Project Title: An investigation into the challenges of Inclusive Education in Institutions of Higher Learning in Malawi

Comments: Gatekeeper letter:

Please clarify what personal data will be requested and for what reason: "and provide access to personal data after participants have consented."

Decision: B. Approved with comments for minor revision

Date: 06-Oct-2020

Appendix C: Consent Form

Informed Consent Form / Certificate of Consent for Research Participants

This document consists of two parts: the **Informed Consent Form** (to share information about the research study with you) and the **Certificate of Consent** (for signatures if you choose to participate). You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form.

This Form is for research interventions that cover the following research activities: questionnaires, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, elicited conversation, observations, recorded listening, videotaped activities, and interviews.

[**NB**: Please use simple language and local and simplified words rather than scientific terms and professional jargon. In your explanation, consider local beliefs and knowledge when deciding how best to provide the information.]

Informed Consent Form for:	Administrators
Researcher's Name:	Emily Grace Chiumia Mwale
E-mail:	emilygracemwale@yahoo.co.uk
Programme of Study:	Doctor of Education
Partner University:	UNICAF UNIVERSITY MALAWI
Project / Dissertation Title:	An investigation into the challenges of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning in Malawi
Supervisor's name:	Dr. Martha Kamwendo
Supervisor's e-mail:	m.kamwendo@unicaf.org

Part 1: Informed Consent Form

1. **Introduction**

My name is Emily Grace Chiumia Mwale a doctorate student at UNICAF in Malawi. Am conducting a study that is looking at the challenges ofinclusive education in Malawian institutions of higher learning and I would like to ask you to participate. Please take your time to consider whether you will be willing to participate or not. If you would like to understand more about the study feel free to ask me or if there are words that you do not understand I will be glad to explain. Please if you have questions at any time during the study feel free to ask me.

2. The purpose/aims of the research

The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges of implementing inclusive education in institutions of higher learning in Malawi. Questionnaires with open-ended and closed questions will be used during the study for the students. You will be expected to participate in an in-depth interview. Some questions will be sensitive in that they will ask about issues to do with learners with disability.

3. Participation in the research

Participation in the study shall mean that you shall respond to interview questions. However, you are not forced to answer if there will be a question that you feel like not answering you may leave it. The interview may take you 30 -40minutes

*if the research includes participants under the age of 18 informed consent should be obtained by their parents or legal guardians who must be presented with all the information described on this informed consent form before giving parental permission for their children to participate. Please provide all relevant information for parents or legal guardians inthe following sections (4-8 below).

4. Participant selection

You have been selected because you are an administrator at this institution.

5. Voluntary participation

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage of the study and there will be no consequences. You will have the opportunity to review the responses at the end of filling out the questionnaire and you may stop participating at any time during the process. You have the right to request the report of the study.

6. Risks and benefits to participants

This study may be psychologically stressful however, it will provide an opportunity for learners with disabilities to have access to effective education. It will also guide policymakers and institution managers to effectively review the approach to inclusive education in institutions of higher learning.

7. Confidentiality

The data collected will be treated with confidentiality and be kept secure. The information that will be collected will not be shared with anyone else but will be kept private. The study participants will be kept anonymous. Only the researcher(s) will know the participant's name, therefore participant's information would not be potentially identifiable but be kept anonymous even in any published material. The raw data will be destroyed after six months after the completion of the study,

8. Sharing the results

The study results will be shared through study presentations and publications.

9. Contact details

UNICAF University Malawi, P.O. Box 30375, Lilongwe, Malawi

Part 2: Certificate of Consent

This section is mandatory and should be signed by the participant(s)

I have read the foregoing information about this study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss them. I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions and I have received enough information about this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason for withdrawing and without negative consequences. I consent to the use of multimedia (e.g. audio recordings, video recordings)for my participation in this study. I understand that my data will remain anonymous and confidential. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print name of Participant:

Signature of Participant:

Date:

If illiterate:

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had an opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print name of witness:

Signature of witness:

Date:

Appendix D: Lecturers' Questionnaire
Questionnaire for Lecturers/Tutors

(Institution of Higher education)

Name of the enumerator: _____ Date   filled   ___/___/ 2020

Checked by: _____ Date checked   ___/___/ 2020

Comment: _____

Date : ___/___/ 2020

1. University/College (institution) _____

2. Position of the respondent _____

3. What is the enrolment rate of learners with disability at this/your institutions of higher learning? Choose your rating.

    ☐ Low   ☐ Moderate   ☐ High

4. What type of disability is accommodated at your institution? Tick against your option/s

    ☐ Hearing impairment   ☐ Visual Impairment   ☐ Physical disability

    ☐ Intellectual disability   ☐ Muteness/dumbness   ☐ Other (specify)

    _____

5. What is the greatest challenge your university faces regarding the delivery of inclusive education?Please tick your option/s.

    ☐   Disability-friendly Infrastructures

    ☐   The budget line for Inclusive Education

    ☐   Expertise in special needs/inclusive education

    ☐   Resources for Inclusive Education

    ☐   Resource Center

Lack of policies that support Inclusive Education

☐ Lack of political will

☐ Other (Please specify)_____

6. Do you have specific policies or strategies at your institution that facilitate the implementation of inclusive education? Tick your option/s

☐ Admission policy   ☐ Welfare policy   ☐ Student policy   ☐ Curriculum policy

☐ Complaints management policy   ☐ Research policy   ☐ Assessment policy

☐ Other (Please state)_____

7. What are some of the strategies you are implementing as an institution to introduce/improve/enhance the implementation of inclusive education and associated challenges? Tick your choice/s

☐ Use of universal design principles to create accessible classrooms/infrastructure

☐ Use of a variety of instructional formats

☐ Develop students'Individualized Education programs(IEPs)

☐ Providing Inclusive learning resources for teachers

☐ Providing Inclusive learning resources for learners with disability

☐ Development of institutional policies on Inclusive Education

☐ Other (Specify) _____

8. Which strategies as an institution are you failing to implement to introduce/improve/enhance the implementation of inclusive education and associated challenges? Tick your choices

☐ Use of universal design principles to create accessible classrooms/infrastructure

☐ Use of a variety of instructional formats

☐ Develop students'Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

☐ Providing Inclusive learning resources for teachers

☐ Providing Inclusive learning resources for learners with disability

☐ Development of institutional policies on Inclusive Education

☐ Other (Specify) _____

9. Suggest reasons leading to the challenges leading to the failure(s) in 8. Tick your option/s

☐ Negative perception ☐ Lack of institutional preparedness ☐ Lack of policy direction ☐ Lack of awareness ofinclusive education options

☐ Other (Specify)_____

10. What is the rate of effectiveness of inclusive services at your institution? Tick your option.

☐ Low ☐ Moderate ☐ High

11. How would you suggest that the challenges associated with the implementation of inclusive education be addressed? Choose your option/options by ticking against them.

a. ☐ Technical training for teachers involved in inclusive education

☐

b   Redressing infrastructure to accommodate the mobility and learning of learners with disability.

c ☐ Awareness ofdisability issues among students

d ☐ Development of institutional policies to support inclusive education

e ☐ Clear government and regulatory bodies' policies on inclusive education

☐

f   Provision of teaching and learning resources for learners with disability.

End of Questionnaire

Appendix E: Students' Questionnaire

Questionnaire for Students

Name of the enumerator: _____ Date filled ___/___/ 2020

Checked by: _____ Date checked ___/___/ 2020

Comment: _____

1. University/College   _____

2. Gender   _____   [*1 = Male, 2 = Female*]

3. Year of Study _____   {Year1, 2, 3 or 4}

4. What type of disability is accommodated at your institution? Tick against your option/s

    ☐ Hearing impairment   ☐ Visual Impairment   ☐ Physical disability

    ☐ Intellectual disability   ☐ Muteness/dumbness   ☐ Other (specify)

    _____

5. What kinds of challenges do learners with disability face? Choose option/s by ticking against the item.

    a. ☐   Lack of learning material/resources

    b. ☐   Unconducive learning infrastructures

    c. ☐   Lack of academic and moral support from lecturers

    d. ☐   Lack of moral support from fellow students

    e. ☐   Lack of relevant technical support to facilitate effective learning

    f. ☐   Other (Specify below)

    _____
    _____
    _____

6. How do you rate the quality of inclusive education provided by your institution? Tick against your option.

☐ Low   ☐ Fair   ☐ High

7. What policies are in place in your institution that supports inclusive education? Tick your option/s

☐ Admission policy   ☐ Welfare policy   ☐ Student policy   ☐ Curriculum policy

☐ Complaints management policy   ☐ Research policy   ☐ Assessment policy

☐ Other (Please state)_____

8. How would you suggest that the challenges associated with the implementation of inclusive education be addressed? Choose your option/options by ticking against them.

    a. ☐ Technical training for teachers involved in inclusive education

    b. ☐ Redressing infrastructure to accommodate the mobility and learning of learners with disability.

    c. ☐ Awareness ofdisability issues among students

    d. ☐ Development of institutional policies to support inclusive education

    e. ☐ Clear government and regulatory bodies' policies on inclusive education

    f. ☐ Provision of teaching and learning resources for learners with disability.

End of Questionnaire

Appendix F: Administrators Interview Guide
Interview for Administrators

(Institution of Higher education)

Name of the enumerator:_____Date   filled   ___/___/ 2020

Checked by:_____Date checked   ___/___/ 2020

Comment: _____

Date of Interview:____/_   / 2020

1. University/College (institution)_____

2. Position of the respondent _____

3. What type of disability is accommodated in your institutions?
    _____
    _____

4. How does the institution support the delivery of education to learners with disability in the following areas:
    a. Infrastructures   _____
    b. Finances   _____
    c. Expertise   _____

5. Do you have specific policies or strategies at your institution that facilitate the implementation of inclusive education?
    _____
    _____
    _____

6. What are some of the strategies you are implementing as an institution to introduce/improve/enhance the implementation of inclusive education and associated challenges?
    _____
    _____
    _____

7. Which strategies as an institution are you failing to implement to introduce/improve/enhance the implementation of inclusive education and associated challenges? Provide reasons for the failure.
    _____
    _____
    _____

8. Suggest solutions to the challenges leading to the failure(s) in 8.
    _____
    _____
    _____

9. What is your perception ofthe incorporation of learners with disability into the mainstream education system?

    _____
    _____
    _____

10. What is the greatest/s challenge your university is facing in regards to inclusive education?

    _____
    _____
    _____

11. Are there any other issues related to inclusive education you might want to share thatwe haven't discussed?

    _____
    _____

End of Questionnaire

Appendix G: Government Officials Interview Guide
Interview for Administrators

(Institution of Higher education)

Name of the enumerator:_____Date   filled   ___/___/ 2020

Checked by:_____Date checked   ___/___/ 2020

Comment: _____

Date of Interview:___/_   / 2020

12. University/College (institution)_____

13. Position of the respondent _____

14. What type of disability is accommodated in your institutions?
    _____
    _____

15. How does the institution support the delivery of education to learners with disability in the following areas:
    a. Infrastructures   _____
    b. Finances   _____
    c. Expertise   _____
16. Do you have specific policies or strategies at your institution that facilitate the implementation of inclusive education?
    _____
    _____
    _____

17. What are some of the strategies you are implementing as an institution to introduce/improve/enhance the implementation of inclusive education and associated challenges?
    _____
    _____
    _____

18. Which strategies as an institution are you failing to implement to introduce/improve/enhance the implementation of inclusive education and associated challenges? Provide reasons for the failure.
    _____
    _____
    _____

19. Suggest solutions to the challenges leading to the failure(s) in 8.

_____
_____
_____

20. What is your perception ofthe incorporation of learners with disability into the mainstream education system?

_____
_____
_____

21. What is the greatest/s challenge your university is facing in regards to inclusive education?

_____
_____
_____

22. Are there any other issues related to inclusive education you might want to share thatwe haven't discussed?

_____
_____
_____

End of Questionnaire