

**Implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy: A Case of Selected  
Mainstream Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division**

By

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## DECLARATION

I, Josephine Msekawanthu, declare that “Implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy 2017-2021: A Case of Selected Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division, Malawi” is my own original work, except where otherwise stated, and has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any university.

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Date

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Michael Chirambo, for being the pillar of my strength.

I cannot imagine a life without him.

## **ABSTRACT**

The study aimed at evaluating the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy (NIES) in Malawi (2017-2021) in selected secondary schools. The study investigated secondary school managers' understanding of the NIES, assessed how secondary school managers are implementing the NIES, and identified factors that affect the implementation of NIES. This was guided by the Transformational Leadership Theory.

This study was underpinned by interpretivist paradigm and employed qualitative approach under a case study design. It took place in the Northern Education Division in four selected secondary schools. Schools were purposively sampled. The participants were headteachers, deputy headteachers and heads of departments. Ethical issues were followed. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and transcribed manually. Codes were identified and came up with the following themes: secondary school managers' understanding of the NIES, managers' implementation of the NIES basing on roles assigned to schools, and factors that influence and hinder the implementation of the NIES.

The following were the major findings of the study: secondary school managers' understanding of the NIES has not developed well; secondary school managers' implementation of the NIES basing on roles assigned to schools had not been successful; the implementation of the NIES is being negatively affected by several factors, the most salient ones being in adequate resources and knowledge gap. Therefore, the study came up with the following recommendations: schools should be conducting Continuous Professional Developments on Inclusive Education issues; the Ministry of Education under the Department of Inclusive Education should be orienting secondary school managers on the NIES; schools should establish a department of Inclusive Education.

**Key words:** Inclusive Education, Inclusive Education Strategy, Diverse needs, Implementation, Transformational leadership

## **ACRONYMS**

MoEST : Ministry of Education Science and Technology

UNESCO : United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

SEN : Special Education Needs

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

IE	: Inclusive Education
NIES	: National Inclusive Education Strategy
CPD	: Continuous Professional Development
SNE	: Special Needs Education



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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Chapter Overview**

This introductory chapter narrows the understanding of the study within a particular context. It presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose, objectives of the study, justification of the study, scope of the study, theoretical framework, and operational definition of terms.

### **1.2 Background**

#### ***1.2.1 Concept of Inclusive Education***

Inclusive Education refers to a type of education which ensures that all children have access to an appropriate, relevant, affordable and effective education within the community (Peter & Nderitu, 2014). It is an international concept which aims at increasing access to education for all children despite their diverse needs. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2016) defines inclusion as a process which is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers that hinder students' participation and achievement. UNESCO (2020) defines it as an educational process which provides all learners with dynamic active participation and enjoyable learning. "Inclusion mirrors equity; a process, actions and practices that embrace diversity and build a sense of belonging, rooted in the belief that every person has value and potential, and should be respected" (UNESCO, 2020, p.11). This therefore, stresses the inclusion of all learners, despite their conditions. This study adopts the definition by UNESCO (2001) which looks at Inclusive Education as the process of reforming the education systems, cultures, policies and practices to address and respond to diverse needs of all learners.

Inclusive Education is the key guiding principle of 2030 Education Agenda embodied in the Sustainable Development Goal number 4 that ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promoted lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2016). The genesis of Inclusive Education is the statement which was produced at an international conference in Salamanca-Spain which called for inclusion to be a norm. At that conference, countries adopted a new framework for action, the guiding principle of which those ordinary schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, and linguistic or other conditions (UNESCO, 1994). Malawi is a signatory of the Salamanca statement and to show her commitment, the country has planned to improve access and equity to quality education through the implementation of inclusive education. To ensure that Inclusive Education is successfully implemented, the country developed the National Inclusive Education Strategy (NIES) 2017-2021.

### ***1.2.2 The National Inclusive Education Strategy (NIES) (2017-2021)***

The strategy is there to set the direction for achieving the goals and priorities set by the policies as it clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders (UNESCO, 2013). The National Inclusive Education strategy (2017-2021) was developed with an aim of achieving an objective on Inclusive Education which has been articulated in the National Education Policy (2016). It mainstreams Special Needs Education interventions into general education with the belief that there would be reduced stigma and discrimination. The roles of SNE Department, Education Division offices, District Education offices, specialists, regular teachers, special schools, resource centres, mainstream schools and colleges, are redefined to align with Inclusive Education values and demands. It has also an expectation that enrollment of marginalised children and young people would increase while dropout rate would decrease. Additionally,

numbers and capacity of specialist teachers would increase, and teachers who are not trained on how to support learners in an inclusive setting would respond positively (MoEST, 2020).

The National Inclusive Education strategy (2017-2021) recognises eight priority areas to make Inclusive Education a reality. These include: capacity for Inclusive Education, learner identification, assessment and case management, Inclusive Education management information system, teacher education and motivation, partnership for Inclusive Education, enabling environment for teaching and learning, and financing Inclusive Education. Apart from the eight priorities, the roles of different stakeholders are presented in NIES (2017-2021). For instance, MoEST has taken the leading role in management, coordination, and regulation of the implementation of Inclusive Education to ensure quality delivery of services. The roles are performed at different levels of the education system in Malawi. The key players for the roles in the education sector are officials from the Ministry headquarters, Education Division offices, District Education offices, education zones and mainstream schools. The following roles and responsibilities are assigned to mainstream schools: enrolling and teaching students with diverse needs; identifying learners with diverse needs; documenting and keeping records on learners with diverse needs; providing appropriate care and support to learners, making assessment referrals where necessary; creating enabling environment; conducting school-based continuous professional development; incorporating of NIES in school planning; establishing and/strengthening child protection mechanisms to ensure the rights of learners with diverse needs are safeguarded; and providing remedial lessons to learners with diverse needs (MoEST, 2016). Therefore, this study focusses on the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy basing on the roles assigned to the mainstream schools.



### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Implementation of Inclusive Education in the mainstream schools is very important if all learners are to have equal opportunity in accessing education. This is why Malawi provided the National Inclusive Education Strategy to help schools implement Inclusive Education. The strategy has ascribed several roles and responsibilities to different stakeholders including the mainstream schools; and was supposed to be implemented from 2017 to 2021.

So far, not much is known to whether the roles and responsibility assigned to schools have been done. Research on the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy is anecdotal, except by Lingolwe (2020) which focused on roles of stakeholders in general rather than in-depth investigation of the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy at school level where managers are key role players. Therefore, it is for this reason that this study set out to assess the extent to which schools have implemented the strategy.

### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

The study's main objective was to evaluate the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy in some selected schools in Northern Education Division have facilitated the implementation of NIES. To achieve that, these specific objectives were used:

- a. To investigate secondary school managers' understanding of National Inclusive Education Strategy.
- b. To assess how secondary school managers are implementing the National Inclusive Education Strategy in their schools.
- c. To identify factors that affect the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy in secondary schools.

### **1.5 Justification of the study**

The findings of this study will help the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders in Inclusive Education to have insight on how the National Inclusive Education Strategy is assisting the schools in improving access and retention of learners with diverse needs in mainstream secondary schools. The findings will further unveil areas that need attention if Inclusive Education is to succeed in some secondary schools in Malawi.

### **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

The study was anchored by transformational leadership theory. The theory was propounded by Burn in 1978. Transformational leadership theory involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers more than what is expected of them. It incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership. The leader precipitates change, encourages creativity, recognises accomplishment, builds trust and inspires a collective vision (Northhouse, 2019). The transformational leader is expected to exhibit aspects shown in Figure 1.1.

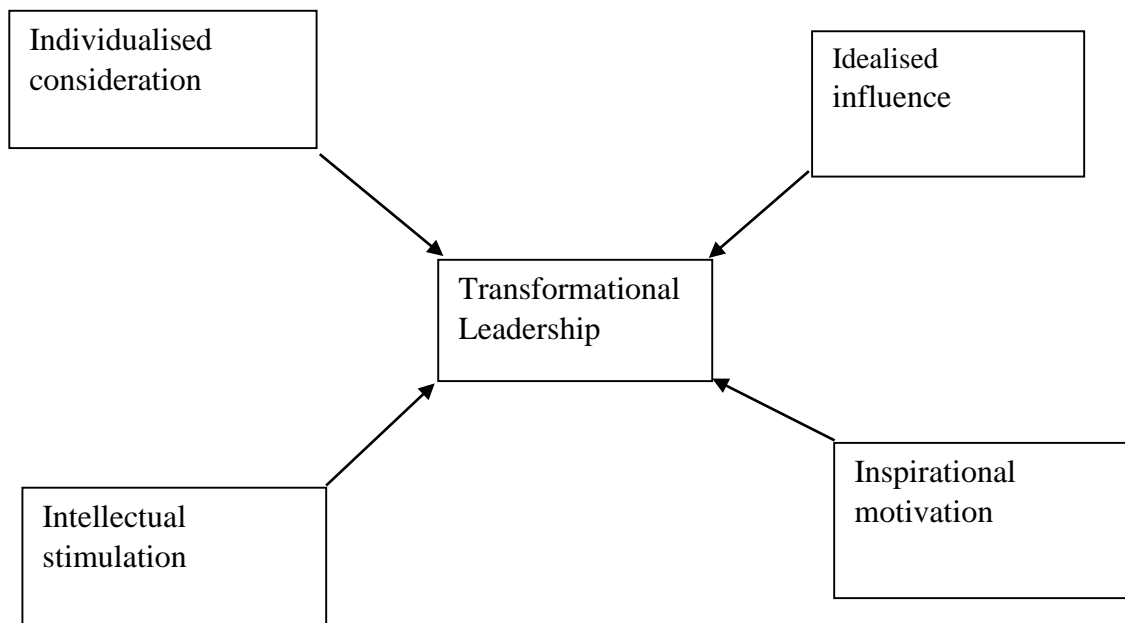


Figure 1.1 Characteristics of Transformational Leadership (adapted from Bass & Riggio, 2006)

Idealised influence is when a leader acts as a role model and has high standards of moral and ethical conduct that the followers can emulate to improve the institution’s desired levels. Inspirational motivation is when leaders communicate high expectations to followers and inspire them through motivation to become committed in achieving the set goals. Leaders can motivate followers through encouraging words, talking positive of what is needed to be changed. Intellectual stimulation is when leaders stimulate their followers to be creative and innovative so that they challenge their own beliefs and values and those of the institution to bring the required change. The leaders are there to support followers as they try new approaches and develop innovative ways of dealing with institutional issues. Individualised consideration is when leaders provide a supportive climate and listen carefully to individual needs of the followers. Leaders act as coaches and advisors (Northhouse, 2019).

This theory provides a context in understanding how the school managers' leadership would help the schools and teachers in implementing the roles which were assigned to schools in the National Inclusive Education Strategy, as they implement Inclusive Education in their respective schools. Effective implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy requires managers who are role models; those who can inspire their members of staff; those who stimulate members to creativity and innovation as well as those who are supportive and listening to individual needs. These characteristics can make them manage to facilitate the enrollment of learners, documentation and keeping records of learners with diverse needs, conducting school-based CPDs as well as creating accessible environment for learners with diverse needs. Bublitz (2016) points out that increased focus on inclusion for learners with diverse needs requires educational leaders who are creative and supportive of inclusion in order to meet the needs of all students. Since managers on their own cannot accomplish the work, creative and supportive managers would inspire, motivate and stimulate their members of staff so that together they can eliminate the barriers for the successful implementation of the desired change. This is what the transformational theory promotes.

### **1.7 Scope of the study and delimitation**

The study focused on secondary school managers because they are controlling officers in schools, as well as Ministry of Education's representatives. School managers are also the ones invested with the responsibility of facilitating the implementation of the NIES. The respondents were members of the school management teams comprising headteachers, deputy headteachers and heads of departments. These were chosen because they were the ones who perform some key roles in the mainstream schools. The roles include: supervision of school activities, procurement of resources and planning for school activities. The headteacher is also responsible for interpreting and translating government policies as well as other documents.

## **1.8 Definition of terms**

**Inclusion:** The practice of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities and members of other minority groups.

**Mainstream school:** A school from the general education system that receives students with special education.

**Special school:** Special education needs school that provides educational and other related services solely to a particular group of learners with special education needs.

**Continuous Professional Development:** The process of tracking and documenting the skills, knowledge and experience that one gains both formally and informally at work, beyond any initial training.

**Remedial lessons:** Lessons that tend or intend to rectify or improve.

**Strategy:** A plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim.

## **1.9 Summary**

The intention of this chapter was to highlight the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives, justification of the study, theoretical framework, the scope and delimitation of the study and the definition of terms. The background to the study discussed the concept of Inclusive Education and the Inclusive Education Strategy. In the section of statement of the problem, the issue that is a concern was identified; that is the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy. Furthermore, specific objectives were drawn to guide the study. The study was justified looking at how the findings would be of importance to

different stakeholders. The discussion of theoretical framework in the chapter has based on the transformational leadership theory. The chapter has revealed that the focus of the study were secondary school managers. Finally, various terms were defined.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter reviews related literature to the study from different sources, such as, books and journals. It discusses the understanding of the National Inclusive Education Strategy, benefits of inclusive education, implementation of Inclusive Education focusing on secondary school managers, and factors that influence and hinder the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy.

### **2.2 Understanding of the National Inclusive Education Strategy (NIES) and other related documents**

Implementation of any important document like NIES requires an understanding of what is to be implemented. In the study about implementation of the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines, Mbewe et al. (2021) state that, if the people do not understand the content of the policy, it is difficult for them to implement it. This indicates that knowledge plays an important role in the exercise. Findings on knowledge about the concept of Inclusive Education and NIES related documents, vary. Chimwaza (2015) notes that there is a variation on the understanding of the concept of Inclusive Education since the concept is still new in Malawi.

The study conducted by Ludago (2020) in Ethiopia has revealed that some principals do not have knowledge, while others have little knowledge on Inclusive Education. This makes them find problems in carrying out Inclusive Education practices in regular education system. This is supported by Mbewe et al. (2021) who did their study in Malawi and Mantey (2014) in Ghana who found that studies done on teachers' knowledge on Inclusive Education policy in some countries, had revealed that most of them had little or no knowledge. Thus, lack of awareness and knowledge hinder effective implementation of Inclusive Education since knowledge is

required to effectively implement Inclusive Education practices (Shu Hui Ng, 2015). Mwale et al. (2021) further argue that the situation had prompted teachers to implement Inclusive Education policies in the way they would think about, not as what is stipulated in the documents' guide. From what has been sourced, awareness of important documents is an issue. It should be understood that knowledge is obtained when one is totally aware of what is contained in documents which are expected to be implemented.

### **2.3 Benefits of Inclusive Education**

Despite the abundance of research evidence on inclusion, not all stakeholders understand what values Inclusive Education represent, Inclusive Education benefits of both learners and teachers (Kafallinu, 2020). It allows learners to attend school in their community. Most learners with diversity learning needs are included in the mainstream schools, thereby acknowledging their potential. Students with SNE and the marginalised are not segregated in the general classroom. They achieve academic success and they also have an opportunity to expose their talents. All children benefit from Inclusive Education because it allows them to develop individual strength and gift with high and appropriate expectation for each child (Mag, Sinfied & Burns, 2017). Mag et al. (2017) argue further that Inclusive Education fosters school culture.

On the other hand, teachers gain skills as they assist learners and become experienced in their teaching profession (Lewis & Doorlag, 2011). The inclusive teacher has a holistic education view with strong skills and experiences to participate in diverse contexts. Inclusive Education reduces all the emotional, physical and psychological barriers to participation in learning for all learners. Education systems, school managers and teachers should focus on generating inclusive setting that upholds the value of respect and understanding of cultural, social and individual differences (UNESCO, 2008).



However, where schools are not fully supported, all the parties do not like Inclusive Education in that way affecting performance. As a catalyst of change, Inclusive Education not only provides school improvement for all learners and teachers, but also leads to an awareness of human rights and a reduction of discrimination (MoEST, 2016). School management should facilitate change so that Inclusive Education is transformed from theory to practice. Managers should adapt to change and make it possible that all learners are accommodated in the school environment. Ayondele (2011) supports that school management should pay attention to school facilities to make them friendly to learners with special needs education, like by the construction of ramps and widening entrances to buildings. Inclusive Education is the right approach and there is need for urgent attention for all education systems around the world (Mag et al., 2017). It should also be regarded as a priority as it boosts togetherness and eliminates discrimination among individuals with diverse learning needs and their peers in the general classroom.

## **2.4 Implementation of Inclusive Education**

Inclusive Education can be introduced for different purposes and is implemented at different levels. The levels may include the Ministry, regional, district offices and schools. Meijer, et al. (1994) argue that Inclusive Education implementation may originate from dissatisfaction with the system, from economic or resource allocation concerns or from a vision of education reform. Schools review plans train and support all teachers in inclusive practices (Scheulka, 2018). However, the school should not only target specialist teachers. All teachers are to be trained and supported so that the implementation is achieved. Scheulka (2018) also highlights the need for school leadership for effective implementation. These should be supported so that they support members of staff who directly support students in their respective classrooms. He argues further that National-level implementation requires an enabling policy to clearly articulate and support inclusive, having a strong system to data collection and management,

providing flexibility in curriculum, and conducting with other aspects of the society. This entails that when the top office is well equipped, the mainstream schools through managers can be alleviated from some challenges which may arise in the process of implementation. On top of that, managers who are intrinsically motivated can easily inspire others to fulfill the roles which the Ministry of Education has assigned to schools in the Inclusive Education strategy. For instance, they can manage to enroll students with diverse needs, identify learners with diverse needs, document and keep records of students and provide appropriate support.

#### ***2.4.1 School managers and Inclusive Education***

Managers are there to manage schools and lead in all the practices which take place. Thus, school management team plays a great role in the implementation of Inclusive Education for its successful in schools. Among others, MoEST (2014) has stipulated some roles to be discharged by school managers as follows: planning school activities, supervision of teaching and learning, ensuring availability of teaching and learning materials, planning and organizing in-service training activities and maintaining school records. In addition, the National Inclusive Education Strategy in Malawi has assigned several roles to schools which are expected to be engineered by managers who are key implementers of Inclusive Education. Schools and leadership team are anticipated to enroll students with diverse needs. Although that is the case, Kayagula (2019) has argued that the approaches used by schools to enroll children with disabilities vary from one school to another. This entails that managers from different schools have their own way of enrolling students. There is no fixed way of doing it. Identification is yet another role given to schools, so as managers take leading roles, they are there to discharge the duties themselves or facilitating. Much as identification is to be done, the study conducted by Chamhenga (2016) in Zimbabwe found that teachers in mainstream schools were not adequately trained to identify children with disabilities in their classes. That cannot spare managers who are most times not

taken on board when it comes to training on issues of Inclusive Education. Documentation and record keeping is also another role, where schools and its leadership are supposed to pay much attention on Inclusive Education. This would help them track how things are taking place. Ministry of Education has an expectation that managers have the responsibility of updating records each time their offices receive information. However, sometimes it does not work as expected.

Furthermore, the provision of care and support to learners with diverse needs is another important role which is to be done to show that the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy is being practised. Therefore, for that to work, managers should maintain their leading role. This is supported by Kapen (2011) who observes that IE can only be a success if school managers are part of the team driving the process and he emphasises that the quality of leadership makes the difference between the success and failure of the school. Most inclusive and high-quality schools are those that have school leaders who lead with vision, inclusive values, motivation, autonomy and trust in staff (Scheulka, Sherab & Nidup, 2018; Sherab et al., 2015). All these can manifest if the school leaders/managers fully assist both teachers and students to work in an environment which is conducive. Strong and supportive leadership, equitable distribution of resources, and flexible and accommodative curriculum are some of the indicators of a successful implementation of Inclusive Education.

Much as the policies call for Inclusive Education, achieving it remains complicated and challenging (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013). School managers, therefore, have a lot to do for Inclusive Education to be practised fully. Khaleel, Alhosani and Duyar (2021) claim that managers are there to ensure that their schools are capable of offering professional support to both learners and teachers. They highlight further, that leaders of inclusive schools should have skills, knowledge and qualities to deliver effective leadership. Leaders should understand their

responsibility of changing school culture so that all learners are accommodated without bias. This calls for the school manager to be aware of the requirements of inclusive schools (Khaleel et al., 2021). El-Jabali (2019) asserts that for leaders to fit in inclusive schools, they need to act as the change agent so that they are able to change the system. Therefore, successful implementation of Inclusive Education requires mindset shift for change to happen (Naicker, 2019). Once school managers are able to acknowledge the type of school they are managing, they will be in a position of planning effectively for the school activities so that learners and their teachers are supported well. Most individuals only think about financial resources when it comes to implementation. Scheulka (2018) asserts that the implementation of IE is not about increasing the educational budget, but it is about the systematic and transformation of education design, cultures and values. Not all resources would need financial muscle for an institution to work properly; there is need for thorough planning for some things to be activated.

Ayondele (2011) also notes the importance of strong and supportive leadership. He clarifies that school managers should make sure that school facilities are responsive to learners with special needs, for instance, making sure that all the areas are accessible for all learners. Making school accessible is identifying and removing barriers. However, some barriers like unfriendly buildings are easy to remove. Policies and practices may require more effort to change (UNESCO, 2016). Indicators for school leaders to review their schools are as follows: everyone is to feel welcome; students are equally valued; there are high expectations for all students; staff and students treat one another with respect; there is partnership between staff and families; the school is accessible to all learners; senior staff support teachers in making sure that all students participate and learn; and the school monitors presence, participation and achievement of the school (UNESCO, 2016, p.47).

Nevertheless, school managers lack knowledge and skills to effectively monitor quality Inclusive Education programmes. There are few trainings for school managers to focus on the leading programmes (Murphy, 2018). Managers who do little to what is needed to support Inclusive Education contribute to slow progress to the anticipated change. However, supportive leaders provide answers to problems which are encountered during the implementation (Maurice & Aloka, 2019).

## **2.5 Factors that affect the implementation of Inclusive Education**

The implementation of Inclusive Education has been affected by several factors. As a continuous change in the education system, it is difficult to avoid those factors. Some factors may enhance implementation while others may hinder it. These are presented and discussed in the sections that follow:

### ***2.5.1 Factors that influence the implementation of Inclusive Education***

Inclusive Education successfulness is enhanced by a number of factors, for instance, good leadership. Precey (2011) claims that for Inclusive Education policies and programmes to work successfully, countries require effective inclusive leadership. This entails that a leader who is flexible to change, visionary and one who works collaboratively with his/her followers and other stakeholders can strive to bring about successful inclusive schools. Leaders who cannot adopt change can easily discourage those teachers who might be willing to assist children with diverse needs and those who would have ideas of supporting in restructuring the school on the road to the environment which is conducive for learners. The availability of resources and some changes in the mainstream schools can transform the system in a drastic way. Children with special needs education and other disadvantaged require specialised aids for movement,

reading, writing or even hearing, so that they are properly assisted in schools (Andai & Mwatera, 2017).

In Namibia, Mokaleng (2019) has noted that implementing the practices and cultures associated with Inclusive Education involves restructuring of the entire education system for inclusion to be a reality. She gives an example of modification of the curriculum. However, that is not the only thing to be changed as there are a number of things. This brings in another view that the success of Inclusive Education rests on quality teacher preparation, availability of resources, and accessible environment. When Inclusive Education is implemented effectively, it can ensure the provision of quality education, improve learners' outcomes and promote long term social inclusion (Kefallinou, et al., 2020).

In addition, students with special needs who are in the mainstream schools need to be empowered so that implementation can be enhanced. Empowerment inspires individuals and this leads to individual's enhancement of skills as well as confidence (Dietrich et al., 2014). With this, students develop positive attitude which could also help managers to have morale of assisting students with diverse needs.

### ***2.5.2 Factors that hinder implementation of Inclusive Education***

Mokaleng (2019) in her study observes that implementation of IE was hampered by teachers' support. Insufficient teaching and learning materials delay the implementation of Inclusive Education (Buhere et al., 2014 & Peter & Nderitu, 2014). This implies that teachers as classroom implementers need to be supported so that they effectively discharge their duties in support of the school leadership. The study conducted by Mambo (2011) reveals that teachers were not fully aware of the inclusive policy and practices as well as some related documents and that poor implementation of the Inclusive Education policy was due to lack of appropriate

training. Mostly, it is good that when change comes, people should be fully made aware of. Nevertheless, some people are just resistant to change glued to old practices. Mokaleng in her study continues that teachers must be trained for successful implementation. Lack of training delays implementation (Mambo, 2011; Chimwaza, 2015). A lot is to be desired like the process itself requires expertise. So, if teachers are not well equipped, they may find excuses for failure to do what they are supposed to do in order to accommodate all learners. Excuses can affect the school managers who are in the leading positions.

Inaccessible environments, lack of reasonable accommodation, negative attitudes, discriminatory application, incompetent leadership and admission procedures as well as lack of policies, hamper students with diverse learning needs to receive quality education. Although teachers may pump in their effort to support learners with diverse learning needs, the absence of resources and friendly environment can negatively affect implementation (Chatayika, 2012 & Andai & Mwatela, 2017).

In other areas, implementation is affected by negative attitudes by the key implementers. It is for this reason that Peakcock (2016) notes that many teachers feel that they are not prepared to meet the needs of students, hence, the contributing factor being lack of knowledge (Mbewe et.al., 2021). It can also be noted that headteachers do not support them fully to improve the system in inclusive school (Mokaleng, 2019). This can cause many challenges to the mainstream schools, as heads of departments may go through tough time in teacher class-allocation as well as planning for Continuous Professional Development in their departments. Peacock (2016) further supports that teachers show biases against learners with SNE due to lack of trust in their own abilities when handling such learners. Haitembu (2014), in a study conducted in Namibia on provision of Inclusive Education in one of the regions, found that even if education officials were aware of their responsibilities in the provision of IE, they had

no understanding of the importance of those responsibilities. She argues further that lack of Continuous Professional Development, and also information and knowledge about IE, are some of the factors hindering the implementation of Inclusive Education.

Ireri, Kang'endo, Wangira and Simon (2020) concur with other researchers by concluding that the implementation of Inclusive Education is hindered by the absence of policy and legal support, resources and facilities, specialized staff, pedagogical techniques, flexible curricula, supportive leadership and cultural attitudes. In addition, schools have structures with no libraries, laboratories and other support facilities (Ibok, 2015; Igbokwe et al., 2014). In support, Ludango (2020) also has revealed that the implementation of inclusive education has been affected by inadequate infrastructure, education facilities, sanitation facilities, lack of ramps, dirty and dusty classrooms, and lack of professionals to screen and identify children with special needs. He has also reported that where there is unfriendly environment, drop-out rate increases since learners are not fully supported.

For National Inclusive Education Strategy to be fully in operation, there is need for educators to take their time and give full support. In the study on factors influencing the implementation of Inclusive Education, Mutisiya (2010) states that children with diverse needs require support from others. This could be psychosocial, where an individual is supported for positive thinking, feeling, and good relationship (MoEST, 2016). Olaka (2016) stipulates that the implementation of Inclusive Education is influenced by the availability of instructional materials. However, materials are not adequate in most schools. Regardless of all what could be there to influence the process, what is much needed is the managers' creativity so that all the activities run smoothly.



## **2.6 Summary**

This chapter has discussed literature from different sources on selected sub-topics. Firstly, it has discussed an understanding of the National Inclusive Education Strategy and other related documents. Literature has shown that the understanding differs. It has also highlighted how different nations implement Inclusive Education. However, it is not clear on how the school managers implement the Inclusive Education Strategy. The chapter has further presented studies on factors affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education. Different nations seem to be affected by several factors.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter presents the research paradigm, approach and design. It also presents the study site, sample size, sampling methods, data collection instruments, data management methods, data analysis methods, trustworthiness and ethical consideration.

### **3.2 Research Paradigm, Approach and Design**

#### ***3.2.1 Research Paradigm***

A research paradigm is a framework for thinking about the social world (Thomas, 2013). It implies the philosophical position of researchers about the nature of matter. In brief, it is how the researcher views the world. Some of the paradigms are positivism and interpretivism. In positivism, the social world is studied objectively and it would be difficult to use open ended questions. This study adopted interpretive paradigm. Interpretive paradigm suggests that the social world can be understood from the stand point of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated (Cohen, Manion, &Marrison, 2018). It gives multiplicity of meaning. Participants are considered as the custodians of knowledge that through interactions, the researcher gains knowledge from the participants. It is believed that how much one understands about inclusiveness, and what it takes to provide Inclusive Education, is what would lead to proper implementation. This is the reason interpretivism was chosen as the best paradigm within which the study was situated.

#### ***3.2.2 Approach***

There are three approaches to research, namely: qualitative, quantitative and mixed. Each one of these has its own design. This study employed qualitative approach under a case study

design. The approach allowed the researcher to study the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy in Malawi in a natural setting, as it tried to interpret the phenomenon in terms of the meaning brought to the researcher by the people she interacted with. Additionally, it assisted the researcher to better understand the phenomenon that was studied.

### **3.2.3 Design**

Cohen et al. (2018) defines a design as “a plan or strategy that is drawn up for organising the research and making it practicable, so that the objectives can be achieved based on evidence and warrants” (p.173). It is described further as the overall strategy that one requires integration of different components of the study in a coherent or logical way, thereby ensuring to solve the problem in an efficient way. It constitutes a blueprint for collection (Shinde, 2015).

This research adopted a case study design. Case study is a design of inquiry which is used in most fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a programme, event, activity, process or one or more individuals (Creswell, 2009). Case study is defined further as a comprehensive description of an individual case and its analysis (Creswell, 2014). He continues that the structure of the case study should be the problem, the context, issues and lessons learned. In case studies, the researcher collects information using different data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Yin, 2014). Creswell has also noted that a case study has distinctive boundaries or parameters to prevent researchers from losing focus. The case study research answers the question “what happened? How or why, something happened?” It focuses on a particular phenomenon to understand a specific problem that occurs in every practice (Mills & Gay, 2016). Therefore, this study being a case study, employed multiple cases as it wanted to understand what practices are taking place. Schools were taken as cases not individuals in the school. However, to have

thorough understanding five managers per school were interviewed as they all work towards the common goal of the schools they manage. School managers comprise; the headteacher, deputy headteacher (s) and heads of departments. These were targeted because at school level, they are key implementers of government programmes.

### **3.3 Study site**

The study was conducted in the Northern Education Division (NED). This is one of the six Education Divisions in Malawi. Northern Education Division has about 216 Secondary Schools, out of which four schools will be targeted. The researcher proposed the Northern Education Division because has the knowledge that the National Inclusive Education strategy booklet was distributed to most secondary schools in the division to guide them in Inclusive Education practices. The choice of the schools is based on schools which enroll students with diverse needs.

### **3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

#### ***3.4.1 Sampling Techniques***

Sampling technique is a description of the strategies which the researcher uses to select the sample from the target population (Creswell, 2012). There are a good number of sampling techniques which researchers use. Simple random is one of them and this is where every member of the population has an equal or independent chance of being selected. Others are stratified, cluster, convenience and purposive sampling. Fraenkel et al. (2012) defines stratified random sampling as a process in which sub groups are selected for the sample in the same proportion as they exist in the population. However, convenience is described as selecting a group of individuals who are available for the study and it is different from purposive sampling which is based on previous knowledge of a population and the specific purpose of the research.

Fraenkel et al. (2015) suggests that researchers assume they can use their knowledge of the population to judge whether or not a particular sample will be representative. He argues further that a researcher does not simply study whoever is present but rather uses judgment to select a sample he/she trusts, basing on previous information, will provide the required information. The study employed convenience and purposive sampling methods. The secondary schools were sampled basing on willingness of schools while participants were chosen basing on the researcher's judgement that managers are supervisors of implementation of policies/programs at school level.

### ***3.4.2 Sample Size***

Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2015) describe a sample as a group on which information is obtained. The results are applied to a larger group known as population. Population is the totality of any group of units which has one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher; this is the group which the researcher would like to generalise the results on (Fraenkel et al., 2015; Omari, 2011). In other words, a sample is the target group the researcher is interested in. Sample size is determined by the researcher's choice and also resources available. For example, the researcher would look at how much time is there for the project, how much would be needed for the whole project. Cohen et al., (2018) have argued that the type of approach chosen can determine the sample size. The study drew five members of school management team from each of the four schools. Thus, twenty participants were interviewed. Five members represented a school and in total, they were twenty participants. Members were selected basing on the researcher's understanding that the participants were the best, adding to the understanding of the phenomenon under study. These schools were referred to as School A, School B, School C and School D, as provided in the profile in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1 Profile of the four schools and participants

SCHOOL	DESCRIPTION	PARTICIPANTS
A	This is a district boarding secondary school. It is headed by the Chief Education Officer along with two deputies. It started enrolling students with special needs in 2015. The school has special needs and Inclusive Education department which is headed by a specialist teacher. It enrolls students with visual impairment, learning difficulties, chronic illness and orphans as well as the needy.	Head A Deputy Head A HoD A1 HoD A2 HoD A3
B	This is a district boarding secondary school. It is headed by the Chief Education Officer along with two deputies. It started enrolling students with special needs in 2014. The school has special needs and Inclusive Education department which is headed by a specialist teacher. It enrolls students with visual impairment, hearing impairment, albinism, learning difficulties, chronic illness and orphans as well as the needy. The school has teachers in various categories but does not have the teacher for students with hearing impairment.	Head B Deputy Head B HoD B1 HoD B2 HoD B3
C	This is a Community Day Secondary School. The school does enroll students with diverse needs but with no allocation of specialist teachers to the school and no department of Inclusive Education.	Head C Deputy Head C HoD C1 HoD C2 HoD C3
D	This is a Community Day Secondary School. It is a single stream and enrolls students with special needs. It has no department of Inclusive Education and specialist teachers in all the categories.	Head D Deputy Head D HoD D1 HoD D2 HoD D3

### 3.4.3 Instrument Development

The researcher developed two types of instruments which were used to collect data. An interview guide was developed to collect in- depth data on respondents' understanding of the

National Inclusive Education Strategy; implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy; and factors affecting the implementation of the NIES. The last question was a follow-up to check on any other information the participants wanted to add on. Document analysis guide was formulated to check the implementing the NIES. The researcher checked if students with diverse needs were enrolled and categorised according to their needs. Availability of Inclusive Education documents was also checked to see if the schools keep records on Inclusive Education. The researcher also checked whether Inclusive Education activities were incorporated in school planning.

#### ***3.4.4 Pilot study***

Before collection of the main data, the researcher conducted a pilot study. She selected a sample of one school which comprised five managers; the headteacher, deputy headteacher and three heads of departments. Pilot studies are conducted to evaluate the adequacy of the researcher's planned instruments, methods and procedures (Polit & Beck, 2017). Therefore, the researcher conducted the study to test the instruments. Interviews were administered to those five secondary school managers. In due course, it was discovered that two questions were obtaining same responses. In addition, the researcher analysed documents. The list was as follows; circulation file, admission book, class registers, calendar of events and others. Following the questions which gave same responses, one was dropped. Furthermore, on the document analysis guide, information was added as the headteacher enlightened the researcher that there was one document which is very important, but was not indicated on the guide. The information helped the researcher to include the Education Management Information System (EMIS). Thus, instruments were modified accordingly.

### **3.5 Data Collection Techniques and Instruments**

Data is the information that the researcher gets on the topic of his/her study. However, to obtain that information, there is need to have good and appropriate instruments. Thomas (2013) asserts that the choice of techniques does not differ from the way one decides on other things in research. He continues that, once you have decided how to approach the question and the design, you can make up your mind about how you are going to collect data and the instruments which would be used. This study used interviews and document analysis as techniques, and the interview guides and documentary review guide were used respectively, as instruments.

#### ***3.5.1 Interviews***

An interview is a discussion with someone in which you try to get information from (Thomas, 2013). Interviews in qualitative research may be structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Alshenqet, 2014). Bowen (2009) has explained these types and he says that structured are interviews that employ the use of a schedule which contains structured and explicit questions that do not give room for veering off the topic in question. Semi-structured are those that are more flexible, they allow unanticipated responses and issues to emerge through the use of open-ended questions and issues are explained from an individualistic perspective. Finally, unstructured interviews are those which have no specific framework for questioning.

Semi-structured interviews (appendix 6) were used in the study to gather information from secondary school managers on the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy. The semi-structured interviews were aimed at cross-checking secondary school manager understanding of the National Inclusive Education Strategy, how the secondary school managers are implementing the National Inclusive Education Strategy and investigating factors affecting the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy. Semi-structured



interviews allow the researcher to go deep for a discovery (Megaldi & Berler, 2020). Use of semi-structured interviews is advantageous because it creates room for the researcher to control the process and at the same time, gives chance for probes where necessary. Such being the case, the researcher was not restricted to the questions formulated, some questions were developed from the responses given. This helped the researcher to collect detailed data on the topic studied

The managers who were interviewed were secondary school headteachers, deputy headteachers and heads of departments. These were interviewed because they are the ones who mostly plan and lead in the implementation of most government documents including the plan for the school. The interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and later were transcribed manually. The researcher opted for a voice recorder because it ensures a full, unedited record of the ground covered in the course of discussion, and this is available to a researcher who can use it afterwards. The recorder helped the researcher to capture direct quotes which later were transcribed. It also helped the researcher to concentrate on face-to-face interaction and probe more on the raised issue because there was no disturbance due to need to take down every information which came from the interviewees. However, sometimes voice recorders misbehave in due course if one has not tested. To avoid that, the researcher tested the device and made sure that it was in good condition. In addition, she also had a phone recorder to back up if she could experience some challenges. Additionally, voice records take time to transcribe as you need to write everything which was recorded. The researcher, tried her level best to transcribe what was recorded during the interviews.

### ***3.5.2 Document Analysis***

Document analysis is a systematic procedure of reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic material (Bowen, 2009). Bowen continues to say that documents contain texts and images that have been recorded without the researchers' intervention. These help

researchers to collect the required data. The method complimented information obtained through interviews. Hence, it achieves triangulation of information which increased the validity of the findings. The researcher prepared the document review guide to maintain the focus of what was reviewed. For instance, the researcher reviewed the enrollment of learners with diverse needs and other records of learners with diverse needs along with plans for activities. Enrollment of students with diverse needs per category was checked as to verify if schools had been enrolling, identifying and keeping records in each year. This was part of evidence on how schools are implementing the national Inclusive Education Strategy 2017-2021. The researcher believed that through that, the right information was to be gathered. Table 3.3 show some documents which were analysed and reasons for analysing them.

Table 3.3 Documents analysed and Reasons for analysis

DOCUMENTS ANALYSED	REASONS FOR ANALYSIS
Admission book	Checked if schools admit students of different categories
Class registers	Checked whether students are identified and recorded in their respective classes
Calendar of events	Checked whether schools include activities which would show that Inclusive Education is being implemented e.g., orienting teachers, students and other stakeholders on Inclusive Education and students screening
School's Education Management Information System	Checked if schools are taking on board students with diverse needs

### 3.6 Data Management and Analysis

#### 3.6.1 Data Management

Research data management refers to the effective handling of information that is created in the research process (Sanjeeva, 2018). He further argues that it involves planning for and creating data, organising, structuring and documenting data, backing up and storing data, and preparing

data for analysis. Basing on the reason that good data management helps to ensure research integrity, the researcher made sure that data was kept safe from being tempered with, loss or theft. The researcher created files with appropriate names in the laptop so that at any time the transcription was done; the data was kept in the specified files. Additionally, the information was kept in flash disks and some in hard copies. The researcher also made sure that the devices were kept safe to avoid losing data.

### ***3.6.2 Data Analysis***

Data analysis includes organising, describing, understanding, accounting for, explaining data for it to make sense in terms of participant's definition of the situation (of which the researcher is one), and noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. All this is the task of qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2018). However, there is no one way of interpreting qualitative data.

In this study, data was analysed thematically where themes emerged from the transcribed data. Apart from emerged themes, other themes were pre-determined from the roles assigned to schools and the theoretical framework. Thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organising and offer insights into patterns of meaning of themes across dataset (Braun & Clark, 2012). Thematic analysis involves identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data and transforming it logically and systematically. This is a flexible and accessible method that allows researchers to focus the data in a numerous and different ways (Braun & Clark, 2012). Further, Braun and Clarke outline the phases as follows: familiarising oneself with data, searching for initial code, identifying themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a report. Thus, in this research, the researcher identified the following themes: managers' understanding of the National Inclusive Education Strategy (NIES), managers' implementation of the NIES, factors enhancing and hindering the

implementation of the NIES. These helped the researcher to analyse the data. The researcher managed to follow the phases to achieve quality.

### **3.7 Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, the study is trustworthy if and only if the reader of the research report judges it to be so. Trustworthiness can be achieved in different ways.

#### **3.7.1 Credibility**

Credibility “asks how congruent are the finding with reality” (Stahl & King, 2020, p26). In addition, Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) argue that credibility addresses the ‘fit’ between respondents’ views and the researcher’s representation of the views. To achieve credibility, member checking is done (Nowell et al., 2017). As such, the researcher went back to cross check with some informants if the interpretation of data collected reflected what was given.

#### **3.7.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the generalisability of inquiry. It is a degree to which results of research can apply or transfer beyond the bounds of the study (Nowell et al., 2017). The study achieved transferability by use of thick description. The researcher provided suitable details on participants, methods of collecting data and on reporting findings of the study.

#### **3.7.3 Confirmability**

Stahl and King (2020) posit that the concept of confirmability is the researcher’s comparable concern to objectivity. This is when researcher’s bias is removed from what has been collected and the study becomes neutral. In this way, the researcher’s interpretations and findings clearly

derives from data (Nowell et al., 2017). One way of ensuring confirmability is emphasising the role of triangulation. Fraenkel et al. (2015) describes triangulation as using a variety of instruments to collect the same data. He argues further that triangulation can work with any other subject, in any setting and at any level. It can improve quality of the data and accuracy of the researcher's interpretation. In the study, the researcher triangulated the data to ensure trustworthiness. Data was collected using interview guides as well as document review guide. Furthermore, frequent interactions between the supervisor and the researcher helped as it widened the researcher's knowledge of the issue which was studied rather than depending on one's thought. Confirmability was also ensured through reflexivity, through safe keeping of data. Hence, conclusions for this study were based on the findings without being biased.

#### ***3.7.4 Pilot study***

The researcher also piloted the instruments to achieve trustworthiness. Piloting helped the researcher to adjust the instruments. For instance, interview guides were revisited as there were two guides which gave the same information. Hence, one question was dropped. Some questions were also re-arranged for the flow of ideas. Additionally, some items which were included in the document analysis guide were removed as they were not part of documents which could be reviewed.

### **3.8 Ethical Consideration**

The consideration of ethical issues is crucial in all stages of qualitative research. To participate fully, participants need to be adequately informed about the research and have power of freedom of choice whether to participate or not (Arifin, 2018; Fraenkel et al., 2015). Arifin (2018) and Fraenkel et al. (2015) also highlights that the anonymity and confidentiality of participants should be preserved. To ensure that ethics are taken into consideration, Fraenkel et

al. (2015) emphasise that participants should be treated with respect and the researcher should make sure that no physical or psychological harm comes to anyone who participates in the study. In addition, it is important to consider the fundamentals of ethical research involving human participants. It is important that approval has to be gained before the commencement of data gathering from human participants as doing so with humans is crucial.

Therefore, to comply with ethics, the researcher sought permission from relevant authorities. Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee provided the researcher with an approval letter (see Appendix 1). The researcher was served with an introduction letter by Mzuzu University and the Northern Education Division office permitted the researcher to collect data in the selected Secondary Schools (see Appendix 2). The researcher had actually sought permission from the Northern Education Division office (see Appendix 3). In addition, Headteachers of the schools visited were served with a letter seeking permission to conduct the research (see Appendix 4), and participants were given consent forms to sign before attending to the interview session (see Appendix 5). The participants were assured by the researcher that their identities were to be protected and that the information which they provided would be treated with greatest confidentiality. The participants were referred to as headteacher A, deputy headteacher A, HoD A1, HoD A2, HoD A3 and so on, as outlined in Table 3.1. In addition, participants were informed that if any one decided not to be part of the study, was free to withdraw. Furthermore, the researcher fully observed Covid-19 prevention measures as she worked with the participants and some documents in the schools. For instance, social distance of two metres apart was observed and both the researcher and participants used face masks/face shields. Hand sanitiser was also used, especially the time when the researcher was checking various documents.

### **3.9 Research Dissemination Strategy**

Dissemination of research results is described as the spreading of the outputs of research to relevant audiences, such as the academic community or policy makers (Marin-González, Malmusi, Camprumbi & Borrell, 2016). Dissemination of research results draws attention of government and stakeholders to research results and conclusion, enhancing their visibility, comprehension and implementation.

The researcher is to share the results of the findings by writing a report in plain language so that it will be easily understood by different stakeholders. The report on the findings will be shared with Mzuzu University to be used by parties interested in the study area. It will help them to go through areas of further studies and some will also have room to improve on the study. Additionally, the research report will be shared with the selected secondary schools, the Northern Education Division and the Ministry of Education, specifically the Department of Inclusive Education. The report will help these stakeholders to appreciate how the selected secondary schools are implementing Inclusive Education basing on the roles and responsibilities, which mainstream schools are assigned in the National Inclusive Education Strategy in Malawi, and plan for more as the country is striving to achieve the effective implementation of Inclusive Education.

### **3.10 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the methods that were employed to collect and analyse data. Purposive sampling method was employed to select the sample. The researcher selected four schools where five managers in each school were selected. The researcher administered semi-structured interviews and analysed documents to collect data. The data were coded and analysed manually by the use of thematic analysis.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study on the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy in some selected secondary schools in Northern Education Division in Malawi. The study was guided by the following objectives:

- a. To investigate secondary school managers' understanding of National Inclusive Education Strategy
- b. To assess how secondary school managers are implementing the National Inclusive Education Strategy in their schools
- c. To identify factors that affect the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy in selected secondary schools

There are so many ways of presenting qualitative data. Cohen et al. (2018) discusses five ways of presenting data as: by groups, individuals, issue, research questions/objectives and instruments. However, for this study data has been presented according to objectives. This has been done because the approach effectively utilises the appropriate data gathered from interviews and document analysis to deliver a collective answer to an objective so that the issues are presented coherently. Much as that is the case, it should be noted that the study did not aim at judging or comparing the participants. To effectively deal with each issue that is raised under a particular objective, findings for each objective are discussed before moving to the next objective.



## 4.2 Findings and Discussions

### 4.2.1 School managers' understanding of the National Inclusive Education Strategy (NIES)

Under the objective, the study has revealed that managers from the four schools visited understood the NIES differently. Amongst the twenty participants, 8 understood it as practices for inclusion. Among the 8 participants, 3 were from School A, 2 were from School B, 2 were from School C and 1 was from School D. For example, it was said that the strategy involves teaching students with challenges along with others, identification of students with diverse needs, inclusion of students with diverse needs in mainstream schools, provision of equal treatment to students regardless of their diversity, and availability of access infrastructures for easy mobility. The following excerpts confirm what forty percent of the twenty participants said. Head A said; *we mix learners with challenges and those without education needs.* HoD A1 also made the following comment; *I identify students with diverse needs by screening them; coming up with strategies on how students with diverse needs can be handled in mainstream schools.* HoD A3 commented that, *treating students equally....* Deputy head B said, *but I know it is there probably they are those things we can do to help learners so that all learners we have are accommodated in the teaching and learning process...* HoD B2 said; *but...I feel the strategy is that we take all students on board, that is the little I know about Inclusive Education.* Head C said; *I think it talks about treating students equally without drawing lines that this one cannot do that.* HoD C1 narrated; *Aaah... on the national I simply know partially that as teachers we have to take part in making sure that all students who have got learning difficulties are considered in classroom situation... the strategy mmm....* HoD D3 narrated; *Aaa! this is a way of encouraging learners let's students who have visual challenges, physically challenges, and with other problems have to be incorporated in a lesson, that is what I know about Inclusive Education.*

However, 10 participants who showed little understanding of the NIES revealed that what was said was not from the NIES document itself, but the knowledge which was acquired from management meetings and their pre-service colleges. 2 participants said that the NIES describes methodologies and procedures which have been set to guide the implementation of Inclusive Education in Malawi as Head B narrates: ... *mmm I think it's a strategy where they are coming up with methodologies and procedures to accommodate students with diverse needs.* On the other hand, 10 participants failed to spell out what the strategy is all about. They claimed that they had never seen the document or heard about it.

The findings have shown that 10 managers have little knowledge of the NIES while the other 10 have no knowledge. Knowledge of NIES document can trigger the process of its implementation. It appears that, those who mentioned some of the activities related to the NIES are those who had attended some management meetings and had studied Inclusive Education in institutions of higher learning. There was variation in the understanding of the NIES among the school managers. This is in line with Chimwaza (2015) who noted that there is a variation on the understanding of the concept of Inclusive Education since the concept is still new in Malawi. Thus, having little or no knowledge can affect implementation negatively.

Similarly, Ludago (2020) in his study discovered that principals' little knowledge or knowledge gap hinders one to carry out Inclusive Education practices in regular education system. Mwale et al. (2021) add that if the people do not understand the content of the policy, it is difficult for them to implement. The findings raise doubts on how secondary school managers may act as role models if they do not fully understand what is to be implemented. School leaders as agents of change require competency to set direction and provide individualised support (Opiyo, 2019). In that way teachers and other members of staff may emulate them in having things done. Where managers lack knowledge or have little knowledge, problems may be encountered.

#### ***4.2.2 Secondary school managers' implementation of the NIES in Malawi***

The assessment of the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy in Malawi (2017-2021) focused on roles which are assigned to mainstream schools. These include the following: enrolling learners with diverse needs, identifying learners with diverse needs, documenting and keeping records on learners with diverse needs, providing appropriate care and support to learners with diverse needs, making assessment referrals where necessary, conducting school-based Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs), incorporating NIES in school planning, establish and/or strengthen child protection mechanisms to ensure rights of learners with diverse needs are safeguarded, and providing remedial lessons to learners with diverse needs that have transitioned to mainstream schools and the existing learners with diverse needs. Pre-determined themes derived from those roles were used in analysing data from interviews and document analysis. The findings were as follows:

##### ***4.2.2.1 Enrolling learners with diverse needs***

It was reported that generally, enrollment was done after schools had received selection books in which names of students with disabilities are indicated. Some students come on recommendation from the Division Office. Amongst the four schools visited, three of the schools (A, B and C) indicated that when students report to schools, names are verified and, in the process, ages and status of students are recorded. Students are also observed keenly to check if they may need special attention or not as in this excerpt from Headteacher A. *...when enrolling, we are able to tell whether the child is needy or not, we look at all the areas*

School D did not elaborate on how enrollment was done, but said that they enroll students who have been selected and those who come on transfer. This may entail that those who were entrusted to enroll students had no knowledge of what exactly should happen in the process of

admitting students. It might be that schools are not aware of the guidelines for enrolling students with diverse needs specified in the NIES. Table 4.1 shows the needs diversity among students enrolled.

Table 4.1 Students with diverse needs enrolled in the four study schools

CATEGORY	SCHOOL	YEARS				
		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Children with disabilities	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	B	✓			✓	✓
	C					✓
	D	✓		✓	✓	✓
Children from poor families	A		✓	✓	✓	
	B	✓			✓	✓
	C		✓	✓	✓	✓
	D					✓
Children with Albinism	A	✓				✓
	B				✓	✓
	C					
	D					
Children suffering from chronic diseases	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	B	✓	✓			
	C					✓
	D					
Gifted and talented	A					
	B					✓
	C					
	D					
Teenage/ Adolescent mothers	A					
	B					✓
	C					✓
	D					
Orphans	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	B	✓				✓
	C		✓	✓	✓	✓
	D	✓	✓	✓		✓

Table 4.1 shows that not all the categories under diverse needs are found in all schools and in some cases, not all categories are being recorded in the schools. Orphans were recorded in all the four schools. According to the four schools in this study, the education office often requests names of orphans, hence they keep records of those students for fear of being labeled as incompetent managers. It appears that managers understand that failure to produce records for orphans can also deprive them from getting support from well-wishers. However, managers need to appreciate that all categories are equally important as they require support at one point or another. It was also reported that School B lost some records as most information used to be sent through WhatsApp, so managers just read and forgot. This is why there are gaps for some years. The other reason for not recording some information seemed to be variation in the approach used by managers in different schools when conducting the activity, and this left some categories aside. Kayagula (2019) argues that the approaches used by schools to enroll children with disabilities vary from one school to another. The difference affects the implementation. Schools C and D did not elaborate on how enrollment is done. It appears that the managers lack specialised knowledge of what the strategy demands because they even revealed that the selection list, they receive, does not indicate names of students with diverse needs. These managers suggest that without the indication of such students, then enrollment is a challenge. This may have led to restrictions in practising the role. The study conducted by Pima (2012) indicates that when stakeholders have not directly interacted with the policy statement themselves, the result is confusion and there are gaps in understanding. This might be true with the way enrollment is being done in some schools. From the findings, there is a portrayal of Individualised consideration which is one of the characteristics of transformational leadership theory. Schools' leadership is able to create a supportive climate when it comes to registration of some categories.

#### 4.2.2.2 Identification of students with diverse needs

The National Inclusive Education Strategy expects schools to effectively identify students with diverse needs. The study found that identification of students with diverse needs is done at different levels in different schools. It is either done before a student gets enrolled into the school or after being enrolled. Table 4.2 outlines how the four schools identify students with diverse needs.

Table 4.2 How students with diverse needs are identified in schools

School	How is it done
A	Checks status of learners Screening by specialist teachers
B	Checking the selection Verifying with names indicated at the back of the selection book- this is done by specialist teachers Observing the learner in the process of admitting them Assessing the learner
C	Bursary committee headed by the deputy headteacher interviews those who fail to pay fees Interviewing parents and friends
D	Collection of information from teachers, prefects upon request from the deputy's office Checking learner's attendance Observation of learner's physical appearance and mobility Checking learners' progress Collecting information from individuals

From the findings of this study, schools identify students with diverse needs using different ways and at different times. This is in line with the strategy requirement as indicated on role number two of the mainstream schools on page 27 (MoEST, 2016). The students are identified upon arrival in the school and in the process of their schooling. However, verification exercise through screening of students with disabilities is conducted in those schools which have

specialist teachers. As noted from Table 4.2, schools A and B conduct screening exercise while schools; C and D do not. It appears that the absence of specialist teachers contributed to the failure to screen students. However, some activities, for instance, checking learners' progress show that managers exercise intellectual stimulation to find new approaches of conducting the exercise. Their creativity managed to help them come up with different ways of identifying students. Intellectual stimulation provides an important force in the school change (Liu, 2013) as school managers strive to find modern ways of thinking and getting things done.

School C reported that in some cases, lack of expertise affects the identification of students with diverse needs in the schools. Therefore, school managers need training to perform this role. One of the managers from school C narrates:

*Mmm... I feel in some areas we lack expertise; we need to be trained; we leave some categories unattended to for a long time. Like here, some students walk long distances to and from school, we agreed to take them on board. Aaa "timangozipangirapo ndi a head angawa" (we just practise it with my head) without any guidance, we don't know whether we are doing the right thing or not. You know! Some students fail to expose themselves that they need someone who has expertise for easy identification.*

Training on how the NIES should be implemented could be seen here as of importance for effective identification of students with diverse needs. Chimhenga (2016) asserts that teachers in mainstream schools are not adequately trained to identify children with disabilities in their classes. However, the National Inclusive Education 2017-2021 prioritises increased capacity which requires creation of awareness on Inclusive Education Training of managers is critical so that they should be aware of the requirements of inclusive schools (Khaleel et al., 2021).

#### *4.2.2.3 Documentation and record keeping*

According to the NIES 2017-2021, mainstream schools are supposed to document and keep records of learners with diverse needs, and these could be indicated in Admission books, Education Management Information System and registers. Here is what was found on each of these documents:

##### *Admission book*

Amongst the schools visited, admission books for schools A and B showed evidence of records of information on Inclusive Education. Students with disabilities, the needy and orphans were indicated in almost all the years targeted. In contrast, schools; C and D had no information on the same, but students of different categories are there. The leadership of schools A and B had exposed inspirational motivation by taking care of the students who are excluded from, and within the classrooms. This can easily motivate the followers to do the same when they may be dealing with those students in the classroom situation.

##### *Class registers*

Registers which were checked had a column for class teachers to indicate if the class had students with disabilities, but nothing was indicated. School D, in the register for 2021, Form 1 class indicated one student with low vision, but that was not captured in the EMIS and the registers for the other years between 2019 and 2021, had also indicated a student with disability. The findings show that the schools visited were treating registers not as a requirement when it comes to the implementation of the roles.



### *Education Management Information System (EMIS)*

Information gathered from the school-based Education Management Information System displayed Inclusive Education records. The schools registered several categories of learners with diverse needs, for example, students with disabilities, orphans, teenage mothers, and learners from disadvantaged families among others. Almost all the four schools visited had captured orphans and needy students in EMIS and on charts which were pasted on notice boards in the headteachers' offices. When asked to give the reason, it was indicated that most of the times, the education office and some well-wishers request for the information they kept.

The investigation has found evidence that documentation and record keeping is a challenge for the schools as the implementation of the NIES does not follow what is sought for but other requirements. For instance, at school D, after a probe, the headteacher and three heads of departments agreed to have students with diverse needs but records did not show. Schools did not also have records of the availability of Inclusive Education documents. This demonstrates failure on part of some school managers to perform roles assigned in the implementation of NIES. This is contrary to mainstream role number three indicated on page 27 (MoEST, 2016) which requires schools to document and keep records. This poor record management leads to difficulties in administering, planning and monitoring of educational systems globally (Ololube, 2013). In this case, Transformational Leadership Theory has been challenged since leaders have failed to communicate high expectations to followers so that they can be motivated in the process of documentation and record keeping. However, some managers were able to keep records especially in the admission books and EMIS as expected. These leaders exhibit idealised influence as their practice sets them as role models where teachers can emulate from them to document names of students in their classrooms.

Documentation and record keeping of Inclusive Education would help in proper planning as managers will always refer to those records when need arises. There are a number of issues on Inclusive Education which need to be managed, for instance, communications from Education offices, schools' programmes and services which are provided to students with diverse needs. In support, Alab (2017) declares that records should be in full and complete, and in secondary schools, it is not optional but a must. Therefore, implementation would be effective where school managers do have materials which they can be referring to.

#### *4.2.2.4 Provision of appropriate care and support*

Mainstream schools are mandated to provide appropriate care and support to students with diverse needs. The study established that care and support is provided, but, it is inadequate. The Table 4.3 summarises the care and support provided to students in the schools visited.

Table 4.3: Care and support given to students with diverse needs

School	Care and support provided
A	Inspection of infrastructure whether it is friendly or not Provision of large prints for students with Low Vision and braille machines to those with VI Advising teachers to accommodate all students, those with hearing impairment placed at the right place Construction of user-friendly toilets Students with Albinism not left to move long distances alone Provision of general teaching and learning materials
B	Sensitisation of teachers for proper support Students with Albinism provided with lotion Construction of private toilets for those with mobility challenges Construction of ramps Empowering prefects to assist teachers in supporting fellow students Provision of general teaching /learning resources
C	Making sure that school facilities are user-friendly Provision of accommodation for those who come from far Advising teachers to use legible handwriting Checking how students are learning
D	Constructing of ramps Provision of writing materials Not chasing those who have no uniform Sourcing bursaries for those with challenges Provision of inadequate materials

Information gathered shows that managers are trying to support students with diverse needs in different ways which is one of the roles expected to be done in schools as indicated in the NIES page 27. For example, schools are making sure that infrastructure is accessible by constructing ramps on almost all entrances, provision of skin protection lotion, general teaching and learning materials, pieces of advice to teachers on how to treat students and accommodation to those

who walk long distances to school. Although ramps were being constructed to achieve accessibility of infrastructures, it was reported by some managers that some ramps constructed in other schools were not of good quality because of lack of resources. Head D said:

*We try to construct ramps, but I feel the ramps we construct are not standard; we fail to employ experienced personnel because of financial constraint. One time we were visited by the PEA (Primary Education Advisor), he said we should reconstruct the ramps but we can't. The school has no money for the work.*

From what was said, financial resources affect the quality of the work. Still, there is an indication that secondary school managers in some of the selected schools saw the need to modify the infrastructure so that learners access them. This is in line with Ayondole (2011) who points out that strong and supportive leaders make sure that the school facilities are responsive to all learners with SNE. The study has also established that, although infrastructure is being modified, some are not of good quality due to inadequate financial support. However, Scheulka (2018) says that the implementation of Inclusive Education is not about increasing educational budget but rather, through the available resources the schools have, some challenges schools encounter can be alleviated.

It was also noted that support in terms of teaching and learning materials specifically for students with disabilities is inadequate. Out of the seventy-five percent of the schools which had students with low visual impairment, fifty percent had no provision of large print text books to support the students. It is claimed that this is due to lack of financial support from the government. It should be pointed out that the provision of teaching and learning materials which meet the needs of learners is important. School managers are entrusted by the Ministry of Education to take a role of ensuring the availability of teaching and learning materials (MoEST, 2014). Shortage of resources which are required in inclusive classrooms could have negative

effects on students with diverse needs. Peter and Nderitu (2014) affirm that lack of teaching and learning materials necessary for special needs education is a challenge to inclusion. There is also need to offer care and support for positive thinking, feeling and good relationship (MoEST, 2016) for effective implementation. Leaders who are supportive would provide answers to problems which are encountered during the implementation (Maurice & Aloka, 2019).

However, it is interesting to note that school B has leadership that thinks of sensitising members of staff for students to be well supported. In addition, prefects are empowered to support their peers so that they are not left behind in all the school activities. The leadership of the school has, therefore, demonstrated intellectual stimulation. Leaders who show intellectual stimulation are creative, innovative as well as supportive. This type of leadership is that which is required in practising Inclusive Education to meet individual needs of students. The assertion collaborates with Bublitz (2016) who finds that education leaders must be creative and supportive of inclusion in order to meet the needs of students. Therefore, students who are supported cannot feel isolated in mainstream classes. In so doing, school managers will be seen achieving their roles in their respective inclusive schools.

#### *4.2.2.5 Making referrals of students with diverse needs*

Students may be referred to schools where they could be well assisted for several reasons. To implement the NIES effectively, better placement of students with diverse needs should be considered. Participants from the four schools were asked to tell if they had ever referred any student with diverse needs to another school. Schools A, C and D indicated that no referrals were made. When asked further, there was a claim that they did not see any reason of referring any student with diverse needs to another school as they were able to handle them. For example,

the headteacher from school A remarked that, *No, we don't refer them to any school; they are managed right away here.*

Nevertheless, Headteacher B said, had ever referred a student to a Day Secondary School through the Education Division Office so that the student should be taken care of by parents. He said;

*we referred one student but not to a special school, he was referred to a regular school. He has sickle cell, the medical personnel recommended that the student was not supposed to be at a boarding school because he lacked some food elements which the school can't provide, so was referred to the Division office and was transferred to a day secondary school.*

The results have demonstrated that three schools have not referred any student. They felt that they could handle the students in the mainstream schools as there is a call for all schools to be inclusive. It could be concluded that managers were trying to give their time and effort in order to accommodate students with diverse needs to remain in the schools they were selected to. Further, it can be claimed that schools and their management team have an understanding that cases which are manageable in their schools should not be referred since the country is promoting Inclusive Education. The way managers are conducting themselves relates to transformational leadership theory. The theory expects leaders to be supportive for change to take place (Northouse, 2019). As such, where leaders accept all students with diverse needs, it is likely that implementation would go on well. However, where schools have no facilities and Inclusive Education professionalism, handling some cases of students with diverse needs becomes a challenge. So, management of such cases requires managers who are conversant with Inclusive Education strategies. The knowledge of the strategies can be acquired through managers' training. Murphy (2018) reveals that there are few trainings for school managers to

focus on the leading programmes, and that may affect schools to assist those who would need assistance.

#### *4.2.2.6 Conducting school-based Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs)*

Professional development is one of the most important activities to be done in schools for proper sharing of information and equipping members of staff with skills for positive development. As such, the strategy has considered it as one of the roles to be done by mainstream schools. The researcher wanted to find out if the role is being fulfilled. It was said by three schools, namely, A, B and C that CPDs were being conducted in different areas and two schools, A and B conduct CPDs on Inclusive Education amongst other areas because of the availability of specialist teachers. The other two schools, C and D conduct CPDs but not on Inclusive Education issues. One of the managers from school B narrated,

*we conduct CPDs in several areas, when we receive new members; we share knowledge on how to assist learners with disabilities. It is planned by the special needs department.*

Deputy Headteacher C disclosed that CPDs on Inclusive Education are not done because there is no specialist teacher at the school. For example, he presented it as follows;

*We do CPDs on questioning technique, National Education Standards and Gender Responsive Pedagogy, none is done on Inclusive Education; we don't have specialist teachers here, but we have students in different categories, for instance, we have one boy with hearing impairment.*

The results confirm that schools A and B conduct CPDs on Inclusive Education possibly could be because of the availability of specialist teachers. The schools visited are not fully fulfilling role number eight of mainstream schools which the NIES has shown on page 27. It is vital to

understand that Continuous Professional Developments can likely motivate teachers to improve their performance as leaders talk positive of Inclusive Education strategy. However, managers from the two schools seem to show signs of Individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation. Continuous Professional Developments help leaders to provide support to teachers on how cases could be managed in inclusive schools. In addition to that, CPDs reinforce existing skills and can give teachers the opportunity to learn new techniques and strategies of teaching. Further training can allow teachers to build on their interaction skills and learn strategies for helping learners to achieve their full potential (British Educational Suppliers Association, 2017). CPDs also increase teachers' motivation, as such, if the school can be transformed, teachers' attitude may change and this may lead to the quest for improving the teaching approaches because during these CPDs, it appears that they share knowledge which was obtained from colleges.

The schools which failed to do professional development trainings on Inclusive Education practices said that their failure was because of the absence of specialist teachers in their schools. Nevertheless, managers are supposed to be creative and innovative. They could have found some ways of addressing the issue to assist in developing ways of providing support to students who required special attention. Managers are there to ensure that their schools are capable of offering professional support (Khaleel et al., 2021). The support would help to instill knowledge in members of staff for the proper handling of all students regardless of their diverse needs.

#### *4.2.2.7 Incorporating Inclusive Education practices in school planning*

Inclusive Education practices are supposed to be incorporated in school plans. Managers who include activities of IE in their plans may communicate high expectations to followers. The plans also inspire the followers as they could be motivated to support students with diverse needs accordingly. An analysis of the calendar of events from some selected schools was done.



The findings were: School A and school B had included similar activities for some years. Activities included professional development on the orientation of teachers on special education issues, screening of students and data collection for students with special needs and classroom observation. When asked to give the reason on observation, it was highlighted that it helps them to check how students are assisted during lessons. The activities were mainly related to students with disabilities unlike other categories. School C indicated a number of activities, but the interest of the researcher was on those related to Inclusive Education practices. Therefore, Gender Responsive Pedagogy was tracked. This is where both teachers and students are trained on how to respect the rights of one another.

Some calendars from other schools did not contain such information and, on top of that, school D did not show any calendar. So, one wonders how such schools fulfill their role. Planning for such activities indicates that the school is part of the process of implementing Inclusive Education. However, it may happen that the role was well known, but they had no understanding of what was to be done. The study conducted by Haitembu (2014) reveals that, even if education officials were aware of their responsibilities in the provision of IE, but they had no understanding of the importance of those responsibilities and how it can affect planning. From the results, it looked like managers from schools A and B were able to include the activities because they have special needs department headed by a specialist teacher. When probed, school B indicated that they started receiving students with disabilities in 2015, and that was before the development of the strategy under study. Therefore, it can be concluded that the availability of special needs department in schools contributes to the implementation of the roles in the NIES. The results have shown that for role number nine of the mainstream schools stipulated in the NIES to be fully implemented there was need for availability of specialised personnel in the schools.

#### *4.2.2.8 Establishing/ or strengthening child protection mechanism of students with diverse needs*

Managers have a task to make sure that all students in the mainstream school are well protected. This protection could be within or outside the classroom. In order to strengthen protection, managers may apply laws and regulations so that the role is accomplished. When managers were asked about the role of strengthening child protection mechanisms, different schools viewed it differently. However, they gave quite related responses. School A response focused on students with albinism that they were not left alone to walk long distances as they are mostly escorted. For example, explained that;

*Students with albinism are not left to walk alone to and from distant places. When we have closed, we call their parents so that they wait for them at a certain point. They are also accompanied by their peers.*

It was also clarified that the school's responsibility is to make sure that there was protection by checking on how teachers were supporting students in class. To strengthen that, teachers and managers indulge in discussion to resolve problems that surface. School B prioritised the need for students' orientation so that both students and teachers should understand one another. Furthermore, teachers' language was checked. Teachers were advised not to produce bad words to students because once one produces abusive language, it would be difficult for that student to feel that there was security at that institution. Another area which was articulated by participants in all the four schools was that protection was being strengthened by making the school environment accessible to all students regardless of their challenges.

The findings are that the secondary schools visited through their management team try to establish protection mechanisms for students with diverse needs in some areas. This is in line

with the requirement in the strategy as mainstream role number ten advocates. However, there is high expectation from members of staff and other stakeholders that managers should do more to fulfill the role for the provision of a successful education system. European Agency (2019) asserts that a successful education system provides fair Inclusive Education services which can lead to successful learning, engagement, wider participation in the community and transition to a stable adulthood.

Successfulness in the provision of proper services demands leaders who display individualised consideration. This would help in dealing with some barriers which cannot be dealt with in simple ways. UNESCO (2016) identifies barriers as those which are easy to be removed, like inaccessible buildings and some which require more effort to change such as policies and practices. In this case, it is seen that other barriers need leaders who can provide supportive climate and listen carefully to individual needs so that students with diverse needs are fully protected.

#### *4.2.2.9 Provision of remedial lessons to students with diverse needs*

Remediation is the process of refining or modifying a situation. It is a corrective measure or a technique that is intended to fix something that has been done wrongly or that has not been successful (MoEST, 2020). The exercise is helpful in the mainstream classes so that no student can be left behind. For successful leadership, managers in inclusive schools are expected to facilitate remediation so that learners are supported academically.

To check how secondary school managers are implementing the national inclusive strategy, the researcher sought to find out if remediation was practised and how it was being practised. In response, all the four schools visited said that they conduct remediation. One of the heads of departments from school B shaded more light that remediation is not done for the purpose of

assisting students with special needs. He further clarified that the Ministry of Education introduced it after a long break the schools had because of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. This is done mostly after normal classes and during weekends. It was also pointed out that sometimes managers request teachers to do remediation, but they mostly say that they had no knowledge on how they could handle students with challenges. For example, HoD C1 remarked that;

*Remedial lessons are done for the whole group, we don't target students with special needs, we feel they benefit within. We do them to cover the syllabus. The activity started after COVID-19 break. The activity is formalised. But before mmm...we were not doing it. Sometimes you ask colleagues to do it so that they assist slow learners, but the answer we get is we have no knowledge on special needs, better in normal classes their peers assist. As managers we can orient them but we also don't have the knowledge.*

The study has revealed that remedial lessons are done but schools were not doing that to specifically assist students with diverse needs, but to fulfil the Ministry of Education's plan. This is contrary to role number eleven indicated on page 27 in the strategy which takes remedial lessons as one of the important roles to be achieved. In addition, basing on the National Inclusive Education Strategy necessity, what has been found is against transformation leadership theory which expects leaders to display individualised consideration. Leaders are expected to support students at all times so that they benefit a lot. This means students have to be supported in areas they did not catch up during the normal class hours because of the challenges faced. While appreciating the work teachers do for all students, it is important to note that the National Guidelines for remediation does not dilute what is supposed to be done for students with diverse needs. The guidelines do include specialist tutoring as one type of conducting remediation (MoEST, 2020) for students with special needs. The Ministry is

believed to be aware of the type of students in most mainstream schools, hence the specification of the type of remediation raised above. Students can be well assisted in schools where managers facilitate remediation for students with diverse needs.

It was claimed that at times managers do try to advise teachers that they should be practising remedial lessons specifically for students with special needs, but teachers expressed having no knowledge. It has also been articulated that; managers also fail to give direction in remediation as they also lack knowledge. Knowledge on how to handle students with special needs is significant. Training of school managers on Inclusive Education practices is one of the requirements in schools as they can easily plan for professional development trainings where teachers would be assisted on how to conduct remedial lessons targeting students with challenges. Training school leaders can help them grasp best practices in Inclusive Education instruction (Murphy, 2018). After that, they can give proper direction to teachers in any role. In conclusion, effective implementation of the provision of remedial lessons may require knowledge through the training of leaders, thereafter, teachers

#### ***4.2.3 Factors that affect the implementation of the NIES in selected Secondary Schools***

Under this objective, the study set out to establish factors that affect the implementation of the NIES in selected schools. Data was obtained through interviews with Headteachers, deputy Headteachers and Heads of Departments. Several themes emerged under the objective. The implementation was found to be influenced and hindered by several factors. These are presented in the sub-sections to follow.

##### ***4.2.3.1 Factors that influence implementation of the NIES***

When asked to identify factors that could influence the implementation of the NIES, participants from the four schools visited came up with the following:

### *Training of managers and teachers*

Training of managers and teachers emerged as a dominate factor influencing the implementation of NIES. All the four schools highlighted the need to train school managers and teachers for the strategy to be implemented successfully. It was said that all managers should be equipped with basic knowledge on Inclusive Education practices and the strategy so that students with diverse needs should be handled properly. This, they said would motivate and make them develop confidence, thereby manage to accommodate all learners regardless their differences. The headteacher from school B indicated that;

*There is need for motivating the school managers through training. Headteachers and other managers should be trained. The concept of Inclusive Education as well as the strategy is new in Malawi, so frequent seminars can move us to work positively. How can one handle students with SN without knowledge? What can drive that person to do the work without being trained or oriented on the strategy? Mmm...planning is a challenge as you find a specialist teacher requesting what you don't know. What will move you to find out... we need to be sensitised on the strategy for us to be motivated and assist students accordingly. But, if all heads could be trained, I don't think the implementation can fail, everything would be almost good. Similarly, HoD C2 commented that, training can motivate all members of staff. ... We lack basic knowledge, hence de-motivated.*

The other manager from school B raised a similar issue and stressed on the need to train both regular and specialist teachers since different teachers specialise in different subjects. The argument was that training all teachers would help learners to be assisted well in all the subjects because teachers specialise in different subjects as remarked by HoD B3:

*Training more teachers in Inclusive Education. I am able to assist students in most categories because I underwent specialist teacher course. I was trained as a teacher for students with learning difficult. The knowledge I got helps me to assist my fellow teachers and students. At least we can assist students or we can implement the strategy effectively, the training should not only target specialist teachers. We specialised in different subjects, want to be assisting students in our fields. When we can understand how to assist learners as one way of implementing the strategy, we will also be helped to develop positive attitude.*

Findings have established that there is need for managers training on the strategy for successful implementation. This has also revealed that the four schools have managers who display inspirational motivation. Their quest for knowledge would help to lead with passion, and manage to communicate high expectations to followers for positive change. This is in line with Murphy (2018) who articulates that training school leaders can help them grasp the best practices in inclusive instruction; therefore, they can offer guidance and seek out professional development that support teachers to be effective in educating students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Dorji, Bailley, Miller, Graham and Paterson (2022) suggest that school leaders need to be adequately trained to understand policy documents from leadership perspective and accordingly apply the policy tenets at school level, to ensure that the policy is actually translated into action by making classroom teaching, learning and assessment effective in implementing the inclusive strategy. Actually, training appears to be a motivation tool in the implementation of the strategy. Balunywa (2003) defines motivation as an inducement of the desired behaviour within subordinates. It has also been defined as an incentive to act or move (Hornby, 2000). The inducement can easily be carried on to members of staff for better practices.

Additionally, the study has found that training should also extend to teachers so that students should be assisted in every subject regardless of their need. According to NIES page 32 priority area number four is set to develop teacher education (MoEST, 2016). Scheulka (2018) in his study found that training of teachers is one of the requirements of Inclusive Education practices. This is supported by the study conducted by Chimwaza (2015) who found that teacher training is important because it shapes attitudes and equips teachers with adequate knowledge in interacting with children with disabilities. Furthermore, it seems once one acquires knowledge, they can be driven to effective implementation of the strategy as it is witnessed in the quotes.

*Provision of appropriate and adequate resources*

Managers are supposed to provide appropriate and adequate resources to students with diverse needs. Three managers from school A; five from school B; three from school C and three from school D highlighted the need for appropriate and adequate resources for the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy to be enhanced. This shows that the factor is crucial. Resources such as accessible infrastructures, resource rooms, teaching and learning materials like Braille machine and text books, bursaries, and additional specialist teachers in all schools may influence the implementation of the NIES. Deputy A said;

*They should also make sure that in the schools where these students are going have enough materials e.g., Braille machine as each and every student needs to have one, even books are needed for those low vision as they need to read in advance.*

The HoD A2 was much concerned with the establishment of resource rooms, and he said;

*There should be establishment of resource rooms; some of these students are not well assisted in large classes. We may be thinking that all students are being assisted equally while leaving others behind. We should accept the fact that much as there is Inclusive*



*Education, other groups may need special attention. Resource rooms help in remedial lessons.*

It was highlighted that the provision of bursaries to children from ultra-poor families can enhance the implementation. This would lead to motivation of learners to continue with studies. For example, Headteacher D explained that;

*Some children have no chance of bursaries; they stop coming to school because of fees challenges; such students if well assisted can benefit from their studies. Some are privileged but others would need bursary to excel. They need to be accommodated, and that will mean successful implementation.*

Furthermore, it was said that the government should provide enough materials such as text books so that they should be distributed to learners to be used out of classroom hours. Braille paper for the students with visual impairment should always be available. Deputy C narrated;

*I think the government should distribute more materials to schools which can help other learners who have other challenges e.g., learners' books, so that there would be chance for other learners to take books to their homes. For students with visual impairment, paper should always be available.*

Thorough assessment conducted has revealed that the availability of accessible infrastructure, resource rooms, bursaries and teaching and learning aids can influence the implementation of the strategy. The findings are in line with Olaka (2016) who in his study on factors that influence the implementation of Inclusive Education found that implementation is influenced by the availability of instructional materials. However, such materials are not enough. Much as there is an expectation that the government should provide resources, managers should be creative and innovative to meet with students' needs in mainstream schools for inclusive purposes with

available resources. The effort should be there with an aim of transforming schools to meet Inclusive Education practice requirements because the absence of resources and unfriendly environment can negatively affect implementation (Andai & Mwatela, 2017). It should be noted that insufficient resources delay implementation. Therefore, if the strategy is to be effectively implemented provision of adequate and appropriate resources is to be taken into consideration.

### *Monitoring and evaluation*

School C identified monitoring and evaluation as one factor that can enhance implementation. Two participants said that when the programme comes out, the next thing should be orientation of all members who are to be interacting with the programme. The next step should be checking how implementation was being done for the effectiveness of the programme. Where they identify challenges, responsible officers should find ways of dealing with them. This was thought to assist schools to implement the strategy in the way it was intended. HoD C3 narrated;

*Aaaah...monitoring and evaluation should also be done to check what is going on in schools. However, the first thing should be orientation. This can be done may be at division level or cluster level. If the target group is oriented, they can go back to schools to orient teachers following the refresher courses. Later, they come to see whether Inclusive Education is being done, using proper strategies or not. If not, they could map the way forward.*

Although the point has not been raised by schools A, B and D, it seems the task itself is very important in any programme including Inclusive Education practices. School managers who uttered the factor seem to practise idealised influence as they have exposed high standards of moral and ethical conduct. Monitoring checks if what was planned is being practised. UNICEF (2014) alludes that, once programmes or policies are recommended to make more schools

inclusive, it is important to monitor their progress. Monitoring holds actors accountable and encourages action. This helps in the early identification of the challenges which implementers might be facing and, in that way, allows for corrective action to be taken. Likewise, evaluation is important as it checks whether there is achievement or not in the process of implementing the programme. Therefore, adhering to the activity, there could be enough information to help coming up with proper ways of supporting students to meet their individual needs.

### *Role modeling*

According to participants in this study, role modeling can enhance the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy. Two managers from school C mentioned that some of the students with special needs should be taking leading roles so that, when other students see them, who have the same challenges in the leading role, they too make attempts and do well. For example, the headteacher narrated remarked that, *there should be role models; those with challenges should be in the forefront to do some activities so that students with challenges can emulate from them.*

The HoD C1 added that schools which enroll students with diverse needs were supposed to be inviting other people with disabilities from different places to talk to students. This will help them to see life differently. The point was stressed as indicated below;

*I think we should be having talks from role models, some of these students think they can't do in life. They should see other people's achievements... Schools should also invite role models, some people in the society with disabilities who have excelled in life.*

Managers would be there to provide supportive environments by inviting responsible persons for talks. "Inviting men and women with disabilities or those who have lived a difficult life but have excelled in life to give a talk to learners in schools would inspire vulnerable children to

remain in school” (MoEST, 2016, p.21). It could be interesting for students to understand that amidst challenges, there is possibility that one can excel. Students should understand what others have gone through and develop positive attitude towards their education for successful implementation. Managers as well as teachers could try all their level best to find ways of assisting students where learners are ready to accept their challenges and strive for better results. Thus, role modeling helps to empower students. As students become inspired, managers and teachers can be encouraged to assist them properly, thereby manage to successfully implement the NIES.

#### *Modification of practices*

This came from three schools. It was claimed that some expected activities are not designed for Malawi environment and this makes it a challenge to implement. One of the areas highlighted was that the nature of the schools should match with the practices required for inclusive schools to meet the needs of specific learners. For instance, HoD B2 said;

*Just to declare that all schools should be enrolling all learners do not match with what is in the schools. Some schools would need a lot of resources to accept all learners because of the way they were built and the environment itself.*

It was also reported that most schools are overcrowded, so to plan for learners with diverse needs becomes a challenge. However, modification of some of the activities is a requirement for successful implementation. Admission of learners is also another part which was mentioned that it is not done as expected. Head A said;

*Inclusive Education was introduced as a Western Concept. There is no reality. Some of the concepts do not apply practically, there is need for modification to suit the environment and sometimes even the admission part is affected. It is like, these learners*

*come on a silver platter and can come anytime mmmh... and even we can see a learner joining in the third term. They join the school without proper background. So, for the student to catch up is a challenge. So, in such cases, remedial lessons may mean discriminating them as it will need more time with them.*

Likewise, HoD B1 explained that, *certain elements need to be modified to suit our local environment. Most concepts work in the West.*

It was also pointed out that remedial lessons could be modified to match with the needs of learners. That means there is need for a special time for that. From these findings, it appears that modification is an important factor. Modification can be done in different areas like the system which the managers are working with, practices and even structures. However, modification can be affected by the shortage of resources because of the nature of the environment, Ireri et al., (2020) assert that students with disabilities in public schools located especially in poor or urban areas have difficulty navigating unmodified school facilities due to high cost of modification. This clearly indicates the need for adequate resources for the activity to take place, as well as leaders' initiative. Leaders who exhibit intellectual stimulation can try to be creative to support learners who would fail to be incorporated in the unmodified environment.

### *Inspirational motivation*

Inspirational motivation is one of the factors that could influence the implementation of the NIES School B highlighted the need for communicating high expectations to students with diverse needs for them to view the world differently. It was said that implementation of NIES could be a success if students can be empowered by sensitising them on what is required from them in inclusive schools. Empowerment could be through encouragement or acquisition of

self-reliant skills. Managers proposed how students with diverse needs could be empowered. For instance, the deputy headteacher said;

*Students should also be sensitised so that they identify their roles. However, I don't know if the strategy has that section. But, all the same, they shouldn't be at the receiving end. We expect them to be acquiring skills. Yes, they need to be self-reliant.*

As students will be sensitised, they will get inspired and in so doing they will respond positively to situations they may come across.

School C also commented on the issue of capacity building as one way of empowering students with diverse needs. The Headteacher narrated; *The issue of capacity building should be included in the strategy...students should be responsible, not always being at the receiving end.* Developing capacity building in students with diverse needs may help them achieve high level performance. Thus, if students could be empowered, they could develop skills which would make them feel that they are part of the society and they may start to concentrate on what they want to be in future. Dietrich et al. (2014) assert that empowerment inspires individuals thereby enhancing their skills as well as their confidence. However, the National Inclusive Education Strategy (2017-2021) appears to have not come out clearly on how students could be empowered to prevent themselves from always being at a recipient end. Well-articulated roles can help students develop positive attitude. Understanding what is it that they are to do can contribute to mindset change; thereafter learners can acknowledge their potential.

### *Creativity and innovation*

Creativity and innovation are another factor that influences the implementation of the NIES. Managers expressed the need for coming up with new ideas to help students be self-reliant after doing their secondary school level. This was said as there is an understanding that not all

students with diverse needs can be well managed in inclusive classes to make it to universities or other colleges. Some students may not do well in classroom work, but they can be good at technical skills. For this, managers from schools; C and D thought that creating more chances for students with special needs can help them achieve something. However, that may depend on how mainstream schools could be guided. For example, headteacher C said;

*The mainstream schools should be guided on how they can help students who cannot achieve academically. There are some students who need to be equipped with self-reliant skills before they come out of school. There is a certain student who is good at outdoor activities; if that one can be assisted properly, we can say the strategy is being implemented. I feel the strategy should come out clearly on this. We can be thinking of this that, but by the end of the four years a student goes out with empty hands. We need to do something.*

From what has been said, it shows that there is need for managers to come up with creative and innovative ways of managing inclusive schools so that change could be realised. Inclusive schools appear to require managers who can be ready to change their minds positively, so that as soon as students are identified should be thinking of how their future would be like. Naicker (2019) asserts that for the successful implementation of Inclusive Education, leaders require mindset shift for change to happen. That is what can help managers to identify proper ways of meeting the needs of individuals, hence, successful implementation of the NIES. When there could be good plans to develop students' future, teachers and managers can work collaboratively to find the new ways of assisting students rather than giving them what they cannot manage in a classroom setting.

#### 4.2.3.2 Factors that may hinder implementation of the NIES

Implementation of the NIES can be hampered by several factors. The following themes emerged from the interviews with managers from the four schools visited: inadequate resources, knowledge gap, negative attitude towards students with SNE, lack of political will, and lack of monitoring.

##### *Inadequate resources*

All the four schools indicated inadequate resources as one of the factors that hinder the implementation. The resources which were mentioned were accessible infrastructures, resource centre, teaching and learning resources such as Braille paper and text books, the NIES document, financial and human resources. The Headteacher A lamented that;

*The challenge mmmmh! The first one is lack of financial support like what we have just experienced. We planned without money from the treasury, teachers ask for materials, we fail to provide. However, they understand us. Similarly, HoD B3 complained that, lack of teaching and learning materials that would suit students' particular need can affect implementation, for example, shortage of Braille paper can make students with visual impairment fail to participate in writing exercises. It's difficult to accommodate all learners. Materials are not enough. Some learners need to read their own books but we can't afford. Though I may not describe the content of the strategy, I feel lack of these resources affect its implementation negatively.*

From the findings, teaching and learning resources are paramount to the implementation of the strategy. Thus, inadequate resources bring about problems to the facilitation of the programmes. This is similar to what Peter and Nderitu (2014) found in their study, that lack of teaching and learning resources necessary for special needs education is a challenge to inclusion. Buhere,



Kindiki and Ndiku (2014) also discovered that Inclusive Education is being delayed because of insufficient teaching and learning materials, inaccessible buildings and facilities. Therefore, the factor is to be checked so that implementation should be improved.

In addition, accessible infrastructure is critical to the implementation of Inclusive Education, therefore, for one school to accommodate some learners with disabilities, it requires checking the status of the classrooms, hostels, toilets and even libraries for their accessibility. It seems at times schools try their level best but they are challenged by shortage of funds. Sometimes, even though schools have a little fund, they fail to allocate funds to Inclusive Education practices. Some students can indeed fail to attain their education, because of that. This leads to failure in the implementation of the strategy. Studies by other researchers have also indicated that implementation of Inclusive Education was affected by inadequate infrastructure, education facilities, sanitation facilities, lack of ramps, dirty and dusty classrooms (Ludago, 2020). It is therefore, important to address the challenge for successful implementation.

#### *Knowledge gap*

Schools A and C reported that lack of knowledge on what is to be implemented impedes its progress. Knowledge gap has been associated with lack of training on inclusive issues and the strategy itself as the headteacher from school A explained that;

*The talk of Inclusive Education has been here in Malawi for several years, but up to now headteachers and other teachers have not attended formal training. Failure to sensitise management team and teachers on Inclusive Education strategy in Malawi is a problem. Even if the document can be distributed to schools, without sensitization can just be left out without use. The headteachers, deputy headteachers, heads of departments and all teachers need to be trained to avoid killing students. As for myself,*

*before being oriented by teachers from the school of students with hearing impairment, was mishandling the students, but now I see there is a change in me. So, I would love that the training of teachers on Inclusive Education would be prioritised by the government, otherwise the implementation of the strategy would be a challenge /burden to most stakeholders, more especially mainstream schools.*

The Headteacher from school C also contributed on lack of knowledge as a barrier to implementation and he narrated that;

*Factors...aah I feel the main factor that can hinder this is lack of knowledge by us as teachers, the Ministry depends on us to implement education related policies, strategies but if we don't know how to do it, that will be definitely a major challenge. During management meetings, Inclusive Education issues are not stressed. There is need for formal training which could be done as we do in other areas. It can be at cluster level.*

From the findings, it is observed that knowledge plays an important role in the implementation of most programmes, including the NIES. Managers complained of lacking information on important areas where they could be effectively assisted if they could have attended training. Nevertheless, the study done by Haitembu in 2014 on the provision of Inclusive Education found that, even if education officials were aware of their responsibilities in provision of Inclusive Education, they had no understanding of the importance of those responsibilities. Furthermore, Mambo (2011) and Chimwaza (2015) identify lack of appropriate training as one of the challenges delaying the implementation of Inclusive Education. This was supported by Mbewe et al. (2021) who in a related study found that thorough knowledge lacked in implementing Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines. Thus, the practice was challenged. Although these studies were not done on managers, the results are related to what the present study has found.

### *Negative attitude*

Negative attitude towards issues of Inclusive Education was also identified as a factor that can bar the implementation. Two respondents from school B said more restrictions which are put forward make them develop negative attitude towards exercising some practices. The deputy head said that;

*Sometimes we just fear the unknown, you know some of these students are fully protected and we even fail to treat them as we do with regular students. Them, being overprotected, make some members develop negative attitude which by the end of the day affects implementation.*

Working in a free and protected environment has no harm, however, if those whom you serve are overprotected, it contributes to the development of negative attitude to service providers, as they work under some restrictions. Leaders and followers who develop negative attitude cannot discharge their duties as expected. Therefore, they fail to meet the needs of different individuals. Nevertheless, sometimes students can take an advantage of overprotection and fail to comply with rules and regulations. As a result, they cannot be well assisted not because of their condition, but the behaviour portrayed. This can have impact on the progress of the practice. For implementers, development of negative attitude can also affect knowledge acquisition. The study by Kirumei (2012) identifies negative attitude of teachers as having a great contribution to unsuccessful implementation of Inclusive Education. Additionally, Galovic, Brojcin and Glumbic (2014) assert that teachers who have more negative attitudes towards inclusion do not strive to learn and apply successful strategies that could help learners with disabilities. Roles assigned to mainstream schools can be well implemented if managers and teachers have positive attitude towards the NIES.

### *Lack of political good will*

Mangers from different schools had several ideas on factors that may hinder the implementation of the NIES. Schools A and D indicated lack of political will as one of the factors that may deter the implementation of NIES, this came from two respondents. They said that the government is expected to support towards the implementation of the strategy at all costs, but in most cases, nothing or little assistance is rendered. Support is expected to be given to both, service providers and beneficiaries. The implementation cannot be a success if the government is not interested to check on what is happening and what challenges implementers are facing. HoD D3 expressed as follows;

*Lack of political will, the government needs to be responsible. It needs to look at the welfare of teachers, how can a de-motivated teacher be sacrificing his/her time for extra work. If we are to excel, to really assist these students, the government should provide much support to teachers for motivation. Students should also be provided with the necessary support, not just starting a practice and live it in suspense; a lot is desired. I don't think the government had ever planned for a follow-up to check how we are struggling. Of course, we try as the government also tries but, in some areas, they should show up.*

Implementation of any document requires the government to show commitment for its success. This can be done by checking the progress of the activities and the provision of suitable support to all service providers and beneficiaries. This could be done where there is political good will. This plays a greater role. Where it lacks, implementation becomes a challenge. This is supported by Chimwaza (2015) who among other factors identified lack of political good will as a challenge hindering the implementation of Inclusive Education. Therefore, findings call for the government to contribute a lot to implementation. Where leaders are not supported with

knowledge, materials and finances, it would be difficult for them to foster the implementation. However, where adequate support is provided, managers easily work towards enhancing the practice at hand. Inclusive Education is still a new concept in Malawi. In order to bring change, school managers who are mainstream schools' key implementers of the strategy should be supported. If they are provided with support, they can easily support their followers and the result is effective implementation.

#### *Lack of monitoring*

School C disclosed that lack of monitoring of Inclusive Education practices may deter successful implementation of the strategy. Deputy headteacher said that;

*Lack of monitoring, we expect that when the programme has come out, they should be coming to check what is going on and see the way forward. They need to come and see. They will really appreciate that we are struggling in teaching these students. Really, we lack training.*

According the NIES on page 34, mid-term evaluation of the strategy has been highlighted (MoEST, 2016). Therefore, lack of monitoring contradicts with the strategy. The NIES clearly indicates that the Ministry would be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the strategy at all education levels including the mainstream school. Monitoring appears to provide managers information on the progress of any work to check how it is going on. It is where one can tell if there are problems or not. Checking the progress of the practice seems to help in strengthening its implementation as one can appreciate what is going on. As such, where monitoring does not take place, it would be difficult to tell whether the programme is taking its shape or not.

Much as there are several factors that can hinder the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy, managers from the four schools visited have displayed some characteristics of transformational leadership such as idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Alongside challenges, managers act as role models and support both students and teachers. They try to find a way out by assisting all students regardless of their challenges and the problems schools are going through. The study conducted by Maurice et al. (2019) reveal that transformational leaders can stand up even during the time when they face challenges.

### **4.3 Summary**

This chapter focused on the findings that derived from the data that was thematically analysed from the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews with headteachers, deputy headteachers and heads of departments and from the document analysis from the four selected schools. It has discussed managers understanding of the National Inclusive Education Strategy. The understanding of the National Inclusive Education Strategy has not developed well in secondary school managers because there was no orientation and some had not seen the document itself. It has also revealed that implementation of the roles assigned to schools was not done as expected; and the implementation has been affected by several factors. The next chapter will conclude the study, provide recommendations and highlight areas of further studies.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter provides conclusions, recommendations and offers suggestions for further study. The study aimed at evaluating the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy in some selected secondary schools in Northern Education Division. Specific objectives were to: investigate secondary school managers' understanding of the National Inclusive Education Strategy (NIES); assess how secondary school managers are implementing the NIES in their schools; and identify factors that affect the implementation of the NIES. The study was anchored by transformational leadership theory and underpinned by interpretive paradigm. Four schools were involved and each school had five participants; the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and three heads of departments.

### **5.2 Study's Conclusions**

#### ***5.2.1 Secondary school managers' understanding of the National Inclusive Education Strategy***

In relation to the said objective, the study found out that secondary school managers' understanding of the National Inclusive Education Strategy (NIES) has not developed well. This is because the understanding of the National Inclusive Education Strategy varied from one manager to another in the four schools visited. The variation comes in because 10 participants had little knowledge on the NIES. Among 10 participants, 8 understood the NIES as practices for inclusion while 2 understood it as the methodologies and procedures which have been set to guide implementation. The other 10 said that they had no knowledge of the NIES.

### ***5.2.2 How secondary school managers are implementing the National Inclusive Education Strategy***

In connection with this objective, the study has established that the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy basing on roles assigned to schools had not been fully successful. The conclusion has been drawn because of how roles and responsibilities assigned to schools had been done. For instance, schools enroll students with diverse needs, but not all the categories are treated as students with diverse needs; schools with specialist teachers identify students with diverse needs, but those without specialist teachers fail to discharge the role. Additionally, documentation and record keeping were found to be done but not to the expectation, for example, documents for all the four schools visited did not contain records of learners with diverse needs. However, some schools had information in EMIS and admission books, while in other documents, such important information was missing. It was also found out that in most cases, schools had documented students with disabilities and orphans, because their information was required at the Education Division office.

Furthermore, in other areas, support was provided with challenges; for example, schools constructed ramps, but some were not of the required standard due to lack of financial resources. Provision of teaching and learning resources was inadequate. Fifty percent of the schools sampled had no provision of text books for students with low visual impairment, and those with visual impairment were not provided with adequate Braille paper. That affected implementation. Referral of students with diverse needs was not done by all the four schools visited. Only twenty-five percent of the schools sampled revealed that they had referred one student to a day secondary school on medical personnel's recommendation. All schools visited facilitate Continuous Professional Developments; however, most of the topics were not on Inclusive Education. Fifty percent of the schools which had topics on Inclusive Education were



those who have specialist teachers. Remediation was being done, but did not target students with diverse challenges. It was for all the students in all schools as the Ministry of Education provided the guidelines because of the long break which schools had in 2020 because of COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***5.2.3 Factors that affect implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy***

As regards the objective above, the study has found that the implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy in Malawi (2017-2021) could be affected by several factors. The implementation could be influenced by the training of school managers and teachers, provision of appropriate resources, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation practice, role modeling, modification of practices, and students' empowerment. Conversely, the implementation was said to be hampered by inadequate resources, knowledge gap, negative attitude towards students with SNE, lack of political will, and lack of monitoring of the Inclusive Education practices.

### ***5.2.4 Summary***

The study concludes by professing that the National Inclusive Education Strategy has not been effectively implemented in secondary schools as there is a lot to be done for effective implementation. However, the results cannot be generalised as the research was done in four secondary schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, it is recommended that:

- Schools should be conducting continuous professional development in Inclusive Education. This should be done by resource persons.

- The Ministry of Education under Inclusive Education Department should train secondary school managers and teachers on Inclusive Education issues in particular, what is stipulated in the National Inclusive Education Strategy (2017-2021). This would help the mainstream schools to be aware of what they are supposed to be doing to properly support students with diverse needs.
- Directorate of Quality Assurance should incorporate members who have knowledge on Inclusive Education issues and how students with diverse needs should be handled so that, when they inspect schools, they should be able to make recommendations where necessary.
- Schools should be planning for supervision of different school activities to check if they incorporate all learners and whether students with diverse needs are assisted or not, thereby, coming up with plans for assisting students.
- Schools should be assisted to the establish department of Inclusive Education which could be headed by a member of staff who has Inclusive Education expertise.
- Concerned officials should be going around schools to check what is happening on the ground rather than basing on paper work.
- The Ministry should intensify the provision of support in all schools, for example, funds for modifying school buildings, books as well as other materials to be used in the process of teaching and learning.
- Schools should also be budgeting for materials for students with diverse needs.
- School management should be supporting students socially and psychologically.

### **5.3 Contributions of the study**

- The study has brought to light issues affecting the implementation of the NIES

- The Ministry of Education and Northern Education Division more specifically Department of Inclusive Education, can use the findings as a basis for monitoring the practices for improvement.

### **5.5 Areas for further study**

The study suggests that more research should be done on:

- Perception of teachers on how secondary school managers are implementing the NIES.
- Secondary schools' collaboration with the community in the implementation of the NIES.
- Inclusive Education Department (Ministry of Education) intervention on the implementation of Inclusive Education Strategy in Malawi in Secondary schools.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Approval Letter



**MZUZU UNIVERSITY**  
DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Mzuzu University  
Private Bag 201  
L u w i n g a  
M z u z u 2  
M A L A W I  
TEL: 01 320 722  
FAX: 01 320 648

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**MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC)**

Ref No: **MZUNIREC/DOR/22/35** 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2022

Josephine Msekwanthu,  
Mzuzu University,  
P/Bag 201,  
Mzuzu.  
Email:  
[jmsekwanthu@gmail.com](mailto:jmsekwanthu@gmail.com)

Dear Josephine,

**RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR PROTOCOL REF NO: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/35: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION STRATEGY IN MALAWI: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL MANAGERS IN THE NORTHERN EDUCATION DIVISION**

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat. Once the study is finalised, you are required to furnish the Committee with a final report of the study. The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly

**Committee Address:**  
*Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwina, Mzuzu 2; E-mail address: [mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw](mailto:mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw)*

maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,



**Gift Mbwele**

**MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR**

**For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC**

**Committee Address:**

*Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwingu, Mzuzu 2; E-mail address: [mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw](mailto:mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw)*

**Appendix 2: Introduction Letter and Authority from EDM'S Office**



**MZUZU UNIVERSITY**

Department of Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Studies

Mzuzu University  
Private Bag 201  
Luwingu  
Mzuzu 2  
MALAWI

Tel: (265) 01 320 575/722  
Fax: (265) 01 320 568  
mdolo.mm@mzuni.ac.mw

**1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2022**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MS JOSEPHINE MSEKAWANTHU**

Ms Josephine Msekwanthu is a registered Master of Education (Leadership and Management) Program student at Mzuzu University. She has been cleared by the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) to collect data for the research study she is conducting as a requirement for the program.

Kindly assist her accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

**Dr Margaret M. Mdolo**  
**Program Coordinator**



*Concerned Heads  
Would you please assist  
the concerned teachers to  
collect data on the  
subject presented to  
you assistance with  
be with appreciate  
Dr. The Com*

### Appendix 3: Permission Letter for the EDM

Mzuzu University

P/Bag 201

Luwingu

Mzuzu

[jmsekawanthu@gmail.com](mailto:jmsekawanthu@gmail.com)

The Education Division Manager

Northern Education Division

P.O. Box 133

Mzuzu

Dear Sir

#### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN FOUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTHERN DIVISION**

I am a post graduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education in Leadership and Management. I am carrying out a study on the **Implementation of National Inclusive Education Strategy in Malawi: a case study of secondary school managers**, as part of fulfillment of the requirements of the award of the Master's Degree. I therefore, write to ask for permission to carry out this study in four secondary schools in the division.

My study will involve interviews with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and heads of departments. I will also check the documents which have information about Inclusive Education. I intend to protect the institution and all participants including yourself by using



pseudonyms. I am therefore writing to request for permission to carry out this study at your school. Attached is an introduction letter from Mzuzu University.

Yours faithfully,

JOSEPHINE MSEKAWANTHU (0994022901)

## Appendix 4: Permission Letter for the Headteacher

Mzuzu University

P/Bag 201

Luwinga

[jmsekawanthu@gmail.com](mailto:jmsekawanthu@gmail.com)

The Headteacher

\_\_\_\_\_Secondary School

Dear Sir/Madam

### **REQUEST FOR A PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT YOUR SECONDARY SCHOOL**

I am a post graduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education in Leadership and Management. I am carrying out a study on the **Implementation of National Inclusive Education Strategy in Malawi: a case study of secondary school managers**, as part of fulfillment of the requirements of the award of the Master's Degree. My study will involve interviews with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and heads of departments. I will also check the documents which have information about Inclusive Education. I intend to protect the institution and all participants including you by using pseudonyms.

I am therefore writing to request for permission to carry out this study at your school. Attached is an introduction letter from Mzuzu University.

Yours faithfully,

JOSEPHINE MSEKAWANTHU (0994022901)

## **Appendix 5: Consent form**



### **Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC)**

## **Informed Consent Form for Research in implementation of National Inclusive Education Strategy in Malawi: a case study of selected secondary school managers in the Northern Education Division**

### **Introduction**

I am **Josephine Msekwanthu (MEDLM/23/20)** from **Mzuzu University**. I am doing research on implementation of National Inclusive Education strategy in Malawi. This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me or of another researcher.

### **Purpose of the research**

This research aims at exploring how Secondary School managers in some selected secondary schools in Northern Education Division are facilitating the implementation of National Inclusive Education Strategy.

### **Type of Research Intervention**

This research will involve your participation in a group discussion and/or individual interview.

### **Participant Selection**

You are being invited to take part in this research because you are amongst the key implementers of Inclusive Education in mainstream schools.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate nothing will change. You may skip any question and move on to the next question.

### **Duration**

The research takes place for a period of one year.

### **Risks**

You do not have to answer any question or take part in the interview if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.)

### **Reimbursements**

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research.

### **Sharing the Results**

The knowledge that we get from this research will be shared with you and your community before it is made widely available to the public. Following, we will publish the results so other interested people may learn from the research.

### **Contact Details**

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact: **Dr. M.M. Mdolo** who happens to be my course coordinator as well as my supervisor, Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwinda, Mzuzu, Phone: 0993801059 and myself, **Josephine Msekawanthu**, Phone: 0994022901/0888755335

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are

protected from harm. If you wish to find about more about the Committee, contact Mr. Gift Mbwele, Mzuzu University Research Ethics (MZUNIREC) Administrator, Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2, Phone: 0999404008/0888641486

Do you have any questions?

**Part II: Certificate of Consent**

*I have been invited to participate in research about **Implementation of the National Inclusive Education in Malawi: A case study of selected secondary school managers in Northern Education Division.***

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Print Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Day/month/year

**Statement by the person taking consent**

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the research project. I confirm the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of person taking the consent \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 6: Interview guides for secondary school managers**

1. What do you know about the National Inclusive Education Strategy (NIES)?
  - a. Is there anything special about the document?
  - b. If yes, do teachers know about it?
2. How does your school enroll learners with diverse needs?
3. How are they identified?
4. What specific roles do you perform to ensure that learners with diverse needs are supported at school?
5. Have you ever referred any student with diverse need to a special school or any school?  
If yes, give a reason.
6. Do teachers practice remedial lessons? If yes, how is it done?
7. Does your school conduct CPDs?
  - a. If yes, in which areas?
  - b. If not, why?
8. Do students with diverse needs have access to facilities at the school?
9. How does the school protect the rights of students with diverse needs?
10. What do you think are factors that can enhance the implementation of the NIES?
11. What are the challenges that may affect the implementation of the NIES?
12. Is there anything you may wish to add?

## Appendix 7: Document Analysis guide

### Information Sheet on Inclusive Education Records

<b>NO</b>	<b>REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>REMARKS</b>
1	Circulation files		
2	Admission Book		
3	Class registers		
4	Calendar of events		
5	Education Management Information System (EMIS)		

## Enrollment of Learners

SN	CATEGORY OF LEARNERS	YEARS				
		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Children with disabilities					
2	Children from poor family					
3	Children who head families					
4	Children suffering from chronic diseases					
5	Gifted and talented					
6	Children with albinism					
7	Teenage/adolescent mothers					
8	Orphans					