

Quality of Education offered to Children with Special Educational Needs  
(SEN) in the era of free primary education (FPE) in rural Kenya: Perspectives  
of educationists, teachers and parents

By

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## ABSTRACT

The education of children with special educational needs (SEN) has been a focus of international inquiry. There is a strong advocacy for the inclusion of children with SEN in regular schools although this remains contentious and challenging. Despite an emphasis by the Kenyan government that children with SEN should be included in regular schooling, there has not been substantial investigation especially in rural settings on how these children can receive quality education. This thesis seeks to address this issue by exploring the perspectives of educationists, teachers and parents on the quality of education offered to children with SEN in the era of free primary education in a rural setting. A qualitative interpretive approach to research was used to generate data through interviews with government officials, teachers and parents, focus group discussions with regular teachers and observations in three schools spread over three rural districts. Thematic analysis was employed in analysing the data. A critical theory approach focussing on social justice and rights of children as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was used as a lens. The findings revealed that despite policy articulation, children with SEN occupied the role of “others” in schools and the society and were described in negative terms. Participants, especially regular staff and parents were emphatic that children with SEN required “experts” and “special” resources both of which were not available in regular schools. The participants felt that the available curriculum was relevant for “normal” children and therefore could not meet the educational needs of children with SEN. The broad conclusion drawn from this study is that there is need to distinctly define the terms inclusive education, special education and mainstream education in a way that the core stakeholders can understand, interpret and implement within their contexts. Designing a means of progress monitoring other than national examinations may help motivate both regular teachers and parents to see the need to have children with SEN in regular schools. There is need for further investigation on how regular teachers can be persuaded from existing beliefs that they are not qualified to teach children with SEN and how to convince parents that their children are worthy of an education.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADL	Activities of daily living
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CREATE	Consortium for research on educational access, transitions and equity
CRIN	Child rights information network
DEO	District education officer
DFID	Department for international development
DOH/DFES	Department of health/department of education and standards
DQAS	Directorate of quality assurance and standards
EARS	Educational assessment and resource services
EBD	Emotional and behaviour deficiencies
ECD	Early childhood development
ECDC	Early childhood development centre
EFA	Education for all
ENT	Ear nose and throat
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EYC	Elimu Yetu Coalition
FPE	Free primary education
IEPS	Individual education plans
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KCPE	Kenya certificate of primary education
KCSE	Kenya certificate of secondary education
KIE	Kenya Institute of Education
KISE	Kenya Institute of Special Education
KNEC	Kenya national examinations council
KSHS	Kenya shillings
M & E	Monitoring and evaluation

MH	Mental handicaps
MOE	Ministry of education
NCPD	National Council for Persons with Disabilities
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NYPSSC	New York partnership for statewide systems change
OAU	Organisation of African union
OMCT	World Organisation Against Torture
PQI	Program quality indicators
QASOs	Quality assurance and standards officers
SAPs	Structural adjustment programmes
SEN	Special educational needs
SNE	Special needs education
TLLM	Teach less learn more
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Science and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal primary education
WB	World Bank

## **DEDICATION**

I want to dedicate this work to my late mother Susan Nyoteyo and my children Betty, Susan, Stanley and Melanie.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

The focus of this study has emerged from my personal experiences, knowledge and career over time. It is rooted in my developing academic, political and practical understanding of the contested issue of Free Primary Education (FPE) in Kenya and its relationship with the education of children with SEN in rural areas. I was born and brought up in rural Kenya. I attended rural schools through to high school and during this time the only knowledge I had of children with SEN was what teachers referred to as “slow learners” or children who went by a local name “*omoriri*” meaning “*stupid*” if translated literally to English. While training to be a secondary school teacher and through my teaching career, I was introduced to special education in the sense of children with physical disabilities who typically attended special schools. This was in addition to the “*stupid*” ones who attended mainstream schools and were included among the typical students. My experience as a teacher in Kenya is that all children who did not perform well in tests were grouped together as “stupid”. The term SEN was not in use.

I later moved to England where I worked in schools for children with SEN and realised that the concept of SEN was complex and diverse. I also conducted research in Kenya on “*under-achievement and SEN*” based on a case study of a secondary school for my master’s degree in “Inclusive Education” from the University of Reading in England. I found that there was little information available to teachers about SEN and that the circumstances under which rural children learn have a bearing on their educational achievement and future life (Omoke, 2006). I witnessed the disruption in Kenyan primary schools when FPE was introduced in 2003 as a consequence of overcrowding in schools and stress on human and physical resources. This raises questions on how the introduction of FPE affected the education of children with SEN given requirements for specialist instruction and resources. The Special Needs Education policy (2009) in Kenya acknowledges that learners with specific disabilities and special needs require specialised educational resources at individual and school levels. It is important to note that children with SEN in Kenya (especially in rural areas) are generally grouped into two categories; those with physical disabilities and those with mental handicaps. Rarely are children identified using more specific categories as one would find in the western world. I also ascribe to the human rights philosophy declaring education as a human right and therefore believe that children with SEN should learn together with their non-disabled peers and operate in an inclusive society. This explains why, as it

will be discussed in chapter 4, I have situated this study within a social justice framework. Janesick (2000) points out that “qualitative researchers have open minds, but not empty minds” (p. 384). Despite these personal experience and perspectives, I strove to remain as open-minded as possible and put my pre-conceptions to one side as suggested by Silverman (2006).

The main objective of the study was to investigate the views of parents, teachers and selected education officers on the quality of education offered to children with SEN within mainstream public primary schools in a rural setting. It was an attempt to examine how policy on SEN was interpreted and practised by core stakeholders.

### **Education as a human right**

Access to education is recognised as a basic right in both the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (King & McGrath, 2002). According to Mansaray (1991), the rapid development of African societies is largely dependent on the extent to which appropriate education is made available to as many people as possible. This task, he argues, must incorporate an attempt to identify those groups that have been unable to benefit from the current structures of education and the factors responsible. This reflects the movement towards “Education for All” (EFA) which has attracted considerable international attention. The quest for EFA has a long history in Africa. A meeting of 36 independent African countries met in Addis Ababa from 15-25 May 1961 and produced a plan called “outline of a plan for educational development in Africa” which came to be known as the Addis Ababa Plan. At the conference, it was stated that Africa needed EFA. Wolhuter (2007) maintains that this was actually the first time in history the phrase EFA was used.

Education has been viewed by nations and international organisations not only as a “human right” but also as a “merit good”. This view is fuelled by persisting assumptions and the enduring belief that education can liberate and empower, develop a literate citizenry, and be a catalyst for social and economic development. Education is also seen as an investment in a country’s future and can equip people with particular competencies and attitudes; it can transfer wisdom, expectations, and ways of thinking and discipline to the next generation (Semali, 2007).

There have been many international declarations regarding the education of all children regardless of gender, age, race, socio-economic status and ability: the 1948 UN Declaration on Human

Rights, the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the 1961 Addis Ababa Conference Declaration of FPE for all, the 1974 UNESCO and UNICEF seminar in Kenya on basic education, the 1976 Lagos Conference of Ministers, the 1977 7<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth conference in Accra, Ghana, the 1980 UN Declaration of Education as a Human Right, the 1990 Jomtien conference which declared that every child should have basic needs met, the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, re-affirming the Jomtien resolution, and the 2001 Department for International Development, UK (DFID) statement that set a target of 2015 for Universal Primary Education. All these declarations and conferences have the education rights of all children as a central theme.

The emphasis on EFA can also be found in the Jomtien conference held in Thailand in 1990. The EFA declaration that grew out of this conference served as a culmination of a century-long movement to transform existing national education systems from a limited to a comprehensive mass system of schooling. Delegates from 155 countries and representatives from 150 organisations agreed at this world conference to universalise primary education towards reducing illiteracy by the end of the decade. The world declaration of education for all was drafted (Baker & Wiseman, 2007). Article 1 of the declaration states that every person, child, youth and adult shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. Article 3 calls for universalising education, equity and quality. Article 4 states that educational opportunities should translate into meaningful development for both individual and society.

It would be difficult in modern times to find any meeting of world leaders in which the universal right to education is not propagated as a common international goal. EFA has become a rallying call among heads of state and international financial institutions, and a focus for trans-national advocacy by civil society actors. Efforts to rebuild world order following World War II saw the inclusion of education as a universal right in the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights (Article 26), and the establishment of the United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organisation with a broad mandate to support the expansion of a universal right to education (Mundy, 2007).

In Africa, as elsewhere in the developing world, education is viewed as the most prominent public policy issue, involving the interplay between national budget allocations and foreign assistance (Mbugua, 2004). The last century of schooling around the world is largely linked to the fulfilment of national development goals. As a result, schooling has become a national project to enhance the civic welfare, political status and economy of a nation through the development of economically

productive citizens who are socially and technically literate (Baker & Wiseman, 2007). In both developed and developing countries, the prosperity of the general society demands that a majority of the adult population have jobs, preferably jobs that generate reasonable income. In the modern world order, it appears that reasonable income cannot be attained without a reasonable education. Oloo (2006) argues that education in general and special education in particular are not seen as reasonable in Kenya due to high unemployment and low income levels. The Kenyan school system remains highly examination oriented, and good examination scores are a route to a well-paying career. As a result, the benefits of education for children who are unlikely to succeed in national examinations may be unclear to school leaders and by extension to those investing in education. This may deny children with SEN their right to education.

The problem of human resource provision as a purpose of education is a topical issue. According to Bensalah (1993), ministries of education are now vying with enterprises in this respect. It is understood that investment in training is security for the future. The problem with this idea is how the training of teachers and others in the education sector can be made relevant to the needs of individual children and at the same time be aligned to global and national market demands. In their review of education for children with SEN in Kenya, Mukuria and Korir (2006) assert that the unspoken societal consensus is simply that productive individuals must be given the meagre available resources first. Children with SEN are arguably in the category of those who may not perform well or take part in national examinations. Thus, the quality of education offered to them is a concern and identified as the focus of this research.

## **Introducing Kenya**

Kenya is situated in East Africa and was a British colony until December 1963 when she gained independence. Kenya borders Somalia to the East, Tanzania to the South, Uganda to the West, Sudan (and now South Sudan) to the North-west, and Ethiopia to the North. The total population (2009 census) is 38,610,097 consisting of 19,192,458 male and 19,417,639 female.

At the time of this study, Kenya was divided into eight provinces for administrative purposes namely Nairobi, Central, Western, Nyanza, Coast, Rift Valley, Eastern and North-Eastern province. The country was further divided into 271 districts for easier administration. Each province and district had a department of education independent of other departments. Kenya promulgated a new constitution in August 2010. This will significantly change the way the country

in general and education in particular will be administered. Instead of the provinces and districts, the country is going to be divided into counties in a devolved system of government. This study was carried out in 3 districts in Nyanza province. They were drawn from a region in Nyanza called the Gusii region that comprises of the Kisii language speaking people. The region had 10 districts most of which were rural in nature.

### ***Brief history and development of education in Kenya***

Formal education in Kenya started with the opening of a school at Rabai at the coastal region by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1841. The purpose of the school was to advance evangelism. Later the school provided employment for white settler farms and clerical staff in the colonial government. Colonial education was characterised by racism. A British government sponsored study of education in East Africa, the *Frazer Report of 1909* proposed that separate educational systems should be maintained for Europeans, Asians and Africans. European schools had superior resources and pursued a different curriculum from that pursued by the other schools. The colonial period saw the emergence of disparities in educational opportunities between races and regions. Various education reports such as the Frazer report of 1909, the Phelps-Stoke report of 1924 and the Beecher report of 1949 all recommended an industrial curriculum as a basis for African education. The objective was to enhance African suitability as labourers and craftsmen in the white settler farms (Alwy & Schech, 2004).

Education and training in Kenya is governed by the Education Act (1968) and other related Acts of Parliament, including Teachers Service Commission (TSC) Act, Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) Act, Adult Education Act, University Act and various acts and charters for universities. However, the 1968 Act and other acts have not been harmonised and are no longer adequately responsive to the current and emerging trends in education and training. The long-term objective of the government is to provide every Kenyan with basic quality education and training, including 2 years of pre-primary, 8 years of primary and 4 years of secondary/tertiary education. Education also aims at enhancing the ability of Kenyans to preserve and utilize the environment for productive gain and sustainable livelihoods. The guiding philosophy for Kenya's education is the belief that every Kenyan, no matter his/her socio-economic status, has a right to basic education. It is in recognition of this that Kenya spends 40% of her official budget on education (United Nations Development Programme, 2000).



### ***Education after independence in Kenya***

At independence in 1963 the quantity, quality and relevance of education was a concern for the government. The task was to design education policies that were relevant to the needs of the emerging nation. The education system has been reconstructed, a major change being the introduction of the 8-4-4 (8 years primary school, 4 years secondary and 4 university) system of education to replace the 7-4-2-3 (7 years primary school, 4 secondary, 2 high school and 3 university) system in 1985. The first national examination that children sit for is the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) taken at the end of Class/year 8, the last year of primary education. Children would be around 13 years of age. This examination determines whether and which kind of secondary school a child joins. Secondary school education has been expensive and only the relatively wealthy have been able to afford but more students have been able to attend since the government made secondary schools tuition free in 2008. The standards of schools differ from well-funded and well-equipped national and provincial schools (big) to under-equipped and under-staffed district schools (small). Private secondary schools are expensive. At the end of secondary school, students sit for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE).

### ***Challenges of implementing Free Primary Education in Kenya***

Kenya has continued to consider education for all (EFA) through conferences, the constitution and declarations by political leaders. Since independence in 1963, different governments have made efforts to make primary education free. As early as 1964, the government established the Ominde Commission to examine the course of the development of the sector. The commission emphasized Kenya's need for universal primary education (World Bank, 2009). In partial fulfilment of this recommendation, FPE for classes 1 to 4 was introduced in 1973 increasing primary enrolment by 1 million. Entire primary education was made free in 1979. As the Kenyan education system expanded and the economy stagnated, the policy of FPE was increasingly abandoned. During the 1980s and 1990s the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) encouraged the government of Kenya to adopt structural adjustment policies in an effort to control the economy better, manage rising debt and generate community ownership of schools (Hardman, Abdi-Kadir, Agg, Migwi, Ndambuki & Smith, 2009). In 1988, the Presidential Working Party on Education and Training for the Next Decade and Beyond (popularly known as the Kamunge Committee) was set up. The committee report recommended cost sharing in the financing of the education sector. This policy was immediately implemented by the government. It stipulated that local communities, including parents, were to construct schools and finance other projects in all public schools (World Bank, 2009).

The policy of cost sharing did not consider the plight of poor households who could not raise the money to meet fees and the many other levies imposed by schools. This meant that the well-intended policy of cost sharing led to many children dropping out of schools and education became the preserve of the wealthy. The second report on poverty in Kenya (Kenya Central Bureau of Statistics, 2000) revealed that 56% of Kenyans lived on or below the poverty line while 30.7% of children were out of school citing cost as the main reason for nonattendance.

In January 2003, the government declared FPE. The number of pupils in public primary schools increased from 5.9 million in December 2002 to 6.9 million in January 2003 and to 7.1 million in December 2004. In 2006, there were about 7.6 million pupils enrolled in public primary schools, nonformal schools and nonformal education centres. This translated to an increase of over 29% in a span of three years (World Bank, 2009). Primary schools with special integrated units recorded a high enrolment of 128,940 as compared to special primary schools with 23,459 due to FPE (Wainaina, 2005). This greatly improved access to education at primary school level but raised concerns about the quality of education due to stress on available human and physical resources. The other concern is the place of children with SEN who may require specialist attention and resources. Wolhuter (2007) observed that the focus of basic education must be on actual learning acquisition and outcome, rather than exclusively on enrolment. It has been argued that neither a high-quality education system serving very few or only certain groups of children nor a mass system where children fail to acquire basic literacy and numeracy contribute to national development (Cummings & Williams, 2008). The initiation of FPE reflected a growing international consensus shared by governments, donors, and international agencies that cost sharing in the health and education sectors that had been highly encouraged through SAPs of the 1980's and 1990s produced highly adverse social outcomes.

Research carried out on the FPE policies in Kenya suggest that there is no easy solution to the challenges facing the policy. In a review of FPE interventions in Kenya, Sifuna (2008) concludes that FPE in Kenya is not sustainable. A report compiled by the Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) (2007) based at Sussex University and funded by the DFID stated that the cost of providing FPE in Kenya is beyond the scope of the ordinary education budget given Kenya's weak economy. The report stated that FPE was pursued as a matter of political expediency, was not adequately planned and resourced and thus led to

increased drop-outs and lower educational quality. The research concluded that the attainment of sustained FPE in Kenya is an illusion.

According to a WB report (2009), the abolition of school fees in Africa compromised quality due to a dramatic increase in class size and a loss of school-level funding, frequently leaving the children of the poor no better off than before. The same report indicated that if poor children were the most vulnerable to the imposition of school fees and the existence of other economic barriers, they could at the same time, ironically, be the most vulnerable to unplanned or under planned attempts to remove these barriers. The report adds that school fee abolition and similar measures to remove economic barriers to schooling are unlikely to succeed without being part of a sustained national education plan. Cumming and Williams (2008) argue that children from poor families require more support than those who come from better off families who can draw on greater support from families and communities including adequate nutrition and health along with intellectually stimulating homes supportive and reinforcing of schooling. It has been argued that while EFA may be a global goal and national priority, it cannot be implemented without considering the specific local contexts and challenges (Baker & Wiseman, 2007).

### ***FPE and the education of children with SEN***

Many students with SEN require individualised services that may include changes in the physical environment, modification of the curriculum content, adaptation in teaching strategies and use of assistive technology devices to help with communication and mastery of necessary knowledge and skills (Kopetz & Ifimu, 2008). This can pose a challenge to schools in an era where they cannot send away any child who wishes to enrol in their schools. Winzer and Mazurek (2005) argue that including children with SEN in mainstream schools without proper inclusive policies may lead to a situation where teachers tend to prioritise their responsibilities to normally developing students. Children with SEN may then be enrolled in a regular education system where they are a minority and where their interests are ignored.

Another challenge of the FPE policy in Kenya is demand for secondary education. Despite the government's efforts to improve access, places are still limited. It may infer that since the places for secondary education are limited, those pupils who score highest marks are likely to get the available places. Children with SEN are unlikely to score high marks overall but this does not necessarily mean that they do not have skills that can be nurtured in mainstream secondary school.

There is also a feeling among parents of disabled children in Kenya that their children are not intelligent enough to benefit from schooling (Wamae & Kan’gethe-Kamau, 2004). This attitude by parents may pose a problem as they may not see the purpose of supporting the education of their children thus making little sense of FPE. Amidst the challenges facing FPE, the role of teachers and parents is crucial. The next section will examine the place of parents and teachers in the education of children with SEN.

### **The role of teachers and parents in the education of children with SEN**

Children protection officials stormed into a house in Langa Langa Estate, Nakuru (Kenya) and rescued a girl locked up by her father for 16 years because she is handicapped. According to the girl’s mother, her husband discriminated against their daughter because of her disability. ‘My daughter would wish to go to school, but her father does not see the need to educate her,’ she said, on Tuesday. The man is said to have locked up the child claiming she was of no use to him... (The standard online Edition, 28/10/09)

#### ***Overview***

Teachers and parents form an integral part of any policy implementation process therefore engaging with and understanding their perspectives is important. According to Duemer and Mendez-Morse (2002), the reason for consultation is to discern policy mutation. They argue that understanding efforts to mutate policy during implementation is essential in order to recognise how policy may change from its original form during the process of implementation. Chimombo (2005) asserts that according to organizational development theories which focus on the satisfaction of the members of an organization, successful implementation is based on consensus and commitment. In 2008, the government of Kenya produced a draft policy on SEN. The policy recognises the importance of parents as partners in the education of children with SEN. It also points to the importance of reviewing the teacher education curriculum. What the policy does not articulate is a process of consulting with teachers and parents who are core policy implementers. Cummings and Williams (2008) front for alternatives to command-and-control, front-loaded approaches to change, suggesting that broader participation, greater information and more attention to “process” is likely to enhance the prospects for meaningful reform.

The diverse interest of advocacy for students with disabilities, professionals, parents, and policy makers have often led to conflicts. It is therefore important to consider the people who mobilise schools to change in order to reduce the exclusion of children and youth with disabilities and how much they influence policy makers. An understanding of interest groups and their victories and

defeats is necessary to explain the institutionalisation of special education (Powell, 2009). It has also been argued that there is a problem with special needs education as the way to equity in terms of how children's difficulties get described and provided for. The descriptions and provision will depend on the extent to which different stakeholders such as parents and teachers can get their views and interests to prevail. In this case, special needs education appears a non-structural conflict between different interest groups instead of being a rational and equitable response to children's difficulties (Osler & Osler, 2002).

Following the chaos after the introduction of FPE in Kenya, the government convened an urgent meeting for stakeholders on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2003. The meeting was attended by senior Ministry of Education officials, development partners, the private sector, civil society organisations and international agencies. The result was the appointment of a task force whose recommendations among others were that curriculum materials were to be developed and teachers advised on the modalities of coping with the various challenges. The other recommendation was the establishment of a capitation grant of Kenya shillings (Kshs) 1,020 per child per year. The organisation, composition and recommendations of this stakeholders meeting can be called into question. Were teachers directly engaged in coming up with these recommendations? Was it assumed that all children have the same needs and therefore the allocation of a uniform capitation? According to a WB report (2009), the capitation grant was by no means a replacement for the loss of revenue to schools resulting from the abolition of fees, as most of the fees had been unnecessary. If this is the case, why was it a recommendation after the abolition of fees? Why was the fee in place for such a long time, exploiting parents if it was surely unnecessary? The same WB report indicates that the government enhanced the school audit unit by employing additional auditors and for the first time, required an annual audit of primary school accounts. Why was this auditing not in place when parents paid fees?

The Kenyan government in a WB Report (2009) conceded that the immediate announcement and implementation of FPE was done without prior consensus building and consultation among the relevant stakeholders on the modalities of rolling it out. In addition, there was lack of preparedness by both implementers and stakeholders on how best to manage the immediate demands of the program. The Kenyan government also concedes that limited sensitisation of the FPE policy among communities has led to diminished parental support in the provision of requisite physical facilities. The FPE declaration created the perception that parents no longer had any obligation to provide for school needs. It is therefore felt that the need to engage core stakeholders is crucial.

### *The role of teachers*

Teachers on their own are not able to effect the radical reforms to school structures that are required in order to enable special education to be replaced by inclusive education. However, they are very well placed as individuals to choose to transform the way they work in their own classrooms. Regardless of school structures and their positions, the constraints of the national curriculum and assessment procedures, teachers are free to think differently about the nature of the problem of “learning difficulties” and the responses that they might make when students encounter barriers to learning. It therefore implies that future trends to research on inclusion should be focussed on practice. This would include ways of working that assist teachers to make sense of the structures that differentiate learners on the basis of characteristics such as “ability” and support them in developing the confidence to know what to do when their students experience difficulties in learning (Florian, 2008).

Clearly, teachers’ beliefs, values and attitudes must be addressed in order to ensure successful inclusion. Commenting on teacher training and acquisition of English language in the hearing impaired in Kenya, Wamae and Kan’gethe-Kamau (2004), indicate that a compelling body of empirical research demonstrates that a proportion of contemporary teachers hold negative and unsettling views and do not see inclusion as a principle that should be pursued. Teachers give reasons such as that students with disabilities would be disruptive to their classes or demand too much attention, inadequate staff training, lack of appropriate curriculum, inadequate support services, stress and increased workloads. Wamae and Kan’gethe-Kamau argue that unfavourable teacher attitudes towards disabled children stem from insecurity and inexperience with children with SEN. Similarly, Arbeiter and Hartley (2002) found that teachers in Uganda who were clearly opposed to integration showed little concern for different needs in their classes and had negative attitudes towards children with disabilities. Teachers with positive attitudes showed concern for children with special needs. The researchers concluded that it was teachers’ and schools’ attitudes that determined whether children with disabilities would be welcomed in schools, more so than the availability of resources or teachers’ specialist knowledge.

According to research by Swain and Cook (2001) which explored the views and experiences of policy-makers, mainstream professionals, parents and pupils on inclusion, mainstream professionals were largely uncommitted to inclusion. One mainstream professional told parents:

“...the same people who were saying segregation is the best thing for your children are now saying inclusion is the best thing for your children. How can they embrace it? It is just a policy as far as they are concerned and they are implementing a policy, there is no real feeling behind it, it is not a belief, it is just work to them, it is just a policy and because it is not what they believe, I don't think they are doing it properly” (p. 65).

Such attitudes would make the implementation of inclusive policies for the education of children with SEN problematic. Jordan, Schwartz and McGhie-Richmond (2009) reported interview findings that regular classroom and subject teachers believed that inclusion of children with special needs in their classes is a policy doomed to fail. Complaints about the policy included: students with SEN limit teachers' instructional time with students more likely to achieve and that teaching students with SEN requires specialised teaching skills. Teachers' fears that they did not have the specialised knowledge and skills to work with students with SEN in regular classrooms may also have caused reluctance to accept inclusion.

In a review and discussion of research on teacher belief for the nature of teaching and teacher education, Kagan (1992) notes that teachers who believe students with SEN are their responsibility tend to be more effective overall with all their students. In assessing teacher beliefs about disability, Kagan suggested a primary tool for measuring teachers' beliefs about student disability and about their responsibility for working with students with disabilities which she referred to as the pathognomonic-interventionist (P-I) interview, an individual one-on-one interview that avoids the transparency of standard paper and pencil measures. Jordan *et al*, (2009) used the pathognomonic-interventionist as a tool to explore teacher beliefs about disability. They concluded that those teachers with the more pathognomonic (P) perspectives tend to attribute to their students with SEN internal, fixed and unreachable characteristics that are beyond the teachers' expertise and therefore beyond their help. Consequently, these teachers would normally refer such students for support outside the classroom, expect parents to teach their children as an after-school remedial “catch-up” activity, seek little information from and do not collaborate with parents, teachers and professionals who also work with these students. Such teachers tend to blame the students and their families for failure to learn and do not see the students' progress as their responsibility. On the other hand, teachers who express the view that they have responsibility for instructing all their students express interventionist beliefs. They express that they are responsible for bridging barriers to access and adapting their instruction to allow students with SEN to participate. Teachers with interventionist beliefs also work more in partnership with other stakeholders including parents, colleagues, teaching assistants and resource teachers; they are more systematic about tracking student progress.

The view that teachers require specialist skills essential to teach students with SEN has been challenged. Jordan *et al* (2009) argue that effective practices in general may be applicable to most students with SEN because providing instruction geared to each student's level of experience and understanding is possible in effective inclusive settings. They maintain that the difference between effective and ineffective inclusion may be rooted in teachers' beliefs about who has primary responsibility for students with special educational needs. This implies that in order to explore how successful the education of children with SEN in inclusive settings can be, the views of teachers must be considered.

### ***The role of parents***

According to Browder, Wakeman, Flowers, Rickman and Pugalee (2007) research is needed to determine how self-advocates, parents and teachers value and define access to the general curriculum for children. Whether parents value the skills being taught to access general curriculum content and how students respond to these opportunities are critical issues and denial by parents and lack of provision by the government are setbacks to quality of life for children with disabilities. For instance, a British multi-agency report (DOH/DFES, 2003) states that children's impairment is not the only factor that determines the quality of life but also disabling attitudes and a disabling environment can lead to unequal access to community services and facilities. When a child behaves outside of the expected societal norms, parents can experience emotional pain, shame and blame as they may question their parental abilities (Carpenter 2005). Such frustrations by parents can have a direct impact on the education of children with SEN.

Yamada (2007) discusses the choices that parents make concerning their children's education that may not always be purely educational but can be economic or social. Schools are situated in and interact with society as a whole. Educationists may view schools as distinct entities from the broader social and economic lives of the people around them. They may fail to acknowledge the contribution communities can make in improving the quality of education and school management, that the school is part and parcel of the whole village life. Yamada maintains that promoting education as a value and increasing access to school seem to have been taken up by parents and students because of the potential for improving one's life and future. In instances where education is not seen as leading to benefits, parents will be reluctant to facilitate the education of their children. This is likely to apply to many children with SEN.



The SEN policy in Kenya recognises that parents and the community are important partners in the education of children with SEN in providing primary care, security and protection. They play a critical role in the socialisation process of the child and teach spiritual and moral values for character development. Yet, most parents, families and communities may not be involved in the education of children with special needs and disabilities and consequently play a minimal role in supporting their children's access to education (MOE, 2008). One of the reasons why this is so may be parent beliefs in Kenya that their children with disabilities are not intelligent enough to benefit from schooling (Samuels, 2003). In many families, priority in education is given to the "bright" children. The situation compares to prevailing beliefs in Indonesia where parents are ashamed of having a disabled child, overprotect, perceive that their children's learning is unworthy, and that education is the responsibility of the school or government (Heung & Grossman, 2007). Meyer, Bevan-Brown, Hyun-Sook and Savage (2010) contend that parental non-involvement in the education of their children may be a result of the perception that professionals are experts and therefore questioning them may be disrespectful.

It should be noted that parental participation in the education of children with SEN in the developed world is centred on meetings to design and evaluate individual education plans (IEPs). Although IEPs exist in the SEN policy in Kenya, there is no evidence that teachers hold meetings with parents over the same. This raises questions on how parents can participate in the education of their children.

### ***Conclusion***

Most of the research that has been done with teachers and parents has been concentrated in the western world. The level of knowledge, skills and support available to such parents and teachers is different from what may be available in poor developing countries like Kenya. Even within developing countries, the limited research available tends to be conducted in urban areas where accessibility and co-operation may be easier than in rural areas. This research aims to investigate the perspectives of educationists, teachers and parents on the quality of education for children with SEN in a rural setting, an issue that has not received sufficient attention in research. According to Muuya (2002), one of the difficulties of addressing SEN problems in Kenya is the lack of information and research evidence on the extent and nature of special education provision. She argues that while thinking at policy level in Kenya reflects recent developments worldwide in approaches to special education, practice at the school level has not reflected these advances. It is my intention that this research will contribute to better understandings of how the participants

perceive the education of children with SEN and how these perceptions may influence their education.

This study will employ a critical theory approach in pursuing issues of social justice for children with SEN through education. According to Prasad (2005), critical theory requires researchers to commit to confronting the variety of injustices and oppressive practices that exist in modern society. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is viewed as a typical example of the move towards confronting social injustice evident in the education of children with SEN.

### **Summary**

This chapter introduced the study topic by giving background information on my personal interest in the study and the human rights aspect of education. It also outlined relevant information about Kenya's educational system, giving a brief history and development. The chapter also examined the challenges facing the implementation of the FPE policy in Kenya. It ended with a discussion of why it is important to consult with parents and teachers in the education of children with SEN. The next two chapters will review the literature related to the study. Chapter two will give an overview of universal and national (Kenyan) trends on issues of SEN, while chapter three will examine issues of quality in SEN.

## **CHAPTER TWO: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS; INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL TRENDS**

### **International trends**

At a general level, special education can be defined as instruction that is specially designed to meet the unique needs of children who are exceptional. It is founded on the understanding that all children and youth can reach their full potential given the opportunity, effective teaching and proper resources (Zajda, 2005). Special education is designed to serve students who have differences that significantly influence the way they learn and behave. In the initial stages, special education served those who conformed to the normative categories of deaf, blind, and mentally retarded. More recently, other groups have been identified who have mild learning and behaviour problems, such as mild intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities and behaviour disorders. According to Phyllis (2005), disability is becoming a social phenomenon, owned by the society as a group, rather than an individual as a person. This view is shared by Oloo (2006) who argues that the concept of special needs is socially constructed because each society is unique and will develop its own meaningful concept of special needs, ways to identify gaps in services, and plans for service provision.

Special needs education is also viewed as an academic delivery system focused primarily on enhancing students with SEN to learn in the modified environment and/or to learn with individualised accommodations (Kopetz & Ifimu, 2008). The Kenya Institute of Education (MOE, 2001) defines special education as “education of children who have learning difficulties as a result of not coping with the normal school organisation and instruction methods” (p. 2). This definition seems to emphasise children’s deficits rather than the inability of an education system to accommodate diverse needs.

Various governments have legislation that defines the terms used in special education provision. For instance, the 1993 Education Act in the UK (Section 156) which was a revision of the 1981 Act states that a child has a learning difficulty if the child:

- a) has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his/her age;

b) has a disability which either prevents or hinders him/her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of his/her age in schools within the area of the local education authority; or

c) is under the age of 5 and is, or would be if special education provision was not made for him/her, likely to fall within (a) or (b) when above that age.

This definition also seems to concentrate on the inability of the children to make use of resources that their non-disabled peers use in school.

What emerges from these definitions is that special education involved additional services over and above the regular school programmes to assist in the development of potential for children with disabilities. One example of such special educational provision is in the United Kingdom Education Act (1981), which describes children with SEN as those unable to access regular schooling and therefore needing special services. Dyson (2001) argues that “specialness” is not tied down to any functional definition of the boundary between special and ordinary, but rests on professional judgement within particular contexts. Likewise, the concept of need is only loosely anchored to any notion of aims or purposes. Thus, intervention is focused on what a child needs rather than why and for what educational purpose. If large numbers of children experience similar difficulties, Dyson considers it more likely that systematic rather than individualised intervention will be seen as appropriate by practitioners and policy makers. Perspectives on history and development of special education have been both optimistic and pessimistic. According to Dyson, optimistic views present practice and policy in special education as progress; in the past, things were done wrongly or less well than they are done today. Tomlinson (1985) presents a pessimist view that the process of special education has been used to further the interests of those professionals who stand to lose if the status quo were interrupted.

Winzer (1993), states that a society’s treatment of those who are weak and dependent is a significant indicator of its social progress and social attitudes towards the education and care of people with various disabilities. It also reflects general attitudes concerning the obligations of a society to its members. She adds that along the range of human behaviour from normal to abnormal there is some point at which a social judgement is made and the individual comes to be regarded as exceptional, disabled, different or deviant. The extent to which societies accept and address differences is varied. According to Thomas (2006), one way of defining the origin of the social marginalisation of people with disabilities is to locate it in the historical development of capitalist commodity production and exchange. She argues that these developments can be seen as

leading to the emergence of social relationships between those deemed “normal” and “impaired” which disadvantage and disempower the “impaired”. This position where disability is seen as residing in individuals has been discussed in terms of the psycho-medical or deficit theory.

### ***The psycho-medical theory***

This theory is also discussed as the deficit theory and conceptualises special needs as emanating from deficits in the neurological or psychological composition of an individual, similar to a medical condition (Skidmore, 1996). Its emphasis is on screening children for the presence of syndromes which can then be fixed by various forms of treatment such as administering drugs or therapy. School failure is attributed to some deficit or inadequacy that can be located within children (Brown, 2005; Clark, Dyson, Millward & Skidmore, 1995). The assumption is that disability is a stable or permanent health condition within the individual which can be diagnosed and categorised. Special schools are seen as ideal places where resources can be availed to address individual disabilities (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2005; Skidmore, 2004).

The deficit model has been criticised (e.g. Skidmore 1996, Slee, 2005) for ignoring other conditions in the society that may hinder the learning of children, for being applied in situations where there is no clear evidence of neurological defects, for not considering the long-term consequences of drugs and for being used as a tool to control groups of people. This critique prompted the search for alternative paradigms. One of the first ones is the sociological or ecological theory.

### ***The ecological theory***

Another way of looking at disability is in the realm of cultural characteristics of a society. McDermott and Varrene (1995) argue that for each aspect of disability and difference noted within a people, there is a cultural element at the background. This aspect is discussed in ecological and sociological theories. The ecological theory is associated with Bronfenbrenner (1979) and advanced by other authors such as Paquette & Ryan (2001). It explains how the development of individuals is affected by environmental factors such as family homes. The interaction between a child and his/her immediate family and community environment has a great influence on how the child grows. The study of children should therefore examine not just the child and his/her environment but also the interaction with the larger environment.

The ecological theory is discussed in tandem with sociological models of disability which focus on the contribution of the society in constructing and maintaining disabilities. The assertion is that special needs are a construction of the society and special education only serves to reproduce structural inequalities prevailing in the society. Sociological paradigms are epistemologically structuralist and operate at societal level. They see special needs as arising from structural inequalities in society which can be addressed by reforming the education system to remove the inequalities (Skidmore, 1996). It has been argued (e.g. McLaughlin & Jordan, 2005; Mitchell, 2005; Skidmore, 2004) that these inequalities persist because they serve the interest of the majority in the society. Skidmore (1996; 2004) criticises the sociological model as being more theoretical than practical and ignoring school organisation as a cause of learning difficulties in children. This led to yet another theory referred to as the organisational theory.

### ***The organisational theory***

The organisational theory is epistemologically functionalist and situates itself at institutional level. It views special needs as arising from deficiencies in the way schools are organised and suggest that school programmes should be restructured to eliminate the deficiencies (Skidmore, 1996). Proponents of this paradigm posit that a restructured school system can eliminate or significantly reduce the incidence of children who fail to realise their educational potential. It is suggested that teachers should look at learners from their (teachers') point of view and accept all children regardless of impairment and behaviour. Whichever theory educationists use to discuss issues of SEN, the development of special education has gone through various periods, each depicting aspects of one or the other theories discussed. The next section will outline this development.

### ***The historical development of special education***

Internationally, the education of children with special needs has taken various dimensions and phases. Dyson (2001) identifies some of them as remedial education, compensatory education, special classes, special treatment, the whole school approach, integration and differentiation all of which have gone into the annals of history. The development of education for children with SEN has also been classified into four main phases. They include the period of neglect where deviating from the "normal" was not tolerated and therefore people with disabilities were isolated (Hick & Thomas, 2009; Hughes, 2002; Tennant, 1996; Winzer, 1993). The period of neglect was criticised because it only succeeded in isolating people with disabilities from the society and not "rehabilitating" them.

Historical neglect of people with disabilities in communities of Africa may have been different from that of the western world and motivated by different circumstances. Neglect of people with disabilities was driven by superstitions that viewed disability as a curse from the gods, breaking laws, family sins, offences against the gods, witches and the wizards, adultery, misfortune, ancestors, god's representatives, misdeed in a previous life, illegal or unapproved marriage, show of omnipotence of god, evil spirits, killing certain forbidden animals, warning from god, and fighting elders during harvest and planting seasons (Mukuria & Korir, 2006). In the absence of institutions and western style unitary governments to make common decisions, families and small communities dealt with disabled people individually. The result was often disregard, fear, killing or hiding people with disabilities.

The next phase was the period of segregation where special education was accepted as a branch of education and required that children with disabilities could learn in special schools as they were not able to learn the same concepts as their peers (Gallagher, 1979; Smith, 1999; Winzer, 1993). Segregation was criticised for violating the rights of individuals and assuming that disability was a permanent condition that resided within individuals (Ainscow, 1999; McLaughlin & Jordan, 2005; Nilhom, 2006; Tomlinson, 1982).

The next phase was the period of integration where children with disabilities were integrated in mainstream schools following the principle of normalisation advanced by Wolfensberger (1972). It was meant to enable children with disabilities learn with their nondisabled peers and adapt a normative approach to education. Integration did not succeed in availing normative status for children with disabilities because of unpreparedness by schools to adopt new programmes, it did not recognise individual differences and denied children a nonrestricted education. It was seen as simply avoiding segregation and placing children in mainstream schools where they did not interact with the nondisabled peers (Ainscow, 1999; Kisanji, 1999; Thomazet, 2009). It is evident that much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in most western countries saw many students with identified SEN served in separate facilities. Major challenges to such provision emerged in the 1970s and led to the inclusive movement. The next section will discuss the period of inclusion.

### ***The development of inclusion***

Since special education began, the merits of various settings to provide support for learners with SEN have been debated. Local and national discourses have been influenced by international governmental and nongovernmental organisations that emphasize EFA as a human rights issue.

The emphasis is on the contributions that inclusive education can make to enhance learning opportunities, produce skilled workers and promote social inclusion. Inclusive education implies phasing out “mainstreaming” or “integration” policies of the past decades. It broadens the focus of educational reform to aim at restructuring schooling to accommodate all learners regardless of disability, social class, gender, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation and religion (Powell, 2009).

Developed countries such as Britain and the USA have been at the forefront in addressing issues of SEN. The first attempt in Britain to address the educational needs of children with learning disabilities was the Warnock Report of 1978. The report recommended the introduction of the term SEN and that planning for provision should be on the basis that “about one in six children at any one time and up to one in five at some time during their school will require some form of special educational provision” (p. 41). One of the main issues raised by the Warnock report is that issues of SEN should not be located entirely in the child but the structures that educate and care for children with SEN. This follows the report’s assertion that most children would experience some learning difficulties at some point in their education. It appears a suggestion that children with SEN do not necessarily have to learn in separate environments.

The policy of inclusion is built on the understanding that education is a basic human right. It is geared towards supporting the capacity of regular schools to respond to diverse needs of all learners. As opposed to integration whose focus was on the numbers of disabled children attending schools and the establishment of additional arrangements to accommodate pupils with disabilities within a system of schooling that remains unchanged, the focus for inclusion, at least in theory, has been the process of making regular schools accessible to disabled children in terms of curriculum and teaching, organisation, management, the physical environment, ethos and culture (Ainscow, 1999; Swain & Cook, 2005). Inclusive education recognises that any child can experience difficulty in learning at any time during the school career and therefore the school must always review its programmes to meet the needs of all its learners.

Writing about education for children with SEN in South Africa, Muthukrishna and Schoeman (2000) saw the notion of “special needs” as a reflection of an “individual change” model which has led to a focus on the personal inadequacies in individuals rather than social inadequacies in systems. They argue that one myth particularly evident in South Africa is the view that the responsibility of educating children with learning difficulties and disabilities is so specialised that



only “experts” can handle it. There is therefore need for education support to focus on restructuring education systems so that they can recognise and respond to diversity in the student population instead of just focussing on supporting individual learners.

Inclusion is about the transformation of a society and its formal institutions such as schools. It implies a change in the values, priorities and policies that have propagated practices of exclusion and discrimination. It has also been argued that the deconstruction of educational barriers is only made possible by refuting the liberal reforming project of placing disabled children in the unreconstructed culture of regular schooling. Inclusive education should not be exclusive to disabled students or those who are described as having SEN but about all children (Slee & Allan, 2001). Booth and Ainscow (2000) argue that the index for inclusion suggests that inclusion involves increasing the presence, participation and achievement of all students in their local schools, with particular attention to those groups of students who are at risk of exclusion.

Individualisation has been key to special education provision requiring individualised interventions to meet children’s needs. This individualisation leads to locating the source of those difficulties in the characteristics of learners which avoids analysing the features of schooling that might be dysfunctional (Dyson, 2001). Working to support an individual child at risk of exclusion may indirectly signal to other children, parents and teachers that the child is responsible, maintaining negative stereotyping and a culture of individual blaming (Maguire, Macrae & Milbourne, 2003).

Despite the apparent agreement that inclusive education is the way forward for educating children with SEN, inclusion remains a challenging and contentious issue. Inclusive education is based on the principle that local schools should provide for all children, regardless of any perceived difference, disability or other social, emotional, cultural or linguistic difference. This raises issues regarding the conflict between special education and inclusive education. Florian (2008) argues that “if special education was not the answer, how were the school to provide for everyone? If inclusive education were to be a process of responding to individual differences within the structures and processes available to all learners, what would be the role of specialist teachers and what should be the nature of their expertise?” (p. 202).

There is varied research that supports the policy of inclusion. Children with SEN benefit from learning in inclusive settings and their inclusion does not have a negative influence on the performance of their nondisabled peers (Demeris, Childs & Jordan, 2007; Fisher & Meyer, 2002).

The challenge for proponents of inclusion is therefore to advance the argument that inclusion of children with SEN would not distract the education of their nondisabled peers but actually enhance their learning. This would arguably be the difficult part.

Most parents, teachers, policy makers and the wider society may respond positively to the appeal of social benefits for children, the fundamental issue of human rights and the positive ideological base of the inclusive movement. However, as Winzer and Mazurek (2005) argue, inclusion is better accepted in concept than in practice. When inclusive schooling is presented as school restructuring and a responsibility to include students with SEN into regular classrooms, it becomes a contradictory and controversial issue. What is problematic is that the gap between policy and practice can expose children with SEN to a situation where every classroom is not necessarily an effective learning environment. It can be argued that the critical issue is not where children sit but where they can learn effectively.

This section reviewed the various ways in which special education has been defined and international trends in the development of education for children with SEN. It was noted that the universal position is that children with SEN should be educated together with their nondisabled peers in what is referred to as inclusive education. The next section will examine issues of education for children with SEN in Kenya.

## **SEN provision in Kenya**

### ***History and development of Special Educational Needs in Kenya***

Providing education for children with SEN has not been easy in sub-Saharan Africa. Hardest hit are those children with severe disabilities who are excluded from the public education system altogether. Where the children are enrolled, they are generally at the age of at least 10 years (UNESCO, 2005a) Children in rural areas are disadvantaged because regular schools lack basic facilities to cater for them. Contrary to initiation, facilitation and follow-through of SEN strategies that assist students with disabilities, most African governments have demonstrated only a policy level interest in the education of learners with SEN. According to Mukuria and Korir (2006), superstition that disability is a curse from the gods is one of the factors that contribute to the general neglect that people with exceptional needs experience in Africa.

An estimated 1 to 2% of children with disabilities in developing countries attend school (Kisanji, 1998). This small percentage is due to a number of reasons, among them a general lack of awareness about disability and the low priority given to educating children with disabilities. In most developing countries special schools exist mainly in the cities and are accessed by the elite and other city dwellers, while the majority of the population live in rural areas (Kalyanpur, 1996) where mainstream schools are not appropriately resourced to include children with disabilities into their classes. The resources hypothesis suggests that richer countries will spend more on education than poorer countries and therefore provide special education for a higher proportion of their children (Putnam, 1979). From a social point of view, if not from the point of view of the individual student, special education may be seen as a luxury because of the higher costs of intensive care and the comparatively small numbers of students who benefit from it.

In circumstances where school attendance is optional, children with sensory deficiencies who are easily identifiable are the first likely to benefit from educational services. Traditionally, special education in Kenya has targeted children with physical handicaps. Establishments were set up for such children in Kenya in 1946. In Kenya, two special schools for students with mental retardation were established in 1948, after the establishment of schools for the deaf and blind but before the introduction of compulsory education. In 1968, these two schools were amalgamated but similar institutions were not set up in East Africa for a long time. Services for the students with physical disabilities became available in 1956 apparently as a result of an increase in knowledge, resources and types of treatment available (Putnam, 1979).

In Kenya, provision for SEN is primarily the responsibility of the government. Due to the poor state of the economy, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the church and organisations such as Kenya Society for the Blind, Kenya Society for Deaf Children, Association for Disabled People of Kenya and Society for People with Mental Handicaps also participate. The Special Needs Education (SNE) department was established at the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) in 1978 to develop education curriculum and curriculum support materials for learners with special needs in the country, working under the primary education division but elevated to a division in 1997 with increased demand for special education services. Following the introduction of FPE in 2003, public primary schools with special/integrated units recorded significant increases in enrolments (Wainaina, 2005).

Elimu Yetu Coalition (2007), an organisation that advocates for the rights of disabled persons in Kenya, estimates that the population of people with disabilities in Kenya is 10% of the total population. About 25% of these are children of school-going age. Of 750,000, an estimated 90,000 have been identified and assessed, but only 14,614 are enrolled in educational programs for children with disabilities while an equivalent number are integrated in regular schools. This suggests that over 90% of handicapped children are either at home or in regular schools with little or no specialised assistance. The government administers 57 special primary schools for children with disabilities. There are 153 integrated units in regular primary schools, 3 high schools for persons with physical disabilities, 2 high schools for persons with hearing disabilities and 1 high school for persons with visual disabilities. Thus, children with SEN who cannot get a place in a public school must find a place in a private school, at a cost ranging from \$192 to \$641 per term; which is considerable expense in a country where, according to the United Nations Human Development report (2003), about 23% of people live on less than \$1 a day.

As is the case in other African countries, one of the difficulties of addressing special needs education in Kenya is the lack of information and research evidence on the extent and nature of special education provision. Accounts of SEN in Africa have focussed on the level of policy development (Kisanji, 1998). There is relatively little evidence at school level of details of provision and of educational aims (Muuya, 2002). There is scarcity of published literature related to inclusive education in Africa and Asia. Published literature is usually in the form of country reports, often written by authors from northern countries and which may heavily be influenced by northern perspectives. Similarly the reports written by international agencies tend to provide relatively oversimplified accounts. It also seems that there is a tendency for practitioners in southern hemisphere countries to look to the literature in English speaking countries for knowledge and information about inclusive education which may not be relevant to the African continent. The Ministry of Education in Kenya acknowledges that research in special needs education and disability is inadequate. The 2009 SEN policy indicates that Kenya has been slow in generating knowledge and taking advantage of new and emerging innovations in the field of disability. Constraints facing research and development include lack of effective coordination between various actors, lack of harmonisation on research policies, and limited research funding. Other challenges are limited appreciation for the role of research and documentation, poor linkages between research and development programmes, inadequate mechanisms and systems for dissemination of and utilisation of research findings, and absence of up-to-date research bank of

inventories. Demand driven research and collaboration have not been effectively utilised (MOE, 2009).

At the level of schools and units, special education has not progressed to the point where it matches the aspirations of national policy in Kenya. In a survey study of head teachers in Kenya, Muuya (2002) found a high emphasis on the importance of the skills of personal care and obedience compared to the relatively low level of emphasis on a broad education and preparation for employment. This showed a somewhat restricted view of special education, a view that matches the “caring and custodial” aims identified traditionally as a function of special education rather than the ambitious aims of recent national policy.

In Kenya, there seems to be a trend where the little research that has been carried out on special education is centred in urban areas. One such study was conducted by Muuya (2002) who stated, “in terms of children with special educational needs, there is no reason to believe that they (in urban areas) differ from the rest of Kenya. However, because of their location around the capital and their more urban characteristics, it is likely that special educational provision is more developed in these areas than elsewhere” (p. 231). Muuya conducted her research in the urban area because of its “practicality” and “accessibility”; a trend, if not checked, is likely to alienate children and schools in rural settings whose needs may be different from those in urban areas.

Research that takes into account local contexts has been a point of discussion. Meyer (2003) argues that the experience of special education and inclusion in other parts of the world could help us to understand better on-going challenges to the implementation of best practices almost anywhere. She notes that if for instance American models were specific to certain conditions and circumstances in (some parts of) America, insisting upon their adoption elsewhere without local and cultural adaptations would be a form of colonialism and domination. It has also been argued that even within countries, situations can be diverse: no country is a homogenous entity and a historical perspective is vital to a deeper analysis of any educational context (Peters, 1993). This view is shared by Booth and Ainscow (1998) who warned against the idea that there can be a single national perspective on inclusion or exclusion.

Apart from the financial aspect of schooling, many children with SEN in Kenya are unlikely to go to school because, as Ndurumo (1993) observes, some parents link their children’s disabilities with sins committed by parents or ancestors and thus hide them at home. It is likely that most of the

negative feelings about a disability and towards people with disabilities are misconceptions that develop from lack of proper understanding of disabilities and how they affect functioning. According to a report by Elimu Yetu Coalition (2007), an organisation that fights for the rights of people with disabilities in Kenya, people with learning difficulties have been marginalised during the distribution of resources because they have been perceived as more of a liability than a group of contributors. They live in poverty, have limited opportunities for accessing education, health, suitable housing and employment. It should also be noted that the lack of an economic welfare state system to assist children with SEN in Kenya means that parents are likely to keep them at home.

In Kenya, children with learning difficulties would commonly be identified with terms such as “*wajinga*” (fools or idiots). This is changing to terms such as *waliopungukiwa na akili* (those with low intellectual ability). Samuels (2003) however points out that derogatory terminologies such as “mentally retarded” or “mentally handicapped” continue to be used to the embarrassment of well meaning educators within the field of special needs. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that a change of terminologies is coupled with change in policy and attitudes. Changes in language may be important but not sufficient to shift meanings on their own when actual practice remains unchanged. It has been argued that despite the positive connotation of the revised terminologies, special needs education still focuses on learner deficit, requiring a variety of experts specialising in particular categories of learners. Such an approach deflects attention from the learning environment, curricula, and teaching methods that might have contributed to creation of difficulties for children (Heung & Grossman, 2007).

According to Mukuria and Korir (2006), Kenya’s policy on special education promises to provide skills and attitudes with the goal of rehabilitation and adjustment of people with disabilities to the environment, provide adequate teachers who are skilled in theory and in the practice of teaching students with special educational needs, and increase the inclusion of exceptional children in regular schools. The policy also aims to provide related services and community-based programmes, increase parental participation and identify gifted and talented children early and provide them with special programs that will increase the development of their gifts and talents. However, Mukuria and Korir argue that SEN issues have not been addressed in the best way due to lack of evidence based educational policy concerning the nature and extent of SEN provision in Kenya. Much of the information that is available deals with children with physical disabilities.

Children with SEN and those from poor households in Kenya are not enrolled in early childhood development centres (ECDC). There is therefore need to develop and implement appropriate ECDC programs for children with SEN, including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, in order to enhance access. In Kenya, rural preschools tend to be poor compared to urban and suburban schools. In terms of staffing, communities often call on retired teachers, mothers, high school dropouts, and volunteers who provide their services for free or at minimal salary (Mbugua, 2004). Given the importance attributed to early identification and intervention for children with SEN, this situation does not augur well. Currently, there are no pre-school units targeting children with SEN. Parents, most of them without skills, are the only educators and care providers at this level (Mukuria & Korir, 2006).

Another issue to contend with is that in some regions of Kenya, special units are overcrowded because the increasing number of students does not match expansion. While it is a positive development that more parents are enrolling handicapped children in schools instead of keeping them at home, more needs to be done. Experts say funding for special units in Kenya is inadequate. A task force appointed by the Ministry of Education (2003) calculated the cost of educating a child with SEN to be Kenya shillings 17,000 annually. Each child in a public special education unit or school gets Kenya shillings 2000 annually (Mukuria & Korir, 2006). This is much less than what the task force recommended. Further, school buildings are not accessible, making it difficult for children with physical disabilities to attend. Lack of basic technical training facilities such as Braille, typewriters, hearing aids, and specialised play material is also a problem (MOE, 2003). Finally, without clear mechanisms and policy for identification and provision for children with SEN in Kenya, there is a lack of professional and material assistance to parents of children with disabilities. The government policy on education of individuals with disabilities is implicit, contradicting, and fails to provide the mandated free education to all children (Muuya, 2002).

Following a report of the taskforce on special needs education appraisal exercise commissioned by the Ministry of Education (Kenya) in November 2003, a draft special needs education policy was released in April 2008 and adapted into a policy document in 2009 with no or little changes. Some of the guiding principles of the policy are a guarantee for the rights of children with SEN including equal access to all educational institutions, non-discriminative enrolment and retention of learners with special needs in any institution of learning and barrier free transition of SNE learners through the various educational levels in accordance with their abilities. Other rights include a learner-centred curriculum and responsive learning systems and materials, protection of the human dignity

and rights of learners with disabilities and active and proactive primary role of parents and families as caregivers and health providers of their children.

### ***Legislating for the rights of children with disabilities in Kenya***

According to the International Labour Organisation (2004), improving legislation and implementation strategies has been identified as one of the main issues to be tackled in the African Decade of Disabled Persons 1999-2009. The Kenyan constitution (2008) provides that children with disabilities have a right to benefit from a full and decent life in conditions that ensure dignity, enhance self-reliance and facilitate active participation in society. However, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that the rights of children with disabilities to have special care and assistance, particularly in regard to access to education, are properly addressed.

Kenyan legislation relating to provision for children with disabilities include:

- Legal notice number 7 of 1986 which established the Kenya Institute of Special Education to meet the educational needs of disabled children, youth and adults;
- The 2000 draft Constitution Article 37 (7) which states that children with special needs are entitled to the special protection of the state and society;
- The Draft Equity Bill 2000 which deals with discrimination that occurs in the context of employment, education, health services, health care benefits, accommodation, property, associations, professions, appointment to public office and provision of goods, services and facilities and promotes choice in education rather than automatic allocation of learners with special needs to special schools or programs based on their disability or educational capability;
- The Children's Act 2001 which provides that a disabled child shall have a right to be treated with dignity, and to be accorded appropriate medical treatment, special care, education and training free of charge or at a reduced cost where possible and
- The Persons with Disabilities Act, 2003 which established the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) to formulate and develop measures to ensure that persons with disabilities are educated, employed and participate fully in sporting, recreational and cultural activities.



Thus, a lack of legislation is not a significant problem in the Kenyan situation. Instead, continued problems may lie in the lack of awareness by stakeholders, notably parents and teachers, about the legislation in order to protect and claim the rights of children as stipulated.

### ***Conclusion***

A look at the history of special education internationally and nationally suggests that although there has been progress through the various stages, there is no single point where it has been agreed that services for children with SEN have been adequate. For various reasons ranging from negative attitudes and resources to a lack of clear policy guidelines, the education of children with SEN continues to be problematic.

Also, the published literature does not include information about the evolution of special education practice in developing countries like Kenya. Much of the literature on its early stages is essentially western, leading to a situation where developing countries may pick up the concept of inclusion as a practice without considering its historical development and practicality. Nevertheless, it is still important to consider the past in the education of children with special needs in order to explain the present and predict the future. As Dyson (2001) argues, the past may have little to offer apart from “a tale of thwarted initiatives and shattered ideas” (p. 25) but it can serve as a starting point for improvement. In order to examine the quality of education offered to children with SEN, it is important to look at what quality education would mean. The next chapter will review some issues or indicators of quality of education for this group of children.

## **CHAPTER THREE: ISSUES OF QUALITY IN SEN**

### **Introduction**

To investigate issues of quality, certain quality indicators were examined borrowing from sources such as the Program Quality Indicators (PQI) developed by Meyer, Eichinger and Downing (1992) as a checklist of most promising practices in educational programs for students with severe disabilities in the USA. According to Moore, Melchior and Davies (2008), an indicator is an instrument or tool for evaluation, a yardstick to measure results and to assess realisation of desired levels of performance in a sustained and objective way. In a WB report (2009), the government of Kenya defines quality education as a programmed form of instruction that seeks out learners and assists them to learn using a wide range of strategies and approaches. It recognises that learning is linked to experience, language and cultural practices, gifts, traits, the external and internal school environments and interests. The report further states that within the learning experience, certain components affect quality including the learner, content, processes and environment. According to the government of Kenya, the main determinants of quality education include provision of adequate textbooks and teaching staff, a conducive learning environment (including water and sanitation facilities and classrooms), as well as a broad based curriculum that is implemented through child-centred interactive teaching methodologies.

According to Powell (2009), the quality of education in many school systems is determined by a grading system that identifies low-status and high-status schools. He gives the example of Germany where students are defined less by their unique individual personality than by the school type that they attend, which in turn is determined by grades, teacher evaluations, and school recommendations. Distinctions between school types remain strict, despite increases in comprehensive school attendance and the rising stigmatisation and the decreasing vocational training opportunities linked to attending low-status types of schools. Powell contrasts this with the US where a large investment in public education focuses on levelling the playing field for all individuals. However, unequal educational outputs and outcomes are tolerated and celebrated. Individual students are ranked and publicly rewarded for their outstanding academic, aesthetic, or athletic achievements. This perspective encourages emphasis in each individual's unique potential, growth, and contributions. In Kenya, secondary schools are classified into national, provincial and district schools. The national schools are usually the best performers, attract the best students and

are better equipped, while the district schools are the lower performers, attract the least prepared students and are less well equipped. Children with SEN will normally find it difficult to get places in the national schools due to low academic performance.

Quantitative and qualitative discourses share different origins and epistemologies and therefore may conflict with the goals of education, the means of teaching, the manner of assessment and evaluation and the notion of student learning. According to Tan, Tan and Chua (2008), qualitative learning focuses on how well students have learnt as opposed to how much, recognises how students make sense and connections of their knowledge as opposed to whether answers are correct or wrong, how students are able to relate different topics into each other and the subject discipline as opposed to aggregation of unrelated information.

The assessment of the policy of FPE in Kenya in 2006 indicated that there was a steady improvement in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination (KCPE) performance in 21 out of the 35 low-achieving districts. It also indicates that performance in the primary examinations initially declined which in turn meant a decline in quality. This appears to suggest that decline in examination performance is seen in terms of decline in quality of education. Examinations in Kenya are the one-fits-all category in that they are uniform and national in nature. This may make it difficult to define quality education in regard to children with SEN. According to the Kenyan government, indicators of quality in relation to the FPE policy include primary completion rate, primary gross enrolment rate, primary repetition rate and primary drop-out rate. Others include the textbook: pupil ratio, pupil: teacher ratio, KCPE performance and additional funds (World Bank, 2009). In relation to children with SEN, the government concedes that high cost of special equipment, facilities and materials required for children with SEN hinders access to education for those categories of learners (World Bank, 2005)

Moore *et al*, (2008) argue that it would be unreasonable to expect a single indicator to capture the complexity of children's rights and the various aspects of childhood. They suggest that indicators would be best used in combination to present as comprehensive a picture as possible of the extent to which children enjoy their rights. The following section will identify and discuss some quality indicators that informed inquiry in this study.

## Quality indicators

### *Inclusive practices*

The philosophy of inclusion and the challenges of its implementation were discussed in detail in chapter two under the heading “development of inclusion”. This section will therefore highlight the core principles of inclusion. Swain and Cook (2001) argue that inclusive education is based on a philosophy of positively evaluating and celebrating difference. An inclusive school should be barrier free and accessible to all in terms of the environment, curriculum, support systems and methods of communication. Ainscow, Dyson and Booth (2006) observe that while inclusive practices can emerge out of a school’s internal dynamics, a commitment to inclusion at policy level would help to meet the demand for flexible supports, resources and professional development opportunities that respond to teachers’ particular circumstances.

Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are often considered as a distinct group of learners. They are not included in the overall planning for education. They appear to be an additional program to be addressed when provision for the more able learners has been assured (Heung & Grossman, 2007). It can be observed that children with SEN need to be part and parcel of the education system. A study by Osler and Starkey (2005) quoted a year 11 student aged 16 with Aspergers Syndrome submitting evidence to a group of professionals discussing his case. The student had been excluded from school for having epileptic seizures. He said,

The special needs department deserves to feel part of the school and not just a little island which is overlooked by all except wretches like myself, escaped from a shipwreck (p. 71).

What constitutes the best interests of the child, who decides and how it is applicable can be debatable. Children with disabilities cannot become typical members of the classroom and develop a strong sense of being if they are compelled to ignore aspects of their identity and conform to a majority culture that devalues their appearance and ways of thinking. Denying diversity among children may compromise their learning by denying them access to required teaching approaches. Teachers need to consider how children with SEN feel when they cannot speak in class, get bullied, are separated from their peers, and how this can impact on their learning (MacArthur, Sharp, Kelly & Gaffney, 2007).

An inclusive programme philosophy should emphasise sharing its own innovative and effective efforts with other services within its environment. It should also provide that any student who is

separated from his/her same age non-disabled peers must have a written reintegration plan stating the reasons for removal, the instructional activities that will occur to prepare for return and a definite schedule for reaching the goal of inclusion (Meyer *et al*, 1992). In Kenya, children who have been placed in special education units have no definite schedules, their transition to the next grade is unclear to stakeholders and they are destined to remain in the unit for the entire primary school cycle.

An inclusive education policy needs to have a clear service delivery model easily accessible to those in charge of its implementation. Stough (2003) gives an example of what he feels is a clear model as practiced in Costa Rica. It is divided into four sections. The first one is the consulting teachers, specially trained to help students with SEN in the regular classrooms, assist regular teachers in modifying teaching and constructing teaching materials and visit schools in rural areas to advice on issues of SEN. The second section is the educational assistance committee, consisting of the school head teacher, special educator, two general educators and a parent. They make decisions on special education services required and recommend assistive education services or accessibility modifications, provide technical teacher training to general educators and supervise quality of education. The third section is the itinerant teams consisting of a psychologist, social worker, general education teacher and special education teacher. They travel across the country to conduct assessments, diagnose students with SEN and provide technical assistance to teachers who work with students with disabilities and arrange workshops for professional development. The last section is the resource centres which provide assistive and medication services. Meyer *et al* (1992) recommend that it is important for governments and individual schools to have a philosophy on inclusive education that is understood by teachers, parents and other staff.

Inclusion can also be seen at the level of the wider community. Meyer, *et al* (1992) argues that a society that accepts inclusion should make it possible for each student to attend a school he/she would attend if he/she did not have a disability. Children with disabilities should also get similar options to attend other programs that are available to the non-disabled peers. Removing children with SEN from the regular classrooms should be considered a temporary measure when absolutely necessary for health/safety reasons, or in the event of serious disruptive behaviour. Meyer *et al* point out that School staffs are required to encourage non-disabled peers to socially interact with students with disabilities in positive ways throughout the day during class and non-class times.

### *Nature of curriculum*

According to Cummings (2008), curriculum is a broad term referring to a school system's plan for what should be taught, when and how. Curriculum designers usually focus on preparing students to pass examinations relevant to international and national capital markets. This implies that in the curriculum, they may use illustrations taken from foreign countries that are unfamiliar to rural children. Examples may include images of famous buildings and pictures of aeroplanes that are so distant from the experience of young people leading to confusion. Cummings argues that these possibilities can be countered by including examples from local cultures in the curriculum.

Hoover (2009) emphasises the need to identify and adopt learner and family needs associated with culture and community into the process of curriculum implementation. Unless this is done, student behaviours may be misinterpreted as problems rather than differences. Cummings (2008) contends that it may be useful for the education system to develop a core curriculum, but to build into the framework distinct areas where local schools can make modifications suited to their circumstances. Examples may include a focus on local economy and culture including the translation of the core curriculum into local languages.

Elimu Yetu Coalition (EYC), a non-governmental organisation in Kenya that brings together education stakeholders in the field of special education, suggests that there is need to enhance mobilisation and awareness programmes to develop and implement a flexible and child-centred curriculum to make special education all-inclusive (Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2007). Important in this assertion is treating children with SEN as individuals and identifying their needs as early as possible. The government of Kenya states that the learning needs of children with SEN and their non-disabled peers are not entirely the same. As a result, the curriculum for the two should not be the same. It is noted that because it is not possible to identify those who will proceed and those who will not before the end of a particular level, there is need for a compromise curriculum which attempts to satisfy the needs of the two (MOE, 2004). This suggests that because it is impossible to identify the students who need help, students will be allowed to fail examinations before they can be offered an opportunity to join courses for the "less intelligent".

In Kenya, teaching is narrowly focussed on acquisition of knowledge and the reproduction of it in high stakes examinations. In a study carried out in China and Hong Kong where examinations also play a vital role in education, Heung and Grossman (2007) found that there was little space or interest for responding to individual needs or cultivating a receptive and inclusive culture in

Chinese or Hong Kong schools. They argue that the value placed on individualism, self advocacy, and diversity by many western educators may not find an equivalent in China or Hong Kong. Another study carried out in Indonesia by the same researchers indicated that often there was a disconnection between children's lives and the school context schedules, language, and culture. They suggest that there is need to match the curriculum with cultural beliefs and priorities with a focus on functional skills. Browder *et al* (2004) support the idea by stating that cross-referencing the general and functional curriculum provides a way to make academic standards applicable for students with severe disabilities through the use of real life examples.

Adjusting the general curriculum to suit the needs of learners with SEN can be problematic. Giangreco, Cloninger and Iverson (1993) describe two basic approaches to adjusting the general education program. The first is using multi-level curriculum where students learn the same curriculum but with different expectations for outcome. The second option is curriculum overlapping where students learn functional skills in the context of an academic lesson. An example is having a student with severe disabilities attend an academic lesson class to receive exposure to the general curriculum but with expectations for learning social skills like turn taking rather than the subject content. However, it should be noted that teachers are under the pressure of high standards and accountability. The question is whether the basic goals of public education should be the integration of disabled students with the required curriculum modifications or the strive for higher academic performance and rigid disciplinary procedures. Commenting on the influence of the school accountability movement in the USA, Browder *et al* (2004) state that there has been interest in aligning alternative assessments and the general curriculum. However, there are questions as to what curriculum to use as their foundation, that is, academic or functional.

Muuya (2002) surveyed head teachers in Kenya regarding the aims of education for children with SEN. The head teachers provided a rating of the aims of special education. The two most highly rated aims of special education were those of personal care and cleanliness and making children obedient. In contrast, for more than a quarter of the head teachers, the basic skills of literacy and numeracy were not a very important aim and only just over one quarter saw it as very important to give children with SEN a broad education. Another finding was that the aims judged to be especially important for special schools and units were to overcome emotional and behavioural difficulties, provide therapy for troubled children, or gain personal skills such as domestic skills, personal care and cleanliness. Academic aims of basic skills, a broad education, and preparation

for employment seen as crucial features of special provision in national policy documents were rated as least important.

Advocating for an appropriate education for children with mental handicaps, Mukuria and Korir (2006) argue that most children with disabilities in Kenya attend schools and units with academic and vocational aims rather than having the capacity to address severe mental retardation and complicated learning difficulties. Kisanji (1999) indicates that principles that guided African indigenous education could be relevant to education for all children, such as the absence of or limited differentiation in space, time, and status since indigenous customary education became available and accessible to all community members. Secondly, education was relevant in terms of content and methods that were drawn from the physical or natural and social environments, both of which were tied to the religious/spiritual life of all community members. Lastly, there was relevance in terms of functionality of knowledge and skills. All knowledge, attitudes and skills included in the curriculum were based on cultural transmission, knowledge creation and transformation. Kisanji argues that the principle of universality, relevance, functionality and community localisation are essential for a successful inclusive curriculum.

Although individualisation is needed, Browder *et al* (2007) argue that models are also needed for general curriculum access that can demonstrate how to balance academic and functional needs, identify age appropriate targets, develop IEPs that link to state standards and teach skills that are meaningful to students. Neel, Cessna, Borock and Bechard (2003), advocated for an expanded curriculum for children with emotional and behaviour deficiencies (EBD). Such a curriculum should include relevant academics with necessary accommodations and modifications to meet the needs of the students, formal and informal instruction including those skills necessary to negotiate home, school and work environments and direct instruction in the area of disability.

As illustrated earlier in this section, children with SEN need to access an age appropriate curriculum. However, identifying the appropriate grade level of focus can be confusing when students learn in ungraded, self-contained classes like the special education units for children with mental handicaps in Kenya. Browder *et al* (2007) state that for such students, the comparable grade level should be based on chronological age. After a planning team identifies the students' age level, confusion may still exist on how to choose priority skills for teaching. Browder *et al* suggest the use of a programme to select content based on the activities of peers who are the same chronological age. These same steps can apply to selecting grade appropriate content by



identifying academic content of same grade-level peers, selecting specific activities for instruction, planning needed accommodations and supports and teaching in the typical settings and with typical activities and materials to the greatest extent possible. Wehmeyer, Lattin and Agram (2001) argue that access to the general curriculum does not mean that all students with disabilities will exclusively learn the general curriculum as this would deny them the right to an IEP. The task force on appraisal of SEN in Kenya (2003) observed that the curriculum used in ordinary schools was rigid and overloaded. As a result, it did not take into account the individual needs of learners with SEN. It was suggested that the curriculum be adequately responsive to the different categories of children with SEN and flexible in terms of time, teaching/learning resources, methodology, mode of access, presentation and content (MOE, 2003).

### ***Curriculum delivery***

Curriculum delivery encompasses how teaching is done to ensure learning. In Kenya, an analysis of the KCPE performance trends between 2002 and 2005 in 21 out of a sample of 35 districts revealed that there was either inadequate coverage of the syllabus or the use of old-fashioned teaching methods, which produce poor results (World Bank, 2009). Children with SEN require an IEP in order to make learning child-centred. In most developed education systems, an IEP is a legal requirement. An appropriate IEP needs to include opportunities for children with SEN to learn in multiple settings and with non-disabled peers. In their research, Hunt, Goetz and Anderson (1986) provided an analysis to examine the quality of IEPs. They identified several quality indicators to use in examining the IEPs which included the use of age appropriate teaching materials, the use of age appropriate student tasks, teaching of basic skills, and teaching opportunities within critical activities. Other indicators included provision of interactive activities, instruction in multiple settings and instruction in natural settings

Meyer *et al* (1992) investigated the quality of IEPs in terms of aims focussed on functional skills needed to operate in community settings as adults based on chronological age guidelines; primary objectives for critical skills that are immediately useful in daily life and the community; objectives to develop leisure activity skills reflecting the learner's personal preferences; and objectives to develop skills in home living and personal management. Other quality indicators included self-regulation objectives reflecting decision-making, choice making and autonomy; how to interact with and help others; social interactions with non-disabled peers; and what the student will do or stop doing as well as what staff will do.

Language is the vehicle through which needs and wants are conveyed. It enables the child to express his or her experiences, to predict and reflect on issues around them. Social contacts are made and sustained by language (Wamae & Kan'gethe-Kamau, 2004). In some school systems, the language of instruction from the first grade is in a metropolitan language unfamiliar to most young children starting school. These children are therefore discouraged by the challenge of having both to learn a new language and then to use it for understanding what their teachers say and what they read in books (Cummings, 2008). This is the case in Kenya where the language of instruction in Kenyan schools is English which is not the children's first language. The danger with this, as Hoover (2009) observes, is that in many instances, teachers assume that during the acquisition of a second language, children are not able to use higher order thinking. The result is that the curriculum is less challenging and may undermine development of higher level thinking. This, in turn, may lead to placement of children in special education due to perceived poor concept thinking skills. Hence, instruction and assessment for diverse learners should be delivered in the student's most proficient language: concluding that the student has a learning disability because of issues in using a second language would be erroneous.

### *Staffing*

The issue of resource mobilization has a great influence on primary education for children with SEN in Kenya. The Ministry of Education SEN policy states that human resources required include specially trained teaching staff, support staff such as teacher aides, professionals in assessment, sign language interpreters, note takers, counselling psychologists, paramedics and medical specialists, social workers, parents and the community as a whole (MOE, 2009). The pupil: teacher ratio in sub-Saharan Africa in primary schools stands at a world high of 1:44, nearly double the world average of 1: 23. The inadequate number of teachers available in schools is a major issue, and staffing challenges include poor remuneration, inadequate and uneven distribution of teachers, and inadequate teaching skills. In higher income areas, there are lower teacher absentee rates than in poorer areas and teacher attendance in rural areas is typically lower than in urban areas. Lower or higher absenteeism is attributed to the quality of infrastructure within a school and the frequency of monitoring (UNESCO, 2005b). In special education in Kenya, the teacher: pupil ratio was even worse at 1:55 in 2003 (MOE, 2003). A major obstacle to the provision of quality education in rural areas is the shortage of teachers willing to work in these areas due to factors such as a lack of housing.

### ***Home-school relationship***

The mounting pressure for increased performance of schools can lead to communication difficulties amongst the key stakeholders. According to Neel *et al*, (2003), those who must work in partnership in order for students with SEN to be successful may not agree on intervention priorities and strategies. Head teachers, special education teachers, special education administrators and parents need certain agreed indicators in order to ensure combined efforts are cohesive and focussed.

The importance of parental involvement in special education has been well established internationally particularly in diverse cultural contexts. Researchers such as Harry (1992; 2002; 2008), Kalyanpur, Harry and Skrtic (2002) have implored the significance of placing the participation of parents in the education of children with disabilities within specific cultural contexts. The expectation that parents would participate in advocating for the rights of their children is difficult to achieve. It is argued that the cultural contexts in which parents operate are likely to influence their attitudes towards and participation in the education of their children as well as affecting how they define and interpret disability. The researchers argue that the non-participation of parents from certain cultural contexts may be seen by professionals as a lack of interest in the education of their children when this may not be the case. As discussed in chapter one in relation to the role of parents in the process of education, it is important that the collaboration between parents and professionals becomes a central quality indicator in the education of children with SEN.

### ***Physical facilities***

The government of Kenya recognises that learners with specific disabilities and special needs in education require specialised educational resources at individual and at school levels depending on the nature and extent of disability. The high cost of this special equipment remains a hindrance to the government's goal to provide education for all in line with the global goal of UPE. The government of Kenya also notes that there is inadequate provision of appropriate teaching and learning materials for Special Needs Education (SNE) because most of the materials available in the market are mainly developed for the regular curricula and regular students. It further states that many parents cannot afford assistive and functional devices needed by SEN learners as they are expensive and out of reach. This according to the government is aggravated further by the fact that the majority of children with SEN come from poor families and therefore find it difficult to participate in cost sharing where this is required (MOE, 2009).

An analysis of the KCPE performance trends between 2002 and 2005 in 21 out of a sample of 35 districts in Kenya revealed that there was inadequate teaching and learning aids. The government of Kenya indicates that it has increased support to learners with SEN. An additional Kenya shillings 153,000 (US\$2,022) per school was disbursed to special schools and units for special needs equipment and every school was given Kenya shillings 10,000 (US\$132) to create a disability-friendly environment at school. Additional funds were also provided to the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) to expand training of SEN teachers towards achieving an all-inclusive educational system (World Bank, 2009). Although the Kenyan government appears to place a great emphasis on physical facilities, Cumming (2008) argues that at most, there is only very weak evidence that the quality of buildings makes a difference in learning. Although some sort of building is necessary for a school to operate effectively, many studies show little or no relationship between student learning and the type of construction, the amount of ventilation and illumination, the physical condition of the roof and the walls or furniture. However, children with SEN may require the physical environment to be modified to suit their various needs. To deal with the increased need for resources in schools, some countries have established clusters of smaller schools that coordinate activities and share learning resources. Cummings (2008) gives the example of Thailand where the resource centre is staffed with an instructional expert and has a generous library and stock of instructional aides to be shared by groups of schools.

Other areas of concern for children with SEN include resources to support transport to and from school, class budgets for class teachers and adaptive environments. However, some services are beyond the reach of service provision in developing countries such as Kenya, particularly in rural areas. Governments in developing countries do not bestow upon themselves an express responsibility to provide such services for children with SEN. Even if this were seen as the children's right, such services may not be a priority when more pressing issues take precedence.

### ***Progress monitoring***

An important objective of all curriculums is to ensure what is taught is learnt. In traditional curriculum, examinations tend to be administered at the end of a course, which, in many systems, means that evaluation occurs at specified times of the school schedule. These tests are normally high stakes and are used to determine if a student has sufficient knowledge to advance to the next level or year. In situations where these exams are the only way of evaluating students, repetition rates could be very high. To counter this, continuous assessment tests have been advanced as an

alternative approach that can test student knowledge at the end of each unit. It has been argued that regularly administered tests provide teachers and students with more regular opportunities to examine material that has not been mastered well and address learning difficulties in good time (Cummings, 2008). Presently, Kenya has no effective national system for monitoring learner achievements at levels other than the end of the school cycle. National examinations are seen as designed for selection and certification purposes but do not provide information about learners' achievement and competencies. The government of Kenya (MOE, 2005) however supports, at least in theory, a system of national assessments as opposed to national examinations. National assessments are viewed as a baseline against which changes in educational standards can be judged and can help in identifying specific strengths and weaknesses in learner achievements so that curriculum and teaching interventions may be designed. The assessments can also facilitate the institutionalisation of monitoring of primary education to ensure learners acquire basic learning competencies in each subject at every level. In respect of children with SEN, the assessments are seen as a tool to ensure early identification and intervention.

According to Wamae and Kan'gethe-Kamau (2004), tools of assessment such as language in Kenya are important because assessment of the pupils' competence in the language depends upon written national examinations. The grades that candidates get in national examinations are of significant value because they help in the selection and placement of learners in the next level of class, into training colleges or even into jobs. Examinations are also used to determine the success or failure of schools or a means by which schools can be held accountable to parents. Examinations seem to emphasise the performance of schools as units and not how individual students may gradually benefit from schooling. National testing regimes are likely to disadvantage children with SEN, detracting attention from the needs of students with disabilities and SEN. Osler and Starkey (2005) note that a system characterised by regular testing and resultant feeling of failure are likely to deflate the confidence of children with learning difficulties. Schools are also unlikely to adapt their practices to meet the needs of these children. Students with SEN may be unable to participate in regular assessment systems even with appropriate accommodations because of the severity of their cognitive disabilities so that alternate assessments are needed.

Although alternative assessment seems to reflect a potential shift in thinking about curriculum for students with severe disabilities, it is not agreed whether students with severe disabilities should be in a separate functional curriculum, in general curriculum or in both. The questions that Browder *et al* (2004) raise include whether access to the general curriculum should be transitional, like the

shift from the developmental model, additive (same curriculum content, varied outcomes, same class, learn social skills e.g. taking turns) like the recent focus on social inclusion and self-determination, or simply renaming the same functional skills as access to general curriculum. Another issue is the regular collection and keeping of records of student performance in the process of progress monitoring. The data need to be correlated to IEP objectives and used to design programme changes as may be required. Meyer *et al* (1992) suggest that overall programme effectiveness need to be evaluated at least every year by using a standardised measure of student progress. At the same time, student transitions from one level to another need to be facilitated by communication between sending and receiving teachers.

### ***Quality Assurance and Standards***

Tan *et al*, (2008) suggest that assessment and learning are best understood as having meaning only in relation to each other. This means that without assessment, it is not possible to know what has been learnt and without learning, it is not possible to know what and how to assess. A qualitative approach to assessment is suggested as a comprehensive way of realising the various assessment needs of students, teachers and education systems. According to the Teach Less Learn More (TLLM), a system designed in Singapore, assessment with open-ended responses permits meaningful student involvement over a period of time in order to prompt, judge, and enhance holistic understandings. Tan *et al* suggest that this system is providing education that prepares students for life instead of life for tests.

Another aspect of quality assurance and standards is external assessment of accountability such as school inspections. Osler and Osler (2005) argue that school inspection may not identify the practice of unofficial exclusion, or inadequacies in supporting children with SEN. They give an example of the British system of education where it would appear that if a school is able to maintain a favourable position in examination league tables and secure a good inspection report, it may prove difficult to address any weaknesses in its SEN provision.

Responsibility for ensuring quality assurance and standards in Kenya's education system lies with the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS). One of its main functions is effective monitoring of curriculum delivery in schools to ensure effectiveness. To realise this, the DQAS is expected to advise schools on how best to improve their teaching. The department however faces challenges which include inadequate school level supervisory capacity, lack of tools to measure learning outcomes, and widespread weakness in teacher skills accompanied by a lack of

professional development. Other challenges include inability of the DQAS to organise sufficient subject-based in-service courses to address shortcomings relating to revised curriculum, assessment skills, lack of capacity to adequately assess special needs and respond to them and inadequate support to quality assurance services at school levels (MOE, 2005). Ajuoga, Indoshi and Agak (2010) carried out a study in Kenya looking at the perception of quality assurance and standards officers about their competence and its implications for training. One of their findings was that the quality assurance and standards officers were unanimous that they needed additional training before and after recruitment. The officers stated that their credibility was undermined by the fact that they were picked from classrooms without prior training in supervisory functions and that the induction courses they receive are too short to help them learn supervision skills. However, when the officers were asked to prioritise areas of further training from a list of ten competencies, special needs education was ranked last.

### ***Decisions on placement of children in special units***

According to Kopetz and Itimu (2008), the practice of identifying students with learning difficulties should include a detailed examination of every child's past academic performance, recorded observations of the student's participation in the classroom and natural environments, personal interviews with the child, parent and other care givers, and referrals from teachers and persons or organisations such as social welfare, religious and medical organisations. This requires the administration of standardised, psycho-educational assessments that identify specific learning difficulties.

Late identification and placement of children in special education can be a problem for children with SEN. It is likely that younger children can respond to early prevention and intervention programmes. Cheney, Flower and Templeton (2008) argue that in order to capitalise on the positive effects of early intervention, schools must accurately and effectively identify their at risk students and provide them with services in pre-school and elementary grades. This is likely to enable children to enjoy the benefits of early intervention programmes and prevent situations like anti-social behaviour from becoming chronic. The NYPSSC 2000 (1996) identifies an effective programme as one which identifies students' need for support services and makes referrals to the appropriate agencies. Such a program should screen learning disabled students in appropriate ways and place them in age appropriate core academic and interrelated classes. A study carried out in Asia found that students enrolling in secondary school at the age of 12 or 13 were assessed and assigned to one of three bands of secondary schools based on the assessment results. This system

of banding was founded on the belief that homogenous groupings of students would facilitate teaching and learning. This tracking of students has far-reaching consequences on the ecology of schools, classroom life and the self-image of students (Heung & Grossman, 2007).

Another problem associated with early identification of children at risk is the late entry into primary school. According to a UNESCO report (2006), more than 1 in 5 children start primary school late in Sub-Saharan Africa. This late entry makes it difficult for teachers to manage a wide range of ages and skills in the same classroom while children who start school late are more likely to drop out. According to Cummings and Williams (2008), broad-based ECD programming is pro-poor, provides children with a cognitive and social foundation that both lays the groundwork for formal schooling and is virtually impossible to develop at later stages of life. A related problem in Kenya is that since the implementation of FPE, poor parents are choosing to withdraw their children from Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDC) or keep them at home until they reach the age of primary school entry so that they do not incur any expenses. They refuse to pay the fees for ECDC on the grounds that it should be free like primary education (Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2007).

In a study to investigate the expectations of parents about future outcomes of children with mental handicaps in Kenya, Mutua and Dimitrov (2001) reported that students with disabilities were indiscriminately integrated into special schools. The erroneous assumption for this was that they will eventually function in the society. In an overview of special education provision in Kenya, Mukuria and Korir (2006) argue that the plight of individuals with behavioural problems was discouraging because identification was done by medical professionals who placed such children in medical wards for individuals with mental illness or in rehabilitation centres with juvenile delinquents.

Appropriate assessment is crucial in ensuring appropriate placement of a student with SEN. It also implies that regular assessment should be administered when a student experiences difficulties meeting the demands of the general curriculum at which point such a student may be considered for special education services. Mukuria and Korir (2006) argue that in Kenya and other African countries, students are not properly categorised. This is as a result of many factors including cultural beliefs, socio-economic problems, high rate of illiteracy, under-trained personnel and a lack of funding. In a study carried out in Kenya, Mutua and Dimitrov (2001) indicated that whereas students with mild mental retardation may be educated in regular schools, those with



moderate and severe disabilities are typically served in educational settings where they cannot reach their highest potential. Hoover (2009) argues that for a disability to exist, problems must be experienced in assessment procedures that use culturally valid assessment procedures, instruments and practices including children's preferred language.

In Kenya, Educational Assessment and Resource Services (EARS) were introduced in 1984. The main purpose was to ensure early identification, assessment, intervention and placement of learners with SEN. One of the constraints identified by the SEN policy is that assessment teachers posted to the centres are not trained in assessment. They conduct their service with the knowledge acquired when they trained as special teachers. The policy also notes that the assessment team at the district is made up of assessment teachers and other professionals from other ministries like Health and Social Services. The setback is that this multidisciplinary approach functions informally since it has not been formalised (MOE, 2009). It should also be noted that many of these health and social services professionals are not available in many rural districts.

### ***Support Services***

Support is understood as a range of measures and provisions that assist teachers to attend to the needs of children with disabilities in school. These measures may include appropriate training, community and parental involvement, professional advice and referral services, participation of persons with disabilities, assistant teachers, provision of mobility and teaching aids, financial support, official acknowledgement, supervision, efficient leadership, assistance in curriculum adaptations, and government/legal support (Arbeiter & Hartley, 2002). Other support services that have been identified include providing students with individual appropriate support services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, adapted physical education, guidance and counselling, social work, family support and protective services and legal and ethical requirements (NYPSSC 2000, 1996).

Another support for children with SEN relates to effective behaviour management systems. Neel *et al*, (2003) argue that behaviour management systems should focus on supervision as opposed to total control and involve specialised instruction around students' social needs. The systems need to include clear rules and routines, an integrated system of discipline that is coordinated with the entire school system, specific modifications that deal with individual needs and crisis plans to limit the negative effect of problem occurrences.

### ***Legislation/statutes and guidelines***

Legislation to safeguard the rights of children with SEN has an international and national dimension. A major guideline is provided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. However, there have been reservations about whether international guidelines will operate to successfully ensure the rights of children with SEN are applied despite the uniqueness of different countries. In her commentary about internationally appropriate best practices for supporting people with disabilities and their families, Meyer (2003) refers to the recent history of special education and community services in the USA where significant access to equality of education opportunity and commitment to meet individualised needs has been achieved. For instance, parents and persons with disabilities are guaranteed due process protected by a legal framework requiring informed consent and confidentiality. Meyer questions whether these values are universal or emphasises on individual rights and legal processes that are peculiarly western constructs. The question is whether such practices can be applied internationally despite a nation's socio-economic resources and socio-political structures.

In a historical overview of the development of inclusion in Costa Rica from a perspective of a developing country, Stough (2003) examines the equal opportunity law which redefines special education services to include early childhood intervention, college-level services and services for students who are hospitalised. It is however noted that in order for the law to influence widespread change and not become a well-intentioned legal document, Costa Rica will need to enforce the law instead of relying on policy compliance. Students with disabilities and their parents need to access the necessary information so that they participate, understand and support the education process.

### ***Staff training and development***

According to Smith and Motivans (2007), teacher quality is very difficult to monitor and measure. It constitutes a range of skills, competencies and motivation. Specific training is therefore necessary in order to expect quality services from teachers. Information on training levels is one of the few indicators procedurally collected about teachers but does not indicate much about the content of such training. The knowledge teachers have in their subject areas and their participation in continuing professional development are significant indicators of quality. The big number of new teachers needed to meet UPE is challenging but even more challenging is ensuring that they are adequately prepared to lead a class.

Professional development is perceived as central to supporting effective teaching for diverse students. In a study exploring the school experiences of seven 11-14 year old disabled children negotiating school life where “difference” was viewed in a negative way, MacArthur *et al* (2007) found that gains will increase when teachers acquire more knowledge of and experience with a variety of students, and explore pedagogies that promote respect for diversity and the active participation of all students in the learning process.

Rouse (2008) has suggested that the challenge of professional development might be expressed as a mutual triangular relationship between knowing, believing and doing. In this model, any two of the three elements of knowing, believing and doing are thought to influence the third. This means that if a teacher believes in the rights-based philosophy of inclusion, and is willing to try it out by including learners who might otherwise be excluded, then the teacher’s knowledge about inclusive practice will develop. Similarly, another teacher who believes in the philosophy of inclusion may lack confidence in “doing” but by taking a course about inclusive practice develops the knowledge that gives him or her confidence to promote inclusive practices. Other teachers may have knowledge of inclusive practices but still be unsure about whether they believe in it, but by working in a school that promotes inclusive practices, (doing), they come to realise that the practice can be effective. Florian (2008) observes that the important question is how teachers can be supported to develop the knowledge, beliefs and practices that support inclusion. Teachers need to be dissuaded from the notion that they are not qualified to teach disabled or children with additional needs. The argument is that teachers have much of the knowledge and many of the skills required to teach all children, but they may lack the confidence to put them into action in helping children who are experiencing difficulties in learning.

It can also be argued that adequate training is important in meeting educational needs of children with SEN. Winzer and Mazurek (2005) posit that although there is scant research on how teachers develop the competencies that enable them effectively teach diverse students in the general classroom, commitment to learning difficulties requires attitudes to disabilities which teachers are not born with. In supporting this position, Wamae and Kan’gethe-Kamau (2004) refer to the work of Wenday (1986, p. 45) in which case it is argued that knowledge is a critical factor in determining teachers’ attitudes towards a handicap. The more knowledge teachers possess about a handicapping condition, the more committed they are likely to become when working with such children. The teachers are likely to become more accepting of children with disabilities as there is no fear of the unknown. Florian (2008) however argues that responding to difference between

pupils is not just a matter of “good teaching” because what works for most does not work for some. The latter is the basis on which special needs education was developed as a separate form of provision. It is also the point at which it becomes difficult to articulate what is distinctive about either special or inclusive education. It is difficult to determine what teachers need to know and do, the role of specialist knowledge and how the knowledge should be used.

A core challenge for teachers who would like to promote inclusive practices is to consider how they think about the problem of inclusion. Instead of defending the need to accommodate learner differences, teachers should challenge their collective misconception about what is not “otherwise available”. Although individual teachers may not be in a position to alter the organisational structure of schooling, their teaching process can be informed by the knowledge that it is possible to support the learning of all students (Florian, 2008). The implication is that children will be seen as having SEN for as long as the extent of difficulty experienced by them is beyond the teacher’s capacity to respond. Powell (2009) argues that teacher values and beliefs, training, personal and practical experiences with diverse student bodies and SEN including the resources and support available to them will influence how they react to students’ diverse range of abilities. Referring to the situation in the USA, Stough (2003) asserts that without appropriately trained special education personnel, students either continue to be educated in segregated settings or are inadequately educated in regular education classrooms.

A UNESCO survey on teacher education conducted in 14 countries found that regular classroom teachers were willing to take on the responsibility for special needs children, but were not confident whether they had the skills to carry out the task (UNESCO, 1989). These findings suggest the need for in-service training for regular classroom teachers through teacher trainers. Winzer & Mazurek (2005) state that for a long time, general educators have been told that they do not have the skills to teach students with disabilities and many of them remember when these students were removed to segregated classrooms. This may explain why in modern times, many educators are unprepared to comply with the numerous requirements and less equipped to teach those who do not respond to group instruction. Teacher resistance is in essence associated with lack of skills, unwillingness to implement alternative instructional strategies and concerns about workload and support. According to Florian (2008), the choices teachers make when students experience difficulty are influenced and limited by factors such as the role of the professional training that they have received and how well it has prepared them to address the challenges of teaching diverse groups of students.

MacArthur *et al* (2007) found that many teachers had good intentions towards the inclusion of disabled children in their classrooms but schools need professional help to ensure that teachers understand, respect and take seriously the impact of children's impairments, and that consistent, fair and responsive teaching strategies are in place to facilitate children's learning. Meyer *et al* (1992) suggest that a quality programme for children with disabilities should support on-going staff development activities with expectations for personal participation. The NYPSSC 2000 (1996) recommended that teacher training programmes should have a staff development process that takes into consideration specific needs, offers training in the skills necessary to provide quality instruction and includes opportunities for feedback. White, Garret, Kearns and Grisham-Brown, (2003) suggest that special education teachers need to acquire the administrative support necessary for access to and instruction in regular education and other inclusive settings.

Another issue associated with professional development in the area of SEN is the universality and sustainability of expertise. In dealing with the educational needs of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the government of New Zealand invited experts to train teachers in the country. After the experts left, there were no professionals to put the training into practice. The result was the creation of one to two extra-ordinary centres in the country's largest city, benefitting a very limited number of pre-school children for at least two years each. This is against the fact that many other children with ASD live with their families across the countryside. Meyer (2003) argues that this solution was like providing a Rolls Royce in a place where there are no roads. She argued that New Zealand is not able to neither spend large amounts of money on a small number of children nor use the limited professional expertise to create extensive assessments and plans that are culturally irrelevant. It can also be argued that even if there were roads for the Rolls Royce, there would be need to give people driving lessons and examine whether they actually need vehicles.

The government of Kenya established one teacher training college for teachers of children with SEN, Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) in 1986. Working on the premise that every child will experience some learning difficulty at some stage in his or her education (Tomlinson, 1982), training a handful of teachers at KISE may not promote education for all children with SEN. Re-structuring of the teacher training programme so that teachers who come to the field are prepared and qualified to differentiate their teaching to suit all learners may be more suitable. A Kenya government report (World Bank, 2009) indicated that for professional growth, primary school teachers need regular in-service training to effectively deliver the curriculum, undertake

school-based assessment of learning achievements and learn alternative approaches to curriculum delivery.

### **Summary**

This chapter highlighted some of the indicators of quality education for children with SEN that informed this study. They include inclusive practices, the nature of the curriculum, curriculum delivery, staffing levels, home-school relationships and physical facilities. Others include progress monitoring, quality assurance and standards, decisions on placement of children in special education, support services, legislation and staff training. Although this study does not examine how each of these indicators is operational in the schools, this information was the basis on which the inquiry was conducted. The next chapter will examine the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that informed this research.

## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

### **THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INVESTIGATING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH SEN**

#### **Social justice and human rights**

The way in which different societies perceive and respond to differences in human beings that emanate from disability is reflected in services available to people with disabilities either in school or in the wider community. The natural understanding is that because disabled people are human beings, they are entitled to all rights that human beings enjoy. However, people with disabilities are not treated equally in many spheres of their lives. In regard to education, LaNear and Frattura (2009) contend that students with disabilities have undeniably and consistently occupied the role of “others” in schools. This position of “others” occupied by children with disabilities is unjustified and therefore injustice. It means children with SEN may require strong advocacy in order to enjoy their rights. A critical theory approach to research can inform such advocacy because it pays attention to the marginalised in the society. According to Kincheloe and McLaren (2008), a criticalist is a researcher whose work seeks to critique certain oppressive aspects of a culture. The assumption is that certain groups of people in the society are more privileged than others for various reasons. Prasad (2005) argues that critical research should seek to empower individuals and confront injustice in the society. By investigating the quality of education offered to children with SEN, this research project seeks to examine and address issues of poor education services for these children.

The idea of universal human rights is acknowledged internationally through declarations such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007). These rights as stated are not enjoyed by all in the best way possible. Making the case for people with intellectual disabilities, Young and Quibell (2000) maintain that although the same rights (including positive rights that provide specific services and materials) are accorded, inequity still exists. They argue that either people do not know what rights to give them, the government does not wish to fund the rights it accords them or the people with disabilities do not understand the rights they are entitled to. The exclusion of people with disabilities by society can therefore be defined within a dimension of social justice. Christensen and Dorn (1997) argue that social justice

is a key factor in modern debates within special education. What is social justice then? The next section will attempt to define social justice and its relationship with disability.

### **Social justice**

Social justice is a contested concept which has variable meanings as opposed to unitary and universally shared understandings (Christensen & Dorn, 1997). Fraser (1995) identifies two forms of injustice. The first one is socioeconomic injustice. This form of injustice is grounded in the political-economic structure of society and includes exploitation, economic marginalisation and deprivation. The second one is cultural injustice which is grounded in society's patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. It exhibits itself in terms of cultural domination, nonrecognition and disrespect. Fraser observes that although the two forms of discrimination are different analytically, they are widespread in modern societies and therefore need to be addressed.

Fraser (1995) suggests ways in which the two forms of injustice can be remedied. Economic injustices require some kind of political-economic restructuring. This might take the form of "redistributing income, reorganising the division of labour, subjecting investment to democratic decision making, or transforming other basic economic structures" (p. 73). Fraser uses the term "redistribution" to refer to these remedies. In 2003 in Kenya, the government introduced FPE for all children. This may be seen in the light of redistribution in that children with SEN had the same opportunity to receive education as their nondisabled peers. This approach can be contested. LaNear and Frattura (2009) argue that the approach suggests that justice for some people can be negotiable. They point that although the approach may be politically correct, it continues to promote a handout model where children with disabilities are forced to wait for the kindness of political actors. Gale (2000) also criticizes redistributive approaches as confining their interests to economic spheres at the expense of cultural politics of social institutions such as schools.

Fraser (1995) suggests that cultural injustices can be addressed by some form of cultural change. This can be in terms of positively revaluing disrespected identities and the cultural outcomes of despised groups of people. It can also include recognising and positively valuing cultural diversity. Fraser uses the term "recognition" to refer to these remedies. This remedy is favoured by other scholars. For instance, Gale (2000) maintains that a recognitive approach is concerned with rethinking social arrangements that are thought to be just. This would lead to a perspective of social justice that puts value in positive regard for group differences and democratic processes



founded on group representations. According to Young and Quibell (2000), ensuring justice for people with disabilities requires an evaluation of both people and their culture.

Another dimension connected to recognition that has been presented is that people should be rewarded (recognised) according to the contribution they make in the society. The argument is that justice is about people receiving what they deserve in terms of input and output. A major proponent of this notion is Nozick (1976) who posits that individuals are entitled to differential rewards in accordance with their differential contributions to productive and competitive processes. In terms of education, Gale (2000) argues that entitlements are usually discussed in terms of academic merit where students are ranked and rewarded according to their academic performances. This view is also raised by Christensen and Dorn (1997) who assert that special education is linked to common views of social justice as a result of the tension between meritocratic and egalitarian views. In this case, schools become meritocratic by describing success as a logical reward for the “best” students. The assumption here appears to be that students will perform well academically as a result of their talents and efforts. This may ignore other factors influencing student performance. Socioeconomic differences between families may determine how much a family will value and invest in education. This means children from disadvantaged families will hold less social goods which may in turn affect their performance. The remedy may be to provide necessary resources for the disadvantaged group. The question on the skeptics’ minds, according to Kittay (2001), is why we should invest public resources meant for all people for the sake of a population who may never be able to reciprocate.

Nevertheless, one position that can be taken is that economic injustices require redistributive remedies while cultural injustices will require recognition remedies. What about injustices which have both economic and cultural dimensions and therefore require both redistributive and recognition remedies? This situation presents what Fraser (1995) refers to as the “*redistribution-recognition*” dilemma. The assumption is that redistributive remedies for political-economic injustice evens social groups while recognition remedies for cultural-valuational injustice enhances social group differentiation. This would make it difficult for certain groups of people to pursue both redistributive and recognition remedies at the same time. So what is the way forward for these groups?

Fraser (1995) identifies two broad approaches to addressing injustice that cut across the redistribution-recognition dilemma. She refers to them as “affirmation” and “transformation”.

“Affirmative” remedies are defined as remedies whose aim is to address inequitable outcomes of the social structure without disturbing the underlying framework that generates them. In contrast, “transformative” remedies are aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes by restructuring the underlying generative framework. What combination then can best untangle the redistribution-recognition dilemma?

The combination of transformative redistribution and transformative recognition is less problematic according to Fraser (1995). For people with disabilities, this may imply that transformative redistribution seeks to redress disability injustice by restructuring the systems that give rise to disability discrimination while transformative recognition seeks to redress disability injustice by deconstruction aimed at destabilizing discrimination against disabled people. For example, it may mean that instead of assuring disabled people of their fair share of existing jobs and educational places, the nature and number of those jobs should be changed. It may also mean that instead of assuring disabled people respect by revaluing disability, the circumstances that give disability its sense should be altered. This seems to be the argument that LaNear and Frattura (2009) are making when they argue that although more students with disabilities have been afforded greater access to schooling, this access does not constitute an appropriate education or quality outcomes for students with disabilities. Another example can be drawn from research by Gale (2000). In response to a question on how teachers adjusted their teaching to accommodate students with learning difficulties, one teacher was quoted as saying:

Not that you're servicing your other children because you're there trying to keep one child on task, and the twenty others can be doing what they like (pp. 258-9)

Thus, affording children with disabilities the opportunity to be in class with their nondisabled peers does not necessarily guarantee them quality education if they will be treated as the “others”. But isn't separating children with disabilities from their nondisabled peers in itself unjust? The principles of equity and social justice have been used to justify both inclusion and special education. Christensen and Dorn (1997) express:

How can some writers argue for the dismantling of special education based on grounds of equity and social justice, while others argue for the retention of extant structures on the same grounds? If special education has been at many times and in many places fundamentally unjust, why has it continued as part of public schooling for nearly a century in the United States?(p. 182)

There is contestation as to which approach between redistribution and recognition would address injustice in a better way. Indeed, Fraser (2000) considers that recognition should be conceived in such a way that it can integrate with the struggle for redistribution strategies rather than displacing and undermining them. Social and material inequities are known to exist in the society especially for people with disabilities. One attempt that has been made to address this is legislation which has utilised the rights to secure the basic material needs for many people. Young and Quibell (2000) argue that this approach raises some individuals to a perceived minimum standard but fails to address the misunderstanding from which the inequalities originate. The debate is whether legislation cannot deal with culturally entrenched discrimination. Culture entails values and according to Priestley (1998), values play a major role in sustaining disabling social relations although it is important to question where these values originate from, why they are dominant over others and whose interest would be under threat if these values were threatened. According to Christensen and Dorn (1997) reform of education for students with disabilities requires a coherent notion of social justice. This notion should recognise and acknowledge the varied characteristics, needs and rights of students with disabilities. Such a notion should also be based on the basis that all people are equal and should have some voice and protection that the majority cannot trample on.

This section explored dimensions of social justice and its relationship to disability. Two forms of injustice, socioeconomic and cultural were identified. Redistribution and recognition are discussed as ways in which these injustices can be remedied, whereby changing structures and attitudes are seen as better ways of dealing with injustice for people with disabilities. It is also outlined that people should be rewarded for their contribution to society although this would work against people with disabilities. However, the general consensus is that people with disabilities need justice and enjoyment of human rights because they are indeed human beings. The concept of social justice within a critical theory framework will inform the approach and analysis of this research project. My understanding is that social justice can be addressed by a combination of transformative redistribution and recognition strategies in line with Fraser's (1995) argument. One of the attempts towards addressing issues of social justice for children with disabilities is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The following section will examine the CRC and its significance in researching issues of education for children with SEN.

## **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and education**

“Children’s rights are not just rights; they are human rights-they are rights that children are entitled to as human beings, equal to other (adult) human beings”(Alanen, 2010).

According to Fineman and Worthington (2009), the concept of rights for children is complex because children are by nature and physiology dependent on others. This means that when we discuss the rights of children, we need to consider how these rights can be implemented without undermining the rights of those responsible for the care of the children. According to Dillon (2010), children have problems which are unique to them. They are at the mercy of deliberations arrived at by others and unable to understand and put in perspective their own problems.

The CRC was a response by nations of the world to the concern about the rights of children. Issues of interest included child abuse, death of children from war and conflict and the suffering of children from disease and hunger. The nations agreed to draft a policy document to address the horrors that faced children. Detrick (1992) argues that the CRC provides nations with a “clear”, coherent and comprehensive legal tool dedicated to children’s rights different from the “incomplete” and scattered provisions in previous treaties. This position is supported by Dillon (2010) who contends that since its promulgation, the CRC has offered a core point of debate on how modern societies should protect and empower children.

As indicated in the literature review, provision for children with SEN has historically developed from periods of neglect, segregated education, integration and inclusion. Inclusion is the current trend and it takes on the Education For All (EFA) agenda by designing ways to enhance the capacity of mainstream schools to serve all children in their natural setting. Ballard (1990) states that historically, special education was constructed on an ideology of individual pathology that created demarcations between normal and abnormal, on theories of deficit and on the belief that only expert teachers can know about and meet the needs of students who are disabled. O’Neill, Bourke and Kearney (2009) consider that inclusive education in contrast does not involve itself in norming, labelling and pathologising learners. Instead, inclusive education involves itself in identifying and minimising the interactive socio-cultural factors that influence the idea of disability and difficulty. It may however be argued that inclusive education fails to identify children with disabilities as a distinct group who require special services. Campbell (2002) points out that when children operate under the title of “all children” as proposed by inclusionists, there is no

acknowledgement of the difficult pressures that work against upholding the rights of disabled children.

According to a report by UNESCO (2000), the movement towards inclusive policies in education is seen as a means by which equitable and quality educational development can take place for all throughout the basic cycle at a level of quality and with successful outcomes. The same report warns that great care is needed in applying the concept of inclusive education, lest some groups and their needs be sub-merged within a monolithic concept and a monolithic provision and thereby further disabled. Fixed firmly within a human rights perspective, inclusive education thus addresses the common goals of decreasing and overcoming all exclusion from the human right to education, at least at the elementary level, and enhancing access, participation and learning success in quality basic education. The practice of inclusion is not easy to witness in developing countries where there are limited resources and knowledge on inclusion. In Kenya, the introduction of FPE implied that all children have access to primary education. It becomes relevant to look at inclusion from a human rights perspective: that the children at least have access to a school place. An important framework for this task would be to apply the CRC. It is considered that every child has a right to an appropriate education as stated in the CRC and inclusive education is an attempt to fulfil this right. Campbell (2002) argues that education is one of the most powerful tools in destroying stereotypes and negative attitudes towards disabled children. She further maintains that when disabled and non-disabled children learn together, this sends a clear signal to the wider society about the value of inclusion and diversity and that segregation does not work. Making a case against segregation of children with severe challenging behaviour, Meyer (2001) questioned how these children would learn socially appropriate, positive behaviour when there are no models in their learning environment except children with severe challenging behaviour.

This research will base its inquiry on the CRC as an attempt towards achieving social justice for children with SEN. The CRC consists of 54 separate articles that set out the rights of children to life, identity, security, family, housing, health and education, freedom from exploitation and protection of their dignity. By August 1991, 95 countries, Kenya included, had ratified or acceded to the convention and another 45 had signed and were working towards ratification. The CRC committee maintains that when states ratify the convention, they take upon themselves obligations not only to implement it within their jurisdiction, but also to contribute, through international co-operation, to global implementation. There are contestations as to where the blame can be placed between individuals and the state when children's rights are not upheld. Dillon (2010) contends

that when children's rights are violated, adults are implicated for the violation. Adults in turn will argue that they are helpless in the face of economic and social challenges beyond their control thus blaming the state. The challenge then becomes determining whether cultural sensitivity or political and social realism are to blame for the violation of children's rights.

Article 28 of the CRC deals specifically with the right to education and together with related articles, especially Article 29, will provide a framework for this research. Article 28 states that the child has a right to education and that the state's duty is to ensure that primary education is free and compulsory, to encourage different forms of secondary education accessible to every child and to make higher education available to all on the basis of capacity. It also states that school discipline shall be consistent with the child's rights and dignity. Article 29 deals with the aims of education. It states that education shall aim at developing the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent. It further states that education shall prepare the child for an active adult life in a free society and foster respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values and for the cultural background and values of others. According to Osler and Starkey (2005), the right to education is specified in Article 28 of the CRC and the principles and values on which that education should be based are spelt out in article 29. Article 28 may provide the basis for an assertion that education is a right for every child. This supports the view of Freeman (2007) that the most fundamental of rights is the right to possess rights. Article 29 provides the basis for the assertion that the education provided should meet individual children's needs or what Verheyde (2006) refers to as "differentiated education".

According to Moore *et al*, (2008), inequality based on a lack of access to social rights for young persons with diverse abilities persists despite the almost universal ratification of the CRC. They conclude that the use of the CRC as a framework to guide implementation of a rights-based approach together may facilitate socio-cultural transformation. Carvalho (2008) also states that 18 years after the CRC came into force, children's issues continue to remain at the forefront of social, political and legal struggles in the international and domestic arena. While justifying the use of the CRC as a framework for their research, Osler and Starkey (2005) stated that they had taken the CRC as a framework for exploring children's political and citizenship rights and sought to demonstrate the value of the CRC as a working document for policy makers and researchers, indicating how research agendas informed by the CRC might be particularly useful in developing policy related research. Osler and Starkey further argue that by drawing on the CRC as a framework, stakeholders can ensure that the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination are

built into their agendas. According to them, a rights-based approach to the schooling of children with disabilities and SEN must examine whether that schooling is not just available but also accessible, acceptable and adaptable.

Most regions of the world and individual countries have made declarations that mirror the CRC. One such example is the African charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. It is contained in the OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/24.9/49 (1990), and entered into force in November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1999. It sought to reaffirm adherence to the principles of the rights and welfare of the child contained in the declaration, conventions and other instruments of the OAU and the UN and in particular the CRC and the OAU Heads of State and Government Declaration on the rights and Welfare of the African child. Kenya is a signatory to the African Charter and the CRC. She has incorporated her principles within the Children's Act 2001 (Kenya) which is:

An Act of parliament to make provision for parental responsibility, fostering, adoption, custody, maintenance, guardianship, care and protection of children; to make provision for the administration of children's institutions, to give effect to principles of the UNCRC and the African charter on the rights and welfare of the child and for connected purposes.

The Act makes specific reference to children with disabilities. Section 12 of the Children's Act states:

A disabled child shall have the right to be treated with dignity, and to be accorded appropriate medical treatment, special care, education and training free of charge or at reduced cost whenever possible.

The Children's Act's reference to the terms "free of charge or at a reduced cost whenever possible" can raise eyebrows. This may open the way for discrimination against children with disabilities where those with power can use the excuse of "whenever possible" to deny children required services. Indeed, the alternative report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the implementation of the CRC in Kenya prepared by World Organisation Against Torture (2007) indicate that in practice, children with disabilities suffered from discrimination. Woodhouse and Johnson (2009) state that although children have moral rights under the CRC to healthcare and education, the methods and extent to which the rights apply differ depending on the circumstances and traditions of particular nations. However, the fact that the Children's Act (Kenya) refers to the African Charter and the CRC implies that Kenya has committed itself to adhering to the principles of the CRC one of which is the right to education. Osler and Starkey (2005) assert that as the CRC is a universally recognised and accepted standard, its prescription is valid in any given national

context. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this research was to pit quantity against quality in the education of children with SEN because the existence of a school place does not necessarily guarantee a child education. The right to receive education does not only guarantee access to education but also implies that the aims of education must be achieved (Osler & Starkey, 2005; Verheyde, 2006). This points to the fact that children should benefit from education as provided and therefore should have a quality education.

While criticising a report by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Osler and Starkey (2005) argue that there is a danger that in overlooking the importance of the CRC as an international standard, researchers may not have identified or given sufficient weight to the specific voices and interests of those children that schools are more likely to marginalise, including those with disabilities. According to Freeman (2007), a child deprived of the sort of rights accorded by the CRC will grow up differently from one to whom such rights are granted; and some because of the way parents conceive their obligations will not grow up at all. This explains why this research intends to understand what parents of children with SEN understand to be quality in the education of their children. The CRC states that the right to education should be recognised on the basis of equality of opportunity where each child has an equal right to a school of their choice (Campbell, 2002).

## **The CRC and the principle of 3Ps (provision, protection and participation)**

### ***Introduction***

The CRC has been classified into various principles or headings. One such classification is by Verheyde (2006). She provides a classification of the CRC's education rights by placing them under three headings:

- a. Right *to* education: entails the provisions regarding the practical organisation of education (Article 28, 1) and organisation as to its content (Article 29, 1).
- b. Right *in* education: entails the protection of rights entrenched in the CRC (including article 28, 2) as well as the several participation rights of the child both of which should be respected in schools.
- c. Right *through* education: refers to the indirect implementation of the CRC and other human rights education (article 29, 1b).



Another classification has been forwarded by Moore *et al.*, (2008). They identify five principles related to the rights of the child, that is, protection, prevention, provision, participation and perception (5 Ps). In its report on human rights and human development, the UNDP(2000) suggests a matrix of analysis that includes the four human rights principles of non-discrimination (ensuring equitable treatment for all), adequate progress (committing resources and effort to the priority of rights), participation (enable people to be involved in decisions that affect their well being) and effective remedy (ensuring redress through judicial, quasi-judicial and/or informal mechanisms when rights are violated) and proposes indicators to measure the fulfilment and violation of these principles. Dillon (2010) argues that the CRC is constructed around two conceptual positions, that is, protection and empowerment. In the historical development of the CRC, debate has centred on whether children should be perceived as requiring more protection or empowerment especially in the area of being included in decisions that affect their lives. Dillon feels that children need both protection and empowerment.

For the purpose of this research, the CRC will be classified into three principles, that is, provision, protection and participation. According to Osler and Starkey (2005), children's rights as covered in the CRC have been categorised as the three Ps: Those of provision (services, material benefits), protection and participation. The CRC recognises that children, particularly those in exceptionally difficult conditions, need special protection, and those children may have needs for which specific provision must be made. This research will treat children with SEN based in rural settings as one of the groups in exceptionally difficult conditions and investigate the quality of their learning using the three Ps as a guideline.

### ***The 3Ps***

#### ***Provision***

These include rights obliging the states parties to ensure children have access to schools and necessary facilities. As was the case in this research project, some children with disabilities may have accompanying health problems like epilepsy. Provision rights would require that they are given proper medical care. Moore *et al.*, (2008) use a personal example of Melchior who witnessed his friends with a condition called Duchenne muscular dystrophy (he had the same condition) left to die. According to him, this condition was seen to be terminal at an early age, led to low quality of life and had no known treatment. This made Melchior to believe that the provision of the essentials of life was subjective and depended on a child's diagnosis, perceived quality of life, and

how much information was available to the children. According to Carvalho (2008), the obligation to fulfil rights entails working actively to put in place political, economic and social systems, and infrastructure that provides access to the guaranteed right to all members of the population.

The CRC stipulates that a disabled child has a right to special care, education and training to help him or her enjoy a full and decent life in dignity and achieve the greatest degree of self reliance and social integration possible (article 23). It can be argued that one of the ways in which this principle can be fulfilled is by the provision of an appropriate type of education to children with SEN and which, according to article 23 (3) should be free of charge and inclusive. The CRC recommends the establishment of special education programs for children with disabilities and, where feasible, to integrate them into mainstream schools. According to Hodgkin and Newell (2007), the phrase “in a manner conducive to the child’s achieving the fullest possible social integration” in article 23 (3) of the CRC reveals a preference for inclusive education. This seems to be the basis on which the government of Kenya established special education units in mainstream primary schools to cater for the educational needs of children with SEN. It was meant to serve as an indication that children with SEN were being included in regular school learning.

Provision rights also place responsibility on other members of the society to take care of children. Article 18 identifies parents as primary care givers of children but also obligates state parties to support parents by providing relevant child care services. It states,

Parents have joint primary responsibility for raising the child, and the state shall support them in this. The state shall provide appropriate assistance to parents in child-raising.

This situation appears to present two “parents” for the children. The other “parent” is the state. The assumption is that if children are not able to stand for their rights, it becomes the responsibility of the parents to do so. What if the parents do not take this responsibility seriously or actually violate the rights of the children? Stainton (2004) considers that while most parents would usually act in the best interest of the child, there are others who may not. Acknowledging that some parents or adults may not always act in the best interest of children is therefore the basis of identifying and promoting children’s rights. To ensure that children are protected and limits are placed on adult power over children, the state has to intervene. This has also given rise to many nongovernmental organisations which take the form of agencies for children. Smith (2007) argues that even when “experts” advocate for the rights of children, they have been known to exclude children from the

agenda of the advocacy. The danger may be that such agency may take away parental responsibility from the parents and place it on the state and the agencies. A strong pattern of cooperation may be a solution to such confusion.

### ***Protection***

Protection includes all rights that oblige states parties to protect children against all forms of abuse and discrimination. A UNDP report (2000) states that the obligation to respect refers to “refraining from interfering with people’s pursuit of their rights”. It is the view of Freeman (2007) that rights without remedies are of no symbolic importance. Further, remedies themselves require the injection of resources, a commitment on behalf of all of us that we view rights with respect, that we want them to have an impact on the lives of all people, and not just the lives of the powerful and privileged, who are often the first to exploit rights for their own benefits. Referring to available literature, Moore *et al* (2008) assert that young people with a range of disabilities are more likely to be sexually, physically or relationally abused across cultures and national contexts. The authors however argue that protecting children with disabilities should not be in such a way that it denies them other rights like the rights to play and participation. Melchior who is disabled gives an example of how his protection rights were applied in a residential care institution:

Any time I did anything unexpected there like (god forbid) leave the hospital grounds without permission...policy kicked in and an incident report was written...protecting children’s rights appeared to be synonymous with removing all opportunities for risk (p. 257).

This seems to suggest that the application of the right of protection for children with disabilities may create a conflict between the children and those who have power over them, mostly adults. By appearing to protect children with disabilities, the adults may end up violating the children’s other rights. This may explain why Campbell (2002) states that rather than emphasising the rights of children with disabilities, disabled children are generally regarded as a “special group” with additional vulnerabilities which may justify their exclusion from mainstream services. According to O’Neill (1998), the key to children’s rights lies in obligation. She points that taking rights as fundamental in ethical deliberation about children has neither theoretical nor political advantage. Her belief is that if we care about children’s lives, we should identify what obligations parents, teachers and indeed the wider community have towards children.

This research project was an investigation of education for children with SEN in a rural setting. According to Verheyde (2006), another special group having difficulties in exercising their

education rights are children living in rural areas. This, she adds, is due to a number of factors including the administration cost and difficulty of serving rural areas, a small number of teachers prepared to live in the countryside, the dependency of farming families on child labour and the apparent lack of relevance of the school curricular to rural areas. The CRC committee repetitively recommended that states parties give special attention to the education of these children. This may point to the fact that such children required special protection to ensure that they enjoyed human rights. There have been disagreements as to whether children's rights can be protected in a significant way without considering assistance for the larger units of culture and family (Dillon, 2010). Assuming that children have rights that are distinct from those of their families, could we blame the families if the children's rights were not upheld? If not, would we be placing the care of children in the hands of states and international organisations at the expense of families which are directly responsible for the care of children? What about the disadvantaged socioeconomic conditions confronting parents in rural areas?

### ***Participation***

Dillon (2010) states that despite emphasis on the participation rights of children, it is evident that children are less capable of articulating their rights to a significant level. It implies that children depend on adults to negotiate for them when their rights have been violated by other adults. According to Woodhouse and Johnson (2009), children's participatory rights which include the right to express their views freely in accordance with their age and maturity and the right to be represented in all judicial and administrative proceedings are one area of the CRC that generates controversy. Such rights oblige state parties to ensure that children and significant others such as parents have an active role in matters affecting them such as the education process. Articles 12, 13, 14 and 15 provide for the rights of children's views to be taken into consideration. For instance, article 12 stipulates:

The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child (CRIN p.4).

According to Smith (2007), participation rights are an integral part of children's rights in the society as adults wield absolute power and authority. This according to her will facilitate a sense of belonging and participation and ensure children can learn to participate in changes occurring in the society. But how are children enabled to express their views? This aspect is important because it is only through being able to express their views that children can enjoy the right to participation. It

would also require that children have got access to information. Campbell (2002) argues that unless children's rights to information is recognised, consultation exercises carried out in the spirit of Article 10 will remain rhetoric and may end up isolating children who will look through the adult-focussed efforts. An important aspect of access to information may be for children to receive an appropriate kind of education. Article 29 stipulates that the aim of education is to develop a child's personality and talents so that the child can take an active adult role in the society. It states:

Education shall prepare the child for an active adult life in a free society (CRIN p. 10).

The Article therefore puts education at the core of the realisation of participation rights for children. Freeman (2007) maintains that participation is a fundamental human right because it enables people to demand rights. He adds that people are better able to demand rights where there is freedom of speech. The latter will challenge assumptions such as the idea of children and their abilities and incapacities. It is the view of Freeman that even small children can show a preference, and most children can "understand" a situation; many can understand disclosed information, and many can give reasons, though they might not convince us. Osler and Starkey (2005) argue that through recognising as citizens and engaging with student voices, educators, policy makers and researchers can increase their understanding of learning and teaching processes and what constitutes a successful learning community. Moore *et al* (2008) posit that participation implies that children are allowed to contribute to the process of change in the society. Referring to a change in how he was being looked after, Melchior (he was disabled) stated:

Whereas I had previously been treated as a passive object of care, I was now being seen more as an active participant in my life...Out went the Draconian staff who thought that solitary confinement was a good teaching tool, and in came the "humans" (as I called them) who believed in our value as human beings-not just as names on the bowel movement chart that hung on the wall.

According to Fineman and Worthington (2009), opponents of children's rights may feel that the CRC undermines parental authority and interferes with the parents' ability to raise and discipline their children, making the rights of children superior to those of parents. Fineman and Worthington argue that in the actual sense, the CRC emphasises the significance of parent-child relationships, outlines obligations of the parents to their children and obliges governments to uphold the rights and duties of parents. The CRC recognizes that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children

should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibility within the community (Article 1). Other articles that give parents rights and responsibilities over their children include article 14 (2), 28 (1), 5, 27 (3) and 29(2). According to Osler and Starkey (2005), children who believe their right to education is not being upheld by the state are not able to appeal directly. Instead, it is the parent or the carer who must seek redress. The claim that children can exercise their rights through their parents can raise some issues. What do parents know about children's rights? What resources are available for parents to act on behalf of the children? Could there be a conflict of interest between the parents and the children? The nature of childhood and beliefs about children's capabilities differ in various historical times and cultural environments (Smith, 2007). In developing countries like Kenya where there are no welfare systems, the sole responsibility of raising children is in the hands of parents. Children disabled or not are not entirely able to question decisions made by adults. The children with SEN in this study were all mentally handicapped and this severely affected their ability to make decisions about their education. It therefore becomes very important that the parents on whose hands the welfare of these children was placed were given an opportunity and information to participate on behalf of the children. This is why Fineman and Worthington (2009) argue that we cannot discuss the rights of children without discussing the rights of parents. The CRC also recognises that to strengthen the rights of children will require that the rights and responsibilities of parents are strengthened.

The government of Kenya recognises that participation and involvement of learners with SEN in socio-economic issues and in decision making on matters affecting them directly or indirectly is important in the process of ensuring that these learners enjoy equal opportunity in society. The government has declared affirmative action to ensure that vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of persons are actively involved in policy and governance issues. Participation and involvement of target groups in matters affecting them is considered a human rights issue. A policy statement on this issue states that the Ministry of Education will involve learners with SEN in decision making processes at all levels in education and training (MOE, 2008). However, the mechanisms of achieving this goal are far from clear.

It can be noted that rights within the realm of the 3Ps are significant in the lives of children and override each other in many circumstances. It can however be argued that protection and provision rights have been generally accepted. This may be as a result of their acceptability in traditional thinking that children and disabled people need protection and care from the society. Campbell (2002) is of the view that there is a tendency to regard disabled children as children in need of

services and protection as opposed to children who have rights like any other children. Regardless of their significance, participation rights have on the other hand raised questions about their applicability. According to Smith (2007), these questions are based on whether children are rational and competent enough to make decision about their lives. Similarly, Article 12 of the CRC which deals with participation rights does not explicitly give children this right. In article 12 (1), it states:

State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

This Article (12) appears to place conditions on the children's exercise of the participation rights by using statements like "capable of forming views" and "in accordance with the age and maturity of the child". It is not however clear how capability, age and maturity of children can be determined. According to Smith (2007), schools do not understand children as being competent enough to make contributions to decision making. She argues that "children should not be treated as passive recipients of adult teaching, protection and care, objects to be shaped and socialised, properties of their families and incomplete human beings" (p. 152).

The perception that children are unable to make competent decisions and disabled people are incomplete human beings has led to control and segregation of children and disabled people. Being disabled makes children more vulnerable. Instead of concentrating on what children cannot do or that disability is inherent in the individual (Christensen & Dorn, 1997), it may be important to examine the support available to children and the culture in which they grow. What expectations do we place on children with disabilities and how do systems support these children to realise their potential? According to the UNDP (2000), human rights are rights that are possessed by all people. They are universal (belong to all people), inalienable (cannot be taken away by others) and indivisible (have no hierarchy). Violating the rights of children with disabilities is therefore the same as violating the rights of any other person.

In using the concept of social justice and its relation to children's rights as a lens in this study, certain quality indicators (Chapter 3) were identified and linked to the 3Ps. The following table illustrates the link.

**Table1: The link between the 3Ps and quality indicators in the education of children with SEN**

<b>The right</b>	<b>Corresponding quality indicator</b>
Protection	<p>Identification for placement in special education(<i>e.g. protection from discrimination</i>)</p> <p>Legislation (<i>e.g. Safety within the justice system, protection from bullying, abuse, neglect and exploitation</i>)</p>
Participation	<p>Inclusive practices(<i>e.g. right to participate in public life, right to name and identity</i>)</p> <p>Home-school relationships(<i>e.g. right for parents to be consulted</i>)</p> <p>Identification for placement in special education(<i>e.g. right to be consulted, right to access information</i>)</p> <p>Legislation (<i>e.g. freedom of speech</i>)</p>
Provision	<p>Nature of curriculum( <i>e.g. relevance of curriculum</i>)</p> <p>Curriculum delivery (<i>e.g. relevance of teaching methods and materials</i>)</p> <p>Staffing(<i>e.g. access to education, social security, physical care, parental care</i>)</p> <p>Physical facilities (<i>e.g. specialist equipment, free state education</i>)</p> <p>Progress monitoring (<i>e.g. reliable progress monitoring procedures</i>)</p> <p>Quality assurance ( <i>e.g. clarity of quality assurance and standards procedures</i>)</p> <p>Legislation(<i>e.g. free legal and social services and adequate health services</i>)</p> <p>Staff training(<i>e.g. availability of “experts” in the area of SEN and general training for all staff involved</i>)</p> <p>Inclusion(<i>e.g. Access to play, recreation, culture and leisure</i>)</p>

A significant aspect of the UNCRC is that it has a review committee to evaluate how the provisions of the convention are being implemented among state parties. Fineman and Worthington (2009) state that the periodic review of the status of children's rights has the benefit of providing an opportunity to learn from experience. She indicates that many of the countries which have ratified the UNCRC are changing their policies and laws regarding children in reaction



to the recommendations of the review committee. This may however become problematic. Relying on reports from countries and pressure from the UN representatives may not result in concrete respect for children's rights. Dillon (2010) states that the UN system relies on a process of "blame and shame" hoping that member state governments will recognise international human rights and commit themselves to implementing them in their countries. This may not always be the case. There is a possibility that some governments may not worry about the "blame" or feel the "shame". For example, a report on Kenya's implementation of the convention prepared by the World Organisation Against Torture (2007) indicated that Kenya ratified the CRC on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1990 but submitted its initial report in 2000, eight years late therefore causing delays for all other reports.

Another issue is to do with the accuracy of these reports. The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) prepares reports of states parties on the CRC. In preparing the report on Kenya (2007), it was indicated that in order to get a "concrete" view of the situation of children in Kenya, a representative of the OMCT carried out a preparatory mission to Nairobi and its environs. Nairobi is the capital city and there would be nothing "concrete" about the Kenyan situation if the city was used as a source of information. The situation in rural areas would be very different. The reports also rely on information from national organisations whose operations may be restricted to urban areas. The report on Kenya (2007) indicated that the "three day mission" was an opportunity to meet the relevant national personalities involved in the protection of children's rights in Kenya from the civil society. Without underestimating the significance of the civil society in advocating the rights of children, a comprehensive report should probably have a more elaborate process, not a "three day" meeting with certain "executives".

Another aspect of implementing the CRC that can be problematic is its assumed "universality". Alanen (2010) argues that the CRC has been criticised for being based on a "modern western concept of the self" or the problem of perceiving children's rights as "universal" standards insensitive of children's everyday lives (p. 7). This may call for an elaborate and country-based mechanism to evaluate how the CRC is implemented.

This chapter explored the issue of social justice as it relates to human rights from a critical theoretical point of view. It is noted that children with disabilities need to enjoy human rights as all other human beings. Given that children with disabilities are a marginalised group in the society, research needs to be geared at voicing the concerns around the violation of their rights. The

approaches of redistribution and recognition were examined with the preference that they should take a transformative approach, an approach that will target the transformation of structures and attitudes that promote disability. The CRC was identified as an important tool that promotes the rights of children with disabilities and therefore an important lens from where education for children with SEN can be examined. The next chapter will examine the methodology that was employed in this research project.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY**

This chapter outlines the aims, objectives and the research questions that guided the study. It then locates the study within a relevant philosophical context before explaining the qualitative research methods that were used to design and conduct the study. The chapter ends by discussing the ethical considerations for the study.

### **Research aims and objectives**

The main objective of this research was to investigate the views of parents, teachers and selected education officers on how the introduction of FPE has impacted on the quality of education provided to children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) within mainstream public primary schools in a rural setting. This objective was broken into more specific objectives to investigate the views of teachers and parents on:

- The quality of education offered to children with SEN;
- The resources available in schools serving children with SEN;
- The procedure of placing children in special education;
- The monitoring/quality assurance and standards in SEN and
- The nature of curriculum offered to children with SEN.

### **Research questions**

This research addressed these major research questions:

- How are the provisions of the SEN policy understood and articulated by government officers?
- What are the perspectives of teachers and parents on the quality of education offered to children with SEN?
- How are children with SEN included in regular school programmes?
- What kind and level of support is available to parents and teachers in educating children with SEN?

### **Inquiry paradigm: Qualitative research**

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), three interconnected generic activities define the qualitative research process. These activities go by various labels including theory, analysis, ontology (what kind of being is a human being? What is the nature of reality?), epistemology (What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?) and methodology (How do we know the world, or gain knowledge of it?). Behind these terms stands the researcher who speaks from a certain class, gender, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective. Researchers approach the world with a set of questions (epistemology) which they then examine in distinct ways (methodology, analysis). Denzin and Lincoln argue that the researchers' epistemological, ontological and methodological premises may be termed as paradigm, an interpretive framework or a set of beliefs that guide their action.

The purpose of a particular research project will determine the type of research method. The intention of this study was to investigate the perspectives of teachers, parents and selected education officials on the quality of education offered to children with SEN in a rural setting, thus well-suited for qualitative methods. Wiersma and Jurs (2005) identify two major points of qualitative research. One is that the research operates in a natural setting because of the interest in context and to maintain openness about the data that will be collected. The other is that it is the perceptions of the participants that are important. These perceptions are to be captured in order to obtain an accurate "measure" of reality, that is, "meaning" as perceived or experienced by the participants and not imposed by the researcher. The researcher's task is simply interpretive or analytical.

The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency. Qualitative researchers emphasise the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constructs that shape inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Regardless of the data collected, the end result is an analysis asking participants to make meaning of their activities and things that are happening around them. Silverman (2006) argues that the greatest strength of qualitative research is its ability to analyse what actually happens in naturally

occurring settings. This enables a study of what people are doing in their natural context, incorporating processes as well as the outcomes and the meanings as well as the causes. In order for qualitative research to be of value to the public, Silverman argues that the researcher may have to report back to the public. There are at least four reasons why qualitative researchers may become involved in reporting back to stakeholders. These would include answering questions asked by respondents, to “check” provisional findings, to provide feedback to organisations and relevant groups and to provide information for the media. As noted in the literature review, education for children with SEN in Kenya does not have a comprehensive policy guideline. Research into this area is also very limited. It is therefore significant that any research regarding the education of children with SEN is reported back to stakeholders in order to highlight challenges and inform policy and practice. Since qualitative research allows for rich descriptions of everyday practice, it enables practitioners to compare their own everyday practices with the research descriptions and findings. As this research required in-depth investigation into how people perceived education for children with SEN, a case study approach was utilised as outlined in the next section.

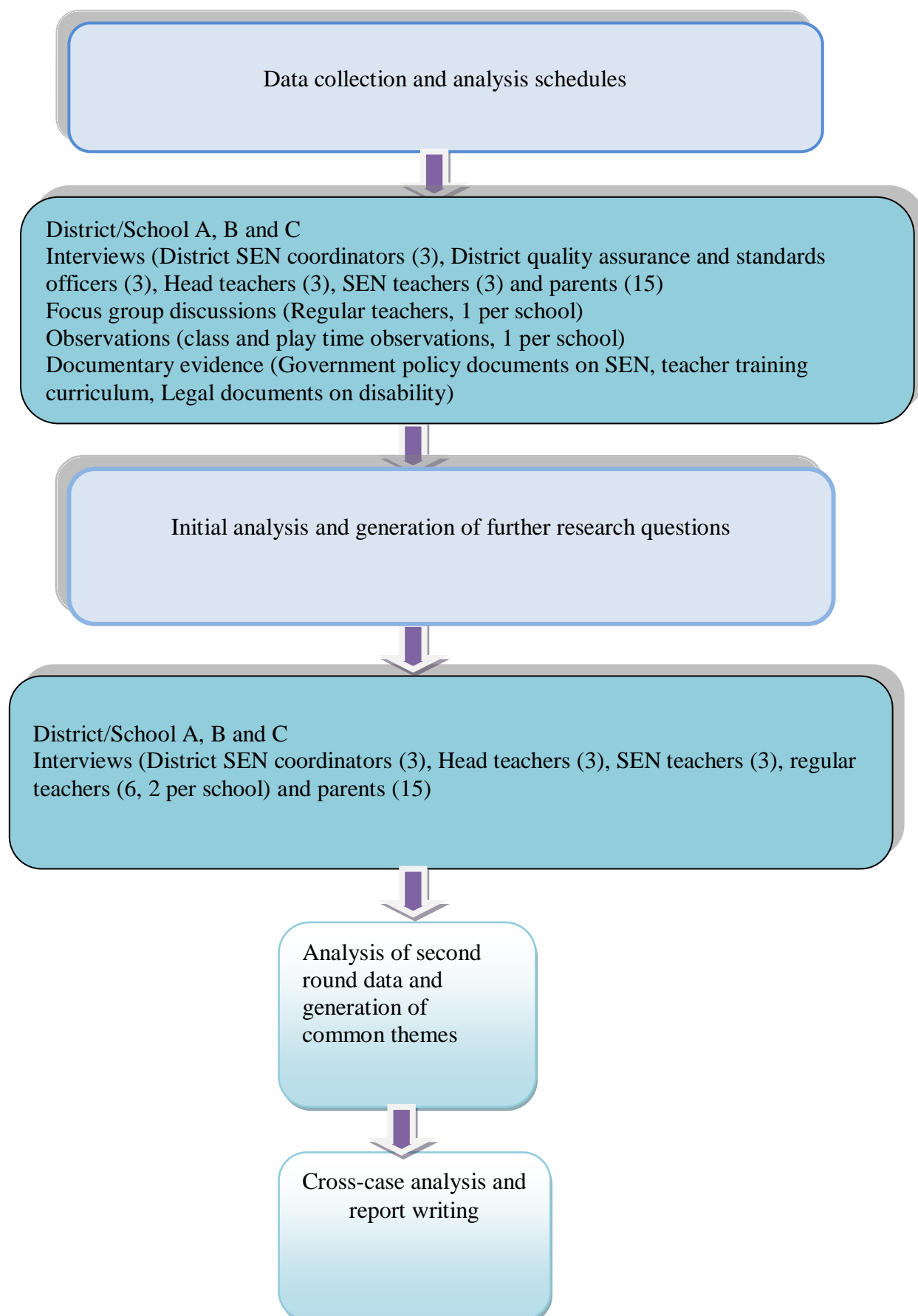
### **Model for research: Case study research**

This research involves a case study approach within a qualitative methodological paradigm that highlights the voices of teachers, parents and education officers. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that qualitative investigators think they can get closer to the actor’s perspective through detailed interviewing and observation. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008), a case study is a detailed account of a case such as an individual, school or subject focused on providing a detailed account of one or more cases. It is preferred because of the difficulty of carrying out a study involving thousands of schools in terms of time, collecting information and various other practicalities. The focus is on each case as it exists in its real life context in order to preserve the natural setting of the learning environment and relate to the real life of the participants. Yin (1991) asserts that the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events such as individual life cycles. Its strength is that it allows a researcher to collect detailed data from the source devoid of contamination. Drever (1995) states that in a case study, the researcher does not aim to cover a wide area and extract common factors but to provide an in-depth picture of a particular area of the educational

world, chosen because it is relatively self-contained. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) argue that a case study approach provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply presenting them with abstract theories or principles.

The characteristics of a case study approach suit this research to better understand quality of learning for children with SEN from the perspectives of teachers, parents, and education officers and how these perspectives are considered to be reflected in policy. This is because the study was interested in not only the lived experiences of the participants but also in “triangulation” of what participants had to say with what was observed and what documents claim are the services being provided. According to Johnson and Christensen (2009), “Case study research is more varied than phenomenology, which focuses on individual’s experience of some phenomenon; ethnography, which focuses on some aspect of culture; or grounded theory, which focuses on developing an explanatory theory. What all pure case studies do have in common, however, is a focus on each case as a whole unit (i.e., case study research is holistic) as it exists in its real-life context” (p. 49).

In this study, it became necessary to collect a second round of data because the first round revealed the existence of a group of children that was not anticipated (See appendices 8 and 9 for data collection schedules). The statistics available revealed that there was a considerable number of children with SEN who never attended school but participated in a programme referred to as the home-based programme. This group’s parents were not interviewed in the first phase nor were the other participants asked particular questions about these children’s education (See figure 1 for a schedule of the data collection and analysis process).

**Figure 1: Outline of data collection process**

## **Fundamental philosophy: Constructivism**

Before discussing constructivism, there is need to clarify the use of the terms constructivism and constructionism. Some authors, for example Lincoln and Guba (2000) have used the terms interchangeably while others like Young and Collin (2004) posit that constructivism focuses on “meaning making and the constructing of the social and psychological worlds through individual, cognitive processes while constructionism emphasises that the social and psychological worlds are made real (constructed) through social processes and interaction” (p. 375). This implies that constructivism relies more on how individuals make meaning of phenomena while constructionism relies more on how knowledge is shaped by social processes. Young and Collin contend that although there is an agreement that the two terms differ on whether constructivism is an individual cognitive or social process, there is not much agreement on what else differentiates them thus eliciting continuing debates. However, both terminologies meet at the point that knowledge and the world are constructed and reconstructed through personal experience.

This research was informed by a constructivist model which encourages researchers to focus upon how phenomena come to be what they are through the close study of interaction in different contexts. Constructionists are interested in documenting the way in which accounts “are part of the world they describe” (Silverman, 2006, p. 129). According to Gray (2009), the view of constructivists is that truth and meaning is created by people’s interactions with the world and not in the external world. This means meaning is not discovered but constructed by subjects that may look at the same phenomenon in different ways. This view is shared by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) who argue that constructivism implies that human beings do not find knowledge but make it; they invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experiences they get in contact with.

Constructivism dictates that we begin with “how” questions and then ask “why”. Thus there is nothing wrong with the search for explanations as long as the search is grounded in a close understanding of how the phenomenon being explained is “put together” at an interactional level. As much as possible, we should seek to obtain “naturally occurring” data in order to obtain adequate understanding. This, according to Silverman (2006), can lead to sound policy interventions. It is worthwhile to note that policy formulation is as significant as policy implementation. Thus, those responsible for implementing policy at school level (teachers and parents) form the core of this study. The most prevalent tool of data collection in this study was interviewing participants in order to come as close to participant views as possible. The parties to



the interview are actively involved in meaning-making work. Meaning is not just elicited by questioning nor simply transported through respondent replies but actively and communicatively constructed in the interview encounter.

It is not in the interest of constructivists to find truth behind what people say but to document how given accounts are part of the events they describe. According to Kitzinger (2004), “Constructivism ... disputes the possibility of uncovering “facts”, “realities” or “truths” behind the talk, and treats as inappropriate any attempt to vet what people say for its “accuracy”, “reliability”, or “validity” ... This approach is valuable in so far as it draws attention to the fact that experience is never “raw”, but is embedded in a social web of interpretation and re-interpretation” (p. 128).

Gray (2009) argues that the constructivist stance is closely linked to interpretivism which examines the culturally and historically situated interpretations of the social world. Research that is interpretive seeks to investigate people’s experiences and their perspectives of these experiences. This is a typically inductive process. This view is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2003) who point out that interpretive practice is concerned with the “hows” and “whys” of social reality and is centred on how people construct their experiences and their worlds.

The next section will examine how the cases and participants were selected.

### **Selection and characteristics of cases and participants**

There are various ways in which cases and participants may be selected in a study. Very often, a case will be chosen simply because it allows access. Many qualitative researchers employ purposive and not random sampling methods. They seek out groups, settings and individuals where the process being studied is most likely to occur (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Silverman (2006) argues that sampling in qualitative research is neither statistical nor purely personal but is, or should be, theoretically grounded.

The link between sampling and theory is outlined by Mason (1996) who states that “theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position... and most importantly the explanations or account which you are developing. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing...a sample which is

meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory and explanations” (pp. 93-94).

This research involved case studies of 3 schools selected from 3 different rural districts as a multiple-case study (Yin (2009)). I come from the community where these schools are located and this influenced the decision to carry out the study in the region. The reason for selecting schools from 3 different districts was to enable the testing of emerging ideas and cross referencing of themes to determine whether a particular context influences practices and belief systems. These case studies were not geared towards generalisation to the larger population of schools in Kenya, although the different cases provide rich data that could underpin future research to investigate issues raised and inform policy. According to Yin (2009), doing a case study incorporates a goal to expand and generalise theories and not statistical generalizations. Although this study involved 3 case studies, the third case did not involve collection of the same set of extensive data as in the first two case studies but was an opportunity to “cross-check” emerging ideas from the first two cases.

In selecting the cases replication logic was followed (Yin, 2003). This is where a case must be carefully selected so that it either predicts similar results (a literal replication) or predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication). This study employed a literal replication whereby results from the three schools were expected to be similar given that rural schools in Kenya tend to be similar in most characteristics. Yin (2003) suggests that a researcher should act as a detective who may have to make inferences about multiple crimes to determine whether the same perpetrator committed them. This last step is similar to the replication logic informing multiple-case studies. Districts in Kenya have an officer called a district SEN coordinator. The coordinators were requested to identify schools that had established special education units. Beginning with schools that had the highest registered children with SEN, the first school from each district that consented to participate in the study was selected. Like many other schools with special education units, these 3 schools had special education units with children labelled as mentally handicapped. The following section describes the study settings.

### **The case study settings**

This study was carried out in three schools from three different districts. The following is a description of the districts and the schools. Letters A, B and C are used to identify the districts.

### ***District A***

District A is a rural district located in the very southern part of the region where the study took place. Educational matters in the district were administered by a district education office. The district education office was staffed with a district education officer (DEO), two quality assurance and standards officers, a district special educational needs coordinator who had a deputy, a human resources department and a finance/auditing office.

The district had 102 public primary schools with a total number of nearly 40,000 pupils. This population was served by over 800 teachers giving it an approximate teacher: pupil ratio of 1:45. This did not however apply across schools as teacher distribution was dependent on many other issues among them teachers' preference to be posted near their homes. There were 15 schools with special education units. In the district, nearly 300 pupils were diagnosed as having SEN at a ratio of approximately 2 boys for every 1 girl. There were 16 teachers trained in SEN. Apart from the 2 officers coordinating special needs in the district, there were no other professionals such as social workers, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and educational psychologists.

### ***District A school***

The school was located in a remote area several kilometres from the district headquarters. The school had modest buildings and a new classroom specifically allocated to children with SEN whose needs could not be met in the regular classes. Many schools in Kenya were putting up new and modern classrooms as a result of direct funding from the government. The government also introduced a constituency development fund (CDF) where schools could apply for funding to improve infrastructure.

At the time of the research, the school had over 500 pupils in total all of whom belonged to the local ethnic group. There were 11 teachers giving the school a teacher: pupil ratio of about 1:49. There was a total number of slightly more than 20 children diagnosed as having SEN. All of them were labelled as having mental handicaps (MH). Four of the children, (2 boys and 2 girls) were included in mainstream classes, and five (4 boys and 1 girl) attended the special education unit. The remaining 13 were attended to in what was referred to as the home-based program. It was however not very clear as to how many children with SEN were included in regular classes. This is because there were no clear mechanisms of identifying and placing children in special education. There was 1 teacher trained in SEN. He held the lowest qualification in special education in Kenya, a certificate level.

The school was divided into 4 sections: special education unit, Early Childhood Centre (ECC), lower primary and upper primary. The ECC had only one class which was called nursery class. The lower primary section consisted of classes 1 to 3 while the upper primary school consisted of classes 4-8.

### ***District B***

District B is also a rural district, located in the central part of the region. The district education office was staffed with a DEO, a deputy DEO, a senior district education officer, 2 quality assurance and standards officers, a finance/auditing department, a human resources department and a district special educational needs coordinator. The SEN coordinator had 2 officers working under him. He spent most of his time in a nearby special school for mentally handicapped children. There were no other professionals working with children with SEN although the SEN coordinator indicated that he could get some of these professionals from the district hospital.

The district had over 100 primary schools with more than 55,000 pupils with an approximate equal number of boys and girls. The district had 1,810 teachers, giving it a teacher: pupil ratio of 1:30. This ratio did not apply to all schools as distribution of teachers depended on other factors. An example in this district was that it had schools that were located near the district headquarters which attracted many teachers as the town was bigger than the other two. There were 20 schools with special education units with a total number of more than 800 pupils and an approximate ratio of 3 girls for every 1 boy. These units were for mentally handicapped children. The total number of children diagnosed with SEN in special education units and inclusive settings was over 3,500 with slightly more girls than boys; the total number of teachers trained in SEN was over 30; 10 held degrees in inclusive education, 19 held diplomas in special education while two held certificate qualifications in special education. The district also had two special schools; one for the hearing impaired and another for mentally handicapped children.

### ***District B school***

The school was located several miles from the district headquarters. Most of the school's buildings were modern. There was a separate class for children with SEN who were classified by the school as unable to attend regular classes. They were 6 in number.

At the time of this research, the school had over 600 pupils (half boys and half girls). There were over 20 teachers in the school with nearly three times as many females than males. This gave the school an approximate teacher: pupil ratio of 1:27. Two of these teachers worked mainly in the special education unit, 1 full time and the other sharing some lessons with mainstream teachers. The total number of children diagnosed with SEN was slightly over 40, approximately equal by gender. Six of these children; 2 boys and 4 girls attended the special education unit while 16 children were registered under the home-based programme. The remaining 18 were in inclusive settings. All the children were classified as having mental handicaps (MH).

Like the district A school, the school was divided into 4 sections; special education unit, ECC, lower primary and upper primary. However, unlike the district A and C schools, there were two classes of the ECC section, one with younger children and the other with those children that were ready to join class one/start lower primary the following year.

### ***District C***

Like the other two districts, District C is a rural district but further north of the region. The district education office was headed by a DEO. The DEO was supported by a team consisting of a deputy district education officer, 2 quality assurance and standards officers, a human resource office, a finance/audit office, a SEN coordinator and an Early Childhood Development (ECD) coordinator.

The district had over 90 primary schools with slightly over 1,000 teachers, an average of 10 teachers per school. However, actual teacher distribution was dependent on many other factors including teachers preferring to teach near their home areas. There were 22 schools with special education units and 2 special schools. The SEN units had over 600 pupils with an approximate ratio of 1 girl to 2 boys. The total number of pupils diagnosed with SEN in the district was over 1400 over half of whom were boys. The total number of teachers trained in SEN was over 90. Five held a degree in inclusive education, while most of the remaining held diplomas in special education. The SEN coordinator indicated that the district hospital had a team of professionals who could be of help to him. They included 1 speech and language therapist, 2 physiotherapists, 1 educational psychologist and 1 occupational therapist.

### ***District C school***

The school was located several kilometres from the district headquarters. It had over 500 pupils and 11 teachers; 8 trained and 4 untrained. This gave the school an approximate pupil: teacher ratio

of 1:48. One of the teachers only taught children with SEN in the special education unit while another attended to nursery school children. That number also included the head teacher who was involved in administration work as well. The school had over 30 pupils diagnosed with SEN. Twelve of them attended the home-based program while 8 of them attended the special education unit. The remaining 10 were included in regular classes. There were 2 teachers trained in SEN. One attended the special unit exclusively while the other had some lessons in the regular classes. The second SEN teacher was also the deputy head teacher and therefore carried out administrative responsibilities when the head teacher was not in school or by delegation. Like the other two schools, the school was divided into 4 sections; special education unit, ECC which had one class, lower primary and upper primary.

It is important to note that all the children with SEN in the schools were labelled as having mental handicaps without any specifications such as categories of disability. The only distinction was between those were included in regular classes labelled as having mild mental handicaps and those in the special education units and home-based programmes labelled as having severe mental handicaps.

### **The participants**

Before starting the process of data collection, Victoria University of Wellington requires that an ethics application is launched and approved. I applied for ethics approval from the University ethics committee and an approval was issued on 16/10/2009 (Approval number SEPP/2009/59: RM). Research in Kenya also requires permission from a government body referred to as the national research council. An application form, three copies of the research proposal and a passport size photo were sent to the council. Given that this research was from a foreign country, the application had to go through a process of vetting. The council then issued me with an approval letter and an identity card for presentation to the district education officers. After selecting the districts and the schools, key people in the districts and schools were contacted in order to get permission to conduct research in their areas of control or interview them. The first point was at the district education offices where the research permit and identity card from the national research council was presented to the district education officers. The district education officers then gave me letters of introduction to present to the head teachers of the schools and any other participant who may request them. For unspecified security reasons, a copy of my research permit was given to the district commissioners who also wrote me introduction letters.

The government officers (SEN coordinators and quality assurance and standards officers) were visited in their offices and given the information sheets. They had an opportunity to ask questions on issues that were not clear. After that, consent forms were given to them and appointments made for interviews in their offices. The officers preferred to be interviewed at the end of the day when the offices were less busy.

The schools were then visited and the head teachers were given information sheets and an opportunity to clarify any issues that they were not clear about. It was intended that the chairmen of the school committees were to be contacted but the head teachers were happy to inform them on my behalf. In the first meetings, the head teachers organised an informal meeting where the teachers were also informed of the research and given information sheets. The teachers had an opportunity to ask questions about the research. Some of the concerns that the teachers raised included why their schools were selected and how the findings of the research would be presented. The teachers were then given consent forms (collected at a later date) and appointments were made for the interviews and focus group discussions. The head teachers preferred to be interviewed either at the beginning of the day before pupils arrived or at the end of the day to avoid distractions as a result of visitors and parents and the fact that they had lessons to teach. The focus group discussions and teacher interviews were held at lunch time in order not to interfere with classes. I provided lunch for the teachers so that they could stay in school for the interviews and focus group discussions.

For the parents, the SEN teachers invited them to school indicating that there was a visitor who wanted to talk to them. In all the schools, a reasonable number of parents turned up for the meetings although at different times. Because of literacy issues, I explained to parents the contents of the information sheets and consent forms and provided an opportunity for questions. It was somewhat difficult to explain to the parents what research entails and how it will benefit them, although I come from the same community and therefore was able to communicate in the local language. The first five parents were then invited to come another day of their choosing for an interview. They were also given opportunity to choose the venue. Most of the first interviews with parents occurred in school. In the second round of the data collection process, the parents were happy for me to go to their homes.

A total of 42 people participated in the research, including 24 parents, 3 SEN teachers, 6 regular teachers, 3 head teachers, 3 SEN coordinators and 3 district quality assurance and standards officers. Three focus group discussions with regular school teachers (one each from the districts) were also facilitated. All interviews were voluntary.

### ***District SEN coordinators***

Three district SEN coordinators were interviewed, one from each district. The SEN coordinators were in charge of issues of SEN in the district such as assessing and placing children in special education. Two of the coordinators were very experienced officers who would have retired from the service had the government not extended the retirement age to 60 years of age. One of them was younger and had completed a bachelor's degree in inclusive education. He was formerly a primary school teacher. The two older officers indicated they had taken courses in Belgium, Britain and Denmark although their qualifications were at diploma level.

### ***District quality assurance and standards officers***

Three quality assurance and standards officers were interviewed during this research, one from each district. They were included because they were in charge of ensuring quality education for children with SEN. According to the Ministry of Education, the officers were required to ensure that learners with special needs in education get quality education through regular inspection. The three officers were former secondary school teachers who had been promoted to be in charge of quality assurance and standards in the districts.

### ***Head teachers***

Three head teachers took part in this research, one each from the 3 districts. Head teachers were the accounting officers and oversaw the day to day running of the schools. The ministry officials at the district depended on them for regular reports about what was going on in the schools. The head teachers were both long serving teachers; to become a head teacher, one must have served in various capacities including class teacher, games teacher, senior teacher and deputy head teacher.

### ***SEN teachers***

Three SEN teachers were interviewed during this study, one from each district. These were teachers who had undergone regular teacher training as well as a special course in special education. Two of them were qualified with diplomas in special education, while the other had a



certificate level qualification. These teachers were directly responsible for issues of SEN because a school could not open a special education unit if there was no teacher trained in special education.

### ***Regular teachers***

Three regular teachers were interviewed in this research, two from each district. Another 21 teachers took part in 3 focus group discussions, 1 focus group discussion from each district. Except in one school where there were 3 untrained teachers, all the other teachers were trained and employed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), a government body charged with the task of employing and paying teachers. The untrained teachers were employed and paid by the school committees. The regular teachers who took part in the individual interviews were all trained teachers.

### ***Parents***

Twenty four parents of children with SEN took part in this research. Fifteen of these parents had their children attending school while the remaining 9 had their children attending what was referred to as a home-based programme. The home-based programme was one in which some children who were not able to come to school for various reasons received (or were supposed to) educational services from their homes. Most of the parents who were interviewed were mothers of the children.

The following section will discuss the methods and tools that were used to collect data.

## **Methods and tools for data collection**

### ***Introduction***

Typically, qualitative researchers use four methods of data collection: observation, analysing texts and documents, interviews and focus groups, and audio and video recording. These methods are often combined. For example, many case studies combine observation with interviewing (Silverman, 2006).

Various principles as suggested by Yin (2003, 2009) were used in the process of this study. One of them is the use of multiple sources of evidence, allowing the investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal and behavioural issues. Multiple sources of evidence also allow the development of converging lines of inquiry. With data triangulation, potential problems of

construct validity can be addressed because the multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon. The second principle is to create a case study data base, separating raw data from the data report and making case study notes. The third principle involves maintaining a chain of evidence to allow external observers to follow derivation of any evidence, ranging from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions. The external observer should be able to trace the steps in either direction, from conclusions back to initial research questions or from questions to conclusions. The report should make sufficient citation to the relevant portions of the case study databases by citing specific documents, interviews or observations.

This study employed both interactive and noninteractive strategies to collect data. The case study approach was utilised to identify major themes in the research. According to Yin (2003), the purpose of the case studies is not to provide generalisations, but to identify themes within each case and then look for themes that transcend the cases. All the methods used made inquiries aligned to the quality indicators identified in the literature review. The first phase of the research occurred between January and March 2010. The second phase of data collection was done between September and December 2010. Four weeks were allocated for data collection at each school, and initial data analysis. The initial data analysis after collecting data from the first and second schools was to inform data collection for the next case. Data analysis of the first set of data was used to formulate research questions for the second phase. Hancock and Algozzine (2006) state that unlike some forms of research in which the data are examined only at the end of the information period, case study research involves on-going examination and interpretation of the data in order to reach tentative conclusions and to refine the research questions.

Except for a few cases where parents in the first phase of the interviews were uncomfortable with recording of interviews, all interviews were tape recorded in order to represent what was said with greater accuracy. A notebook was also kept where decisions and issues of interest were recorded. The following methods were used to collect data for this study.

### ***Focus group discussions***

Focus group discussions have been defined as a form of group interview where the reliance is on interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher. It is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a free, nonthreatening environment (Krueger & Casey, 2009). This discussion must however be limited to

a small number of issues and have a clearly identifiable agenda. According to Stewart, Dasani and Rook (2007) the contemporary focus group interview generally involves 8 to 12 people who discuss a particular topic under the direction of a moderator. The moderator promotes interaction and ensures that the discussion remains on the topic of interest and that the group affords an opportunity for all members to contribute to the discussion. As the moderator, I utilised the beginning of the discussion to provide information on the topic, create a comfortable atmosphere and provide rules for the discussion. As recommended by Krueger and Casey (2009), I informed the participants that:

- There were no right or wrong answers and that they should feel free to share their differing points of view;
- Recording of the conversation was to be done in order not to miss comments. No names would appear in reports (the teachers were identified by numbers) and their comments will be confidential; and
- I was there to ask questions and make sure everyone had a chance to share. If some talked more frequently, I would ask others also to comment on the issue (p. 97).

Discussions were facilitated with regular school teachers (one group per school) in order to find out their perceptions on the quality of education offered to children with SEN. Focus groups may create confidentiality issues because information shared in a group could be repeated outside the group. Freeman and Mathison (2009) suggest that one strategy is to let participants know that it is not alright to share what was disclosed in any detail outside the group but to talk in general about what was said. It was also important to make a verbal agreement with the group that members will respect confidentiality in regard to “who said what”. This is a strategy I employed because telling people never to disclose “anything” would be impractical. Data from the focus group interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed after the interviews. Compared to field notes of observational data, recordings and transcripts can offer a highly reliable record to which researchers can return to as they develop new hypotheses (Silverman, 2006). All the teachers who participated in the focus group discussions consented to audio recording.

According to Arbeiter and Hartley (2002) one of the reasons for using focus groups in addition to interviews is to enable a discussion about possibly controversial topics that would not come up in an interview. The issue of the education of children with SEN is controversial in that it is not clear especially to regular teachers what their role is in regard to the education of these children.

### ***Interviews***

This research employed a type of interview termed standardised open-ended interview. In this type, the exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance and all interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order (Cohen *et al*, 2000). In the second phase of parent interviews, some of the pre-established questions were abandoned because the questions seemed inappropriate as they assumed a programme was in place. Instead, the “home-based programme” for these parents’ children was largely non-functional. Thus, the interviews became more open where parents were asked questions like, “What would you like your child to learn?” Yin (2003) contends that case study interviews are of an open-ended nature, in which you can ask key respondents about the facts of a matter as well as their opinions about events. In this research, participants were asked what services were available for children with SEN and what they thought about the services.

According to Yin (2003), interviews are directed conversations rather than structured questions. This means that although you will be pursuing a consistent line of inquiry, the actual stream of questions in a case study interview is likely to be flexible. This means that throughout the interview process, the researcher has two jobs to follow a line of inquiry as reflected by the case study protocol and to ask actual questions in a way that would reduce bias. There can be concerns about the best way of finding out why a certain process occurred the way it did. Asking people a “why” question is likely to trigger a defensive position. The preferred alternative could be asking people “how” questions. This may be helpful in answering the “why” questions. Case study interviews therefore require operating on two levels at the same time to satisfy the needs of the line of inquiry while also asking “friendly” and “non-threatening” questions in open-ended interviews (Yin, 2003). Qualitative interviews are often conducted with small samples, and the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee may be defined in political rather than scientific terms (Silverman, 2006).

This research involved pre-established open-ended questions(see appendices 4 and 6) administered to parents of children with SEN (8 per school), head teachers of the selected schools (3), District SEN coordinators (3), SEN teachers (3), regular teachers (6) and District Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (3). Three focus group discussions with regular teachers were also organised, one in each school. It was intended to audio record all interviews as well as take notes during the interviews, adding more details immediately after the interviews. However, in the first phase of data collection, the parents were uncomfortable with recording so only notes were taken. This was

probably because I was a stranger to them and recording devices were unknown to them. In the second phase when the parents knew me, they were happy for me to audio record the interviews. In the second set of interviews, a list of prompts (see Appendix 7) were developed to enable the parents think about what skills they felt were important for their children. A child profile (see appendix 8) was also developed for the children who were home-based in order to get a picture of what issues surrounded their home placement. All interviews were individual. According to Freeman and Mathison (2009), individual interviews prioritise the individual and allow the researcher to give each participant his/her complete attention. Individual interviews can explore sensitive issues in depth. This study involved asking parents about their children with SEN and was therefore sensitive as it meant the parents were sharing what could be private information.

Key informants are often critical to the success of a case study. They not only provide the case study investigator with insights into a matter but can also suggest sources of further evidence and even initiate access to such sources. Researchers however need to be cautious about becoming too dependent on a key informant, especially because of the interpersonal influence the informant may have. A reasonable way of dealing with this is to rely on other sources of evidence and to search for contrary evidence as carefully as possible (Yin, 2003). In this study, the SEN teachers became very close to me as they organised my access to parents. The SEN teachers also saw themselves as “experts” in the area of SEN. I was however aware of the fact that I did not need to rely overly on their information but corroborate it with other information.

This research was situated within a constructivist perspective whereby knowledge was constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee (Silverman, 2006). It is the view of constructivists that the interviewers and the interviewees are always actively engaged in constructing meaning. The researcher has therefore to be keen on how meaning is mutually constructed.

There were instances in this research where respondents shifted from their perspectives into other people's. Teachers and parents used phrases such as “if it were my wish” when recommending what they felt was the best way for the education of children with SEN. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) cite phrases which respondents use to signal shifts in roles, e.g. “speaking as a mother now”, “thinking like a woman”, “wearing my professional kit”, “if I were in his shoes”, and “now that you ask” (pp. 33-4). Silverman (2006) suggest that when analysing interview data, researchers should look for prefaces of this kind and try to identify the range of subject positions that respondents invoke. This approach is a useful way of dealing with the assumption that people have

a single identity waiting to be discovered by the interviewer. One group of participants in this study were parents of children with SEN. It was noted that when parents of children with disabilities were interviewed, they offered stories usually about the inadequate services available to their children. The stories parents told were a reflection of their frustration and confusion as to the future of their children. This was important because it revealed the differences between what the society expected of children and what the children with SEN could actually achieve. Interviews therefore formed a core part of the data collection process. They facilitated the collection of data that would be hard to collect with any other method. It was the best way to go given that this research was looking at people's perspectives.

### ***Observations***

Observational data afford the researcher the opportunity to gather "live" data from "live" situations. Given that the researcher looks at what is happening first hand, it enables him/her to understand the context of programmes, be open-ended and inductive, see things that might be unconsciously missed, discover things that participants might not freely talk about in interview situations, move beyond perception-based data (e.g. opinions in interviews), and access personal knowledge (Cohen *et al*, 2000). Silverman (2006) states that it is a comparison between what people actually do in a setting and what they think about what they do. He adds that what people say in answer to interview questions does not have a stable relationship with how they behave in naturally occurring situations. Kitzinger's (2004) view is that the emphasis on what people say has led to an over-reliance on self-report methods at the expense of approaches which involve the researcher in direct observation of the phenomenon under investigation.

Observation involves purposefully obtaining information contained in children's behaviour and giving that information meaning that can be used to foster their growth, development and overall well-being. It is the ability to take in information through one or more of our five senses and to make sense of that information so that we can use it in meaningful ways (Bentzen, 2005). In this study, the focus was not largely on children's behaviour but on how the learning of the children was influenced by factors around them. Examples of these factors included the staffing levels and physical resources. The observations were done in predetermined sites, times and what was to be observed was also predetermined (see appendix 5 for observation protocol). Bentzen argues that observation involves the noting and recording of "facts". This meaning can be refined to include the idea of looking for something in a controlled, structured way rather than doing random observations. What, where and how the observations are to be done is determined in advance.

Observing people could affect behaviour, and awareness of the observer's presence can distract them or motivate them to behave in ways they believe will please the observer. One other thing is that children can become very curious about someone writing in a notebook, especially if they are not used to seeing other familiar adults do this (Bentzen, 2005). The children in this study became curious of my presence although they did not question me. From my experience as a teacher in Kenya, there is too much respect for teachers and therefore children may not question what has been sanctioned by their teachers. This did not however seem to affect the issues under observation in this study as the teachers and children seemed unperturbed by my presence.

Observations in this research involved observing children with SEN during inclusion (in regular classes) and withdrawal (in special education units), when using specialist facilities in inclusive or withdrawn settings and reflection of teacher planning in practice. Johnson and Christensen (2008) indicate that observation involves observing all relevant phenomena and taking extensive field notes without specifying in advance exactly what is to be observed. This research employed a type of observation called observer-as-participant. According to Johnson and Christensen, this refers to a situation where the participants are fully aware that they are part of a research study. The observer-as-participant does not spend very much time in the field. For instance, the researcher might negotiate entry to two classes as part of a research study. In this study, the teachers were made aware that they were part of a research project. The teachers in the classes explained to the pupils about the purpose of my presence although it not possible to tell how much the pupils understood the idea of research.

During this research, I carried out three observations per school; one morning lesson, one afternoon lesson and one out of class lesson. This was done in order to observe the learning process in different environments to see if there were differences. The out of class observation took place at games time. In Kenya, there is a period of between 1-1.5 hours (games time) at the end of the school day when children take part in various games activities including football, volleyball, netball and athletics. The intention was to observe things such as whether children with SEN had specialist facilities and how much they interacted with their nondisabled peers. Lessons in primary schools in Kenya last for a period of 40 minutes but the out of class ones may last longer. A table was prepared with sections and descriptions for the following areas through the 3 schools:

- Activities children were engaged in/subject being learnt

- Resources in use
- How the resources were distributed
- How learning was differentiated/planning
- Organisation of activities/teacher explanations
- Teacher: pupil ratio
- Language of communication and
- Duration of lesson

During the observations, I took notes and then added more detail as soon as possible after the observation in order not to forget the details. I drew a table with area of interest on one column and comments on the other.

### ***Documentary evidence***

According to Yin (2009), the most important use of documents in case studies is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. Some of the strengths of documentary evidence include the fact that documents are stable (can be reviewed repeatedly), are unobtrusive (not created as a result of the case study), are exact and have a broad coverage. Some of the weaknesses of documentary evidence may include retrievability (difficult to find), biased selectivity, reporting bias and access where they may be deliberately withheld. One of the difficulties encountered in this study was accessing school documents. The schools or teachers were unwilling to release documents such as minutes of various meetings. I explained to the teachers that I was never going to identify their names or those of the schools and if I needed any copies, they could make the copies themselves without revealing the names of the schools. This was not successful and so I had to remove certain documents from the list of the documents I was going to examine.

Many people have been critical of the potential over-reliance on documents in case study research. It should be remembered that every document was written for a specific purpose and audience other than those of the case study being done. By constantly trying to identify the purpose and audience of documents, the researcher is less likely to be misled by documentary evidence and more likely to be correctly critical in interpreting the contents of such evidence (Yin, 2003).

Documentary evidence in this study involved examining various documents to find out how they reflected issues of SEN. At the planning stage of this research, the following documents were to be scrutinised; curriculum documents, schemes of work and lesson plans, school and government



policies on SEN, SEN teacher training curriculum, SEN code of conduct and Children's Act, class registers, student progress reports, staff meeting minutes, school committee meeting minutes, inspection reports and school rules and regulations. As mentioned earlier, it was not possible to examine many of the school records because they were either unavailable or the teachers were unwilling to avail them. Thus, only government documents were examined. These included the Children's Act 2001, government policy documents on SEN, SEN teacher training curriculum and curriculum for children with mental handicaps.

## **Procedures followed in data management and analysis**

### ***Data management***

The large amount of data collected required orderly data management procedures. Hard copies of all data were prepared and stored in a lever arch file. The file had dividers with labels District 1, 2 and 3. These files were kept in a locked university office and files typed and saved in my laptop, and university computer had passwords known only to me consistent with ethics requirements.

All interviews including focus group discussions were audio taped and transcribed. The interviews with parents that were not recorded were handwritten and then typed. The audio taped data was still stored in a password prepared document for continued reference.

### ***Data analysis***

#### ***Analysis of interviews and focus group discussions***

Johnson and Christensen (2008) define data analysis as creating meaning out of raw data. They suggest a process of data analysis that involves data collection, data entry and storage, segmenting, coding and developing category systems, identifying relationships (e.g. themes, patterns and hierarchies), constructing diagrams, tables and graphs and finally corroborating and validating results.

This research employed a qualitative analytic method referred to as thematic analysis to analyse data. It is a method that can be used for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data. It can be useful in organising and describing research data in detail. Thematic analysis goes beyond descriptions and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). One of the benefits of thematic analysis is that it is flexible implying that it is compatible with both essentialist and constructivist paradigms. This study is situated within a constructivist perspective

and therefore thematic analysis is suitable. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis can be a constructivist method which examines ways in which events, realities, meanings and experiences are a result of a variety of discourses operating within society.

### **Important decisions to make in the use of thematic analysis**

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), several decisions are made before embarking on the use of thematic analysis in qualitative research. The first decision is whether to provide a rich description of the entire data set to discuss dominant themes or provide a more detailed and varied account of particular themes or groups of themes within the data. This research employed the latter. Major themes are identified and then a detailed account of each is given with examples from the data across the 3 cases.

The second decision involves choosing between inductive thematic analysis and theoretical thematic analysis. In inductive thematic analysis, data coding follows from the data rather than any pre-existing coding frame. In theoretical thematic analysis, coding tends to be driven by the researchers' theoretical stance. The latter analysis produces a less rich description of the data overall but a more detailed analysis of some aspect of the data. In this study, a choice was made to use inductive thematic analysis identifying themes from the data corpus; coding was data driven.

The third decision involves whether themes are identified at a semantic or a latent level. At the semantic level, themes are identified within the explicit meanings of the data: the analysis is not looking beyond what the participants have said or what is written. At the latent level, analysis goes beyond the semantic content of the data to examine underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations that are theorised as informing the semantic content of the data. Themes developed at this level involve interpretive work, and the analysis produced is not just a description but is already theorised. Analysis at this level tends to come from a constructivist paradigm. Given that this research was rooted in a constructivist perspective, it was decided to identify themes at the latent level. All responses on the data corpus were read with the aim of constructing meanings behind people talk and behaviour. Braun and Clarke (2006) conclude that approaches that consider specific aspects are at latent level and constructivist, with a tendency to cluster together. Those that consider meanings across the entire data set are at the semantic level, are realist, and often cluster together.

## Procedures to follow in thematic data analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) have identified 6 phases to follow in the use of thematic data analysis. The following table illustrates the phases.

**Table II: Procedures followed in thematic data analysis**

Phase	Description of the process
Familiarizing with data.	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
Generating initial codes.	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
Searching for themes.	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering data relevant to each potential theme.
Reviewing themes.	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic “map” of the analysis.
Defining and naming themes.	On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
Producing the report.	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research questions and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

## Working through the phases

### *Phase 1*

All interviews were transcribed and read through in their entirety, taking notes for coding that were useful in the later stages of the analysis. As recommended by Creswell (2003), this phase also entailed sorting data into different groups depending on the information sources. At this stage, tables were constructed listing leading questions and participant responses across the three districts.

### *Phase 2*

Phase 2 was the beginning of the coding process. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), coding is part of the analysis as data are being organised into meaningful groups. Data were coded manually. Pencilled notes were written against any data with something of interest to the research.

Braun and Clark (2006) point out that in manual coding, data can be coded by writing notes on the text, using highlighters or coloured pens to indicate potential patterns or by using “post-it” notes to identify segments of data. At the end of this phase, 12 different ideas were identified.

### ***Phase 3***

Phase 3 involved considering how the various codes may combine to form themes, representing the search for themes. Braun and Clark (2006) recommend that we use visual representations to help sort the different codes into themes. Examples include tables, mind maps, writing the name and description of each code, and a brief description on a separate piece of paper among other techniques. In this study, a word document was prepared with the names of the potential themes as headings and the different ideas/codes (and descriptions) listed under the headings. At this stage, 5 potential themes were identified.

### ***Phase 4***

Phase 4 involved reviewing the themes by reading through all the extracts for each theme to consider whether they form a coherent pattern (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to examine whether the individual themes relate to and accurately reflect meaning evident in the entire data set. All the potential themes were evaluated against the labels given to the themes to determine if the data set formed logical patterns. This process led to the reduction of the themes from five to four and renaming some of them to better reflect the data set. The four themes were later condensed and written as two major themes.

### ***Phase 5***

Phase 5 involved a close look at what aspects of the data each theme represents. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that this phase should identify whether any theme contains any sub-themes. The sub-themes can be useful in giving structure to a large or complex theme. They can also help in demonstrating hierarchy of meaning within the data. For example, one of the major themes identified was “disconnections between the various stakeholders involved in the education of children with SEN”. This was a broad theme and therefore a decision was made to allocate 4 sub-themes: relationship between government officers, relationships between government officers and schools, relationships between SEN teachers and regular teachers, and relationships between schools and parents.

### ***Phase 6***

Phase 6 is the final step and includes writing the report. At this stage, analysis goes beyond description and makes arguments in relation to the research questions. According to Creswell (2003), this involves interpreting the data. I used my own experience to make meaning of the data, compare my findings to published literature and suggesting areas of further investigation.

I followed the recommendation of Yin (2009) to summarise findings. Yin identifies four various ways in which qualitative research can be reported. One applies to multi-case studies only and was utilised in this research. This is where there are no separate sections or chapters devoted to individual cases. Instead, each chapter or section is dedicated to a separate cross-case issue, and information from the individual cases is referred to throughout each chapter or section. This format may require that summary information about the individual cases is either ignored or presented in a brief and clear description. The main themes in this research are discussed and the relevant data set referred to across all the cases.

### **Analysis of documentary evidence**

As noted earlier, the documents examined included the SEN policy draft of 2008, the 2001 curriculum for mentally handicapped children, the 2006 SEN handbook for quality assurance and standards, the 2006 Diploma curriculum in special needs education module II, the Children's Act of 2001, and a government task force document from 2003. The purpose of this review was to get an overview of the relationship between policy and practice as understood by those who were in charge of implementing the policies. A word document was prepared outlining what the documents stated in the following areas:

- inclusive practices
- quality assurance and standards
- legislation
- staffing
- curriculum issues
- identification and placement of children in special education
- resources
- progress monitoring
- parent-teacher partnerships and
- staff training

## **Analysis of observations**

As indicated earlier, 9 observations were conducted across 3 districts, 3 per school. The observations were focussed on resources, inclusive practices, staffing, and schedules for children with SEN and were coded in order to corroborate information from the other participants and sources. They were finally grouped and reported in three sections; physical resources, staffing, and inclusive practices.

## **Ensuring trustworthiness of the research**

### ***Triangulation***

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus. However, the use of multimethods or triangulation attempts to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question to achieve objective quality. Triangulation is not a strategy for validation but an alternative to validation. The combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives and observations in a single study is best understood as a strategy that adds rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to any inquiry (Flick, 2002). The triangulation employed in this study meant cross-checking the existence of certain phenomena and veracity of individual accounts by gathering data from a number of informants and a number of sources, then comparing and contrasting data (Bell, 1999). Cohen *et al* (2000) define triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour.

The most common application of triangulation in qualitative research is one of multiple methods. For example, a study may try to combine interviews with observation. If findings across different methods correspond and lead to similar conclusions, this supports the validity of those findings and conclusions (Silverman, 2006). However, Moisander and Valtonen (2006) argue that we cannot assume that looking at an object from more than one standpoint produces a truer and certain representation of the object. This may make sense in the natural sciences with physical objects but not in cultural research where the focus is on social reality. In this study, some participants held different perspectives on the issues surrounding the education of children with SEN. The intent was not to merge the various perspectives to form some kind of truth but to make meaning of different perspectives. Bias is another issue that may prompt triangulation. According to Yin (2003), case study investigators are especially prone to the problem of bias because they have knowledge of the issues before gathering data. People have also grown with and gone through

experiences that may make them think in a given way and therefore bias. It is important to be true to the collected data and be explicit on how the data was analysed. Triangulation in this study was achieved by the use of various methods of data collection and respondents.

### ***Validity of the research***

Validity is the extent to which an account represents the social phenomena to which it refers (Hammersley, 1990). Research is valid if it is plausible, credible, trustworthy and thus defensible (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) define validity as referring to the appropriateness, correctness, meaningfulness and usefulness of the specific inferences that researchers make based on the data they collect.

The major problem with research validity is research bias that involves obtaining results consistent with what the researcher wants to find. In qualitative data, validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher (Cohen *et al*, 2000). Many authors (e.g. Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Richards, 2005; Silverman, 2006) have advocated for providing feedback to research participants and member checking to affirm the credibility of the data. Although attempts were made to get back to the participants in this study with the transcribed data and initial findings, most of them showed little interest in the process. They however were able to confirm that what was recorded was a reflection of their responses. The teachers, SEN coordinators and quality assurance and standards officers were given written notes of the main ideas from the data while the parents were verbally informed of the ideas.

### ***Reliability***

Reliability deals with replicability, the question of whether or not some future researchers could repeat the research project and come up with the same results, interpretations and claims. Silverman (2006) suggests two ways to satisfy reliability. One of them is to make the research process transparent by describing the research strategy and data analysis methods in a clear and detailed manner in the research report. The other one is by paying attention to “theoretical transparency” through making clear the theoretical position from which the interpretation takes place and showing how this produces particular interpretations. In this study, verbatim accounts of what people said were recorded. Interviews with teachers, educationists were tape recorded and transcribed. Parent interviews in the second phase of the data collection process were also tape recorded and transcribed.

## Ethical issues

For many poor third –world interviewees, local norms make it difficult to turn down a request from a visitor to be interviewed or they do not know the potential implications of participating in research. (This means that) the general ethical correctness of informed consent irrespective of the location of the field may be questionable with reference to the North-South dimension in Third world projects (Ryen, 2004: p. 232)

In the initial stage of any research involving humans, universities require ethics approval and this research was approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Ethics Committee (*Ethics approval number RM 16952*) for data collected from administrators, parents, teachers, and observations of children in schools. Participation in the research was negotiated with participants and clear information provided. Initial visits to selected schools and parents were carried out to discuss the purpose of the research in order for them to give informed consent (see appendix 2 for information sheets).

Either written or verbal consent was obtained from all participants depending on their literacy level (see Appendix 3 for consent forms). With parents, I sought verbal consent by visiting them in their homes, explaining the purpose of the study and assuring them that it was not an obligation for them or their children to take part in the study and that they could withdraw at any time during the process of data collection. For the purpose of confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used for the districts, schools and all participants in the research and identifiable information removed. Participants were assured that everything possible would be done to ensure that information is kept confidential.

But what is informed consent? Silverman (2006) suggests several issues to consider when seeking informed consent. Relevant information about the research should be given to the participants to enable them to make a decision on whether to participate in the research. It should also be ensured that participants understand the information given. For instance, the information should be in a language that the participants can understand. Participation should be voluntary and for those participants who are deemed incompetent to agree for example children, consent should be sought from the parents. This research was examining people's perspectives and informed consent was to ensure that people can participate voluntarily and give a clear picture of their perspectives.

The issue of informed consent can be problematic. In this study, it was decided that each participant, especially the parents who came to school would be reimbursed some travel cost after



the interviews. Although they were not informed in advance about this, it created some problem when the second phase of data collection was taking place. There is a possibility that some of the parents may have been motivated by the “travel cost” to respond positively to my request for interviews. One particular parent in district C informed the SEN teacher that if she will not get some money as it happened in the first time, she would not come for the interview. The reason she gave was that she was going to stay away from paid work in order to attend the interview. I made a decision that this particular parent would be removed from the interview list. This begs the question: what about poor people who may participate in research for payment? Marvasti (2004) gives the example of his research on homelessness where he might give someone living in the streets a few dollars for an interview. He wonders whether it is ethical to ask the poor to participate in research in exchange for money which could be the moral equivalent of asking a starving person to answer a few questions in exchange for a plate of food. The solution that can be put forth to comply with ethical standards is to ask people to participate in interviews or research without rewards. However, what may be seen as a kind of appreciation or reimbursement may actually be viewed as a reward in some circles.

So, is there a universal way of looking at what may constitute ethical principles? One researcher who has done her work in Africa, Ryen (2004), observed that in the process of her work, she met expectations that she would reciprocate in some ways. These ways included coping with local poverty, offering grants, exchanging gifts and even sexual offers. It is possible that this is a result of western research being viewed as aimed at some kind of grant and the general view in developing countries that westerners do actually have lots of money. I may have been in a situation like that of Ryen. Having introduced myself as studying in a foreign university, it is possible that the local people, including poor parents with disabled children, may have looked at me in terms of helping them out.

Another issue that was raised above is on how universal ethical principles can be said to be. In the community where this study was done and where I grew up, it is against cultural expectations to refuse to talk to visitors. In earlier days, visitors to homes used to come with gifts of food. Due to changing times, it is common for visitors to leave some money as a form of appreciation. If the purpose of the visit was research, would leaving some money be considered unethical? Another issue is how much parents especially in the rural setting will understand about research and its implications. After explaining to the parents about the whole research process, the parents in this study gave what I would call informed consent. It is not possible to determine whether they

actually understood the research process. So, did they give informed consent or just consent? This dilemma is captured by Ryen (2004) who did research in East Africa. She notes:

For many poor third –world interviewees, local norms make it difficult to turn down a request from a visitor to be interviewed or they do not know the potential implications of participating in research. (This means that) the general ethical correctness of informed consent irrespective of the location of the field may be questionable with reference to the North-South dimension in Third world projects (p. 232).

Issues around informed consent may need to be considered within specific cultural perspectives and it may not be possible to have a universal understanding of ethical principles. Ethical considerations designed by universities and organisations in western countries may have little meaning in other parts of the world, such as Africa South of the Sahara, without modifications.

Another significant issue was sensitivity to the feelings of parents of disabled children. This is because their children were considered different from their non-disabled peers. Great consideration was taken to assure parents that any information collected about their children would be kept confidential. According to Bentzen (2005), parents might be wary of anyone other than the school staff observing and recording the behaviour and developmental progress of their children. This is especially true if the children have characteristics that set them apart from their peers in a way the parents view as unfavourable. It therefore requires researchers to be sensitive, confidential and respectful of the rights of the parents, including the right to say if they want/do not want their children observed or information about them recorded.

These ethical procedures were presented in an application to the Ethics committee of the Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington. The committee determined that the research adhered to ethical considerations as required by the University. The research was also approved by the Research Council of Kenya.

## CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS I: CONTEXT AND STAKEHOLDER DISCONNECTIONS

### Introduction

This chapter examines what was found to be a disconnection between policy and practice on one hand and the government officers, teachers and parents on the other about various issues concerned with the education of children with SEN. It also presents the context in which the children with SEN operate in regard to resources and inclusive practices as evidenced from observational data. It should be noted that the interpretation and implementation of policies in regard to the education of children with SEN contradicted most policy guidelines. The interviews with government officers, teachers and parents revealed that there were clear indications of poor services for children with SEN. Although the participants on some occasions blamed the poor services on resources, observations indicated that extra resources would not necessarily contribute to quality education for children with SEN. The interviewees seemed to have different understandings on how the system worked as well as different opinions on the services available. What then appeared to emerge is a clear disconnection between the various stakeholders in charge of the education of children with SEN. The interviews with various stakeholders revealed many areas where a clear partnership did not exist. In reporting the findings in this and the next chapter, the districts are referred to as district A, B and C while the respondents' identities are coded using initials as shown in the following table.

**Table III: Initials used in reporting findings**

INITIALS	RESPONDENT
SC	District special educational needs coordinator
QS	District quality assurance and standards officer
HT	Head teacher
ST	Special educational needs teacher
T	Regular teacher in interview
TF	Regular teacher in focus group discussions
P	Parent

In this study, disconnections between the various stakeholders were identified at four levels. These included disconnections between various government officers, between government officers and schools, between SEN teachers and regular teachers and lastly between schools and the parents. These will be reported separately. Before reporting on the findings from the interviews, the findings from documents and observational data will be presented first. This is so that a relationship can be created between the context, interpretations and implementation of education for children with SEN.

### **Documentary evidence**

In this study, various Ministry of Education (MOE) documents were analysed to review policy guidelines for the education of children with SEN. These documents included the Special Needs Education policy (2009), the curriculum for mentally handicapped children (2001) (most children in this study were diagnosed as having mental handicaps), the Special Needs Education handbook for Quality Assurance and Standards (2006), a report of the taskforce on Special Needs Education appraisal exercise (2003) and the constitution of Kenya. The aim was to assess how the government and its agencies articulate the education of children with SEN in terms of inclusion, quality assurance and standards, legislation, curriculum, staffing, placement of children in special education, progress monitoring, physical resources, parent-teacher partnerships, and staff training. This was corroborated with interviews from the teachers, parents and government officers, and observations. At the planning stage of this study, it was intended that school level documentation such as school mission statements and policies would be examined. This was not possible because the head teachers did not avail any documents when requested. Either the schools did not have such documents or were unwilling to avail them. The documentary evidence will be presented using the headings of quality indicators identified in chapter three.

### ***Inclusive practices***

The Kenyan government contends that the current trend in education is towards inclusive education. It means that all children including learners with special needs in education should attend the school nearest to their home regardless of age or disability unless there are compelling reasons, such as communication barrier or severity of disability, which may mean they attend special schools. The government is advocating for the inclusion of children with SEN in all educational institutions instead of special schools and special units attached to regular schools. The main objective of educating children with SEN is to give them opportunities to realise the

same national and individual goals of education as their non-handicapped peers by providing them with quality and relevant education. Special schools and units will only be for children with SEN in the areas of hearing, visual, mental and serious physical challenges. Such children are viewed as not benefiting from regular schooling. However, the government concedes that there is a lack of guidelines to support inclusive education implementation (MOE, 2006; 2009).

The special education policy articulates that inclusive education calls for restructuring of the education system in terms of physical facilities and environment, curriculum, methods of teaching, medium of instruction, change of attitude and other aspects to children joining schools of their choice and convenience (MOE, 2006; 2009). Emphasis on inclusive education is founded on the fact that there has been historical discrimination against people with disabilities in all spheres of life in Kenya. The SEN policy recognises that persons with disabilities are sometimes marginalised and excluded from social economic development and political matters due to misconceptions, mistaken beliefs, cultural practices and attitudes. The result is that many learners with special needs have limited access to education due to lack of public awareness that would otherwise address these issues (MOE, 2009)

According to the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2009), the form of education where learners with special needs in education attend regular schools has traditionally been known as integration. Under integration, the learners are required to be tailored to fit into the school environment as opposed to meeting the needs of the learners. It is further stated that an integration programme in present times should aim at modifying the school, home or community to meet the needs of the learners with SEN in terms of curriculum and the environment. The policy provides for a learner to receive education in an integrated programme either by being placed in a special education unit or being “mainstreamed” (pp. 9-10).

The government places a lot of responsibility on individual schools to become inclusive in terms of planning and practice. Every school’s objective should be to build its own capacity to be able to meet the learning needs of every learner regardless of his/her ability or disability. Schools are expected to put in place necessary support systems to be able to cater for all learners in what is referred to as becoming a “school for all”. The support system that schools are expected to put in place may include provision of specialised equipment such as Braille machines, white canes, wheel chairs and hearing aids, construction of ramps and adapted toilets, introduction of other modes of communication such as sign language, use of specialised staff such as sign language

interpreters, and Braille transcribers, use of specialist curricular, and the sensitisation of the school community to make their school “a school for all” (MOE, 2006). Despite the emphasis on inclusive education, the government provides for a home-based programme where children who are not able to attend schools for various reasons can receive educational services at their homes.

### ***Quality assurance and standards***

The inspectorate at the Ministry of Education (MOE) carries out supervision of schools. The government has pledged to develop and enhance the capacity of all inspectors at all levels through in-servicing in issues of SEN. This is to ensure effective supervision of SEN services alongside regular educational services. The government has also promised to enhance the capacity of head teachers of special schools and those whose schools have special education units to a minimum of diploma qualification in SEN. The Teachers Service Commission, the body that employs teachers in Kenya, will be required to post SEN teachers in specialised subjects to meet the minimum demand for both special schools/units and regular schools to support inclusive education (MOE, 2009).

A comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework will be required to ensure effective implementation of the SEN policy. This framework shall address issues of monitoring processes to collect information, report and recommend necessary action for improvement of SEN services. The government also pledges to develop an indicator of performance monitoring to track continuous implementation and consumption of SEN services. This will include specific activities such as identification and development of SEN responsive indicators and targets, building the capacity of the inspectorate team on the indicators, actual field monitoring, evaluation and interpretation of findings for use in future planning and improvement (MOE, 2009).

The Director of Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS) ensures that learners with SEN receive quality education through regular inspection. There are Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) who are in charge of different areas of special needs in education such as education of the hearing impaired, education of the visually handicapped, education of the mentally handicapped, education of the physically handicapped and Education Assessment and Resource Services at the headquarters, in the provinces, districts or zones. However, it is expected that every quality assurance and standards officer should be able to supervise any school catering for learners with SEN. In April 2006, the Ministry of Education produced a

Special Needs Education handbook for quality assurance and standards which was to be used together with and supplement the handbook for inspection of educational institutions. The aim was to give teachers who handle learners with SEN the necessary professional guidance and advice. The Ministry of Education maintains that a school catering for learners with special needs in education should be subject to supervision as any other school (MOE, 2006).

***Legislation:***

Kenya has committed itself to the rights of all children including those with SEN. At international level, Kenya is a signatory to declarations and conventions which are aimed at establishing, respecting and protecting the rights of all children. Some of the declarations include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) which Kenya signed in 1990, Dakar Framework on education for All (2000), The African Charter on the Rights of the Child, UN Standard Rules (1994), and the Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education (1994). At national level, Kenya has put in place legal frameworks and legislation to protect the rights of all children. These include the constitution of Kenya (2010), the Children's Act (2001) and the Persons with Disabilities Act (2003).

The constitution of Kenya (2010) is very clear about the rights of children and people with disabilities. In chapter 4, part 3 of the constitution; it states: "A person with any disability is entitled to access educational institutions and facilities for persons with disabilities that are integrated into society to the extent compatible with the interests of the person" (p. 40). The same chapter provides for the rights of all children by declaring: "Every child has the right to free and compulsory basic education (53/1b)", "Every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, neglect and healthcare (53/1c) and that "Every child has the right to be protected from abuse, neglect, harmful cultural practices, all forms of violence, inhuman treatment and punishment, and hazardous or exploitative labour (53/1d).

The Ministry of Education emphasises that all those involved in the education of children be aware of the various legislation related to the rights of children. For instance, the Ministry has directed quality assurance and standards officers to be conversant with the policies and legal frameworks relating to SEN both at national and international levels (MOE, 2006).

### ***Staffing***

The government directs that it is important for quality assurance and standards officers to know that the teacher: pupil ratio in relation to learners with special needs in education is usually lower than that found in a regular school. It recommends 1:1 ratios for an individual speech lesson for the visually impaired, a lesson with a learner who is deaf blind, typing, computer and activities of daily living lessons and a lesson with a learner with a severe case of cerebral palsy. Other teacher: pupil ratio recommendations are 1:12 for a class of learners who are deaf, between 1:4 and 1:15 for a class of learners with mental handicaps (depending on severity of the handicap), between 1:15 and 1:25 for a class of learners with physical handicap and between 1:5 and 1:15 for a class of learners with visual impairment (MOE, 2006).

### ***Curriculum issues***

The government of Kenya instituted a task force on appraisal of SEN in 2003. The task force observed that the curriculum used in ordinary schools was rigid and overloaded and did not take care of the individual needs of learners with SEN. It recommended that the curriculum should be restructured to adequately respond to the different categories of children with SEN and disabilities and be flexible in terms of time, teaching/learning resources, methodology, mode of access, presentation and content (MOE, 2003). This position was adopted by the policy on SEN (2009) which stated that the curriculum should be learner-centred and that learning systems and materials should be responsive. It was also recommended that the Ministry of Education through the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) shall develop a curriculum for all specialist areas in SEN and monitor their implementation to ensure sensitivity to the needs of learners (MOE, 2009).

The Ministry of Education through the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) came up with a special curriculum for children with mental handicaps (MOE, 2001). The curriculum is designed to help learners with mental handicaps acquire communication skills, develop receptive and expressive language skills, acquire functional reading and writing skills and expand the child's ability to interact with the environment. The government position is that regular children acquire these skills as part of their normal growth and development with the exposure and resources that are usually available in society. It is recognised that learners with mental handicaps have varying degrees of difficulty in developing these skills ranging from profound to severe through to moderate and mild mental handicaps. The government articulates that the curriculum has been developed to cater for various levels of learners with mental handicaps from nursery, pre-primary, primary and pre-vocational classes. Teachers are expected to select suitable materials



and develop an individual education programme according to the age and ability of the learners (MOE, 2001).

The SEN policy provides various curriculum options for learners with SEN. It is noted that some learners with SEN experience difficulties following the regular school curriculum due to their disabilities. It is recommended that the curriculum be adapted to meet their needs or the children are allowed to follow a separate curriculum. The curriculum may be adapted in terms of content, methodology, or learning resources. Some learners may also be allowed to follow the regular school curriculum but take extra specialist subjects that address their special needs.

The government recommends four types of curricula to be used by learners with SEN: The *adopted* curriculum is the regular curriculum which is used as it is in a special school with hardly any adjustment. The *adapted* curriculum is the regular school curriculum modified to suit learners with SEN for example, physical education can be adapted to suit the needs of learners who are physically handicapped while subjects like biology, maths and geography can be modified to suit those with visual impaired. The *specialised curriculum* involves significant modification of the regular curriculum for a special group of learners with SEN. Specialised curricula are compensatory in nature and best suited for learners with severe disabilities. Modification of the regular curriculum is done to support severely handicapped learners, e.g. typing and computer studies for those with visual impairment. The last one is the *specialist curriculum* which is independent of the regular school curriculum. It is meant to remediate specific challenges in learners with SEN. Examples include sign language, orientation and mobility, speech training and daily living skills curricula. Teachers are instructed to offer the curriculum according to the functioning level or understanding of the learner but this should be closer to the main regular school curriculum as much as possible for children who are in the integrated units (MOE, 2006).

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, there is a specialist curriculum for mentally handicapped children. According to the government, this is offered to learners with severe to profound mental handicaps in regular classes, special education units, schools for the mentally handicapped or home-based programmes. The home-based programmes are normally handled by teachers in the Educational Assessment and Resource Centres (EARC). The specialist curriculum focuses on activities of daily living (ADL), communication skills, perceptual training, and number skills (MOE, 2006).

The emphasis of the curriculum for mentally handicapped children is on communication skills. The specialist curriculum has recommended ways in which teachers can help learners with language difficulties. Teachers are instructed to help the children learn and use a preferred mode of communication, involve the children in language based activities both in and out of class and guide and counsel the parents on how the child can be included in language based activities in the home. The teachers are also instructed to keep proper records of the children's language difficulties and remedies, give the children time to respond to questions and instructions and seek the assistance of a speech therapist where available (MOE, 2006).

### ***Identification and placement of learners in special education***

According to the Special Needs Education Handbook for Quality Assurance and Standards (2006), educational assessment is a process that involves a systematic gathering of relevant information aimed at determining the functioning level of a learner, his/her strengths, challenges and educational needs. It also involves the development and implementation of the necessary intervention strategies. Assessment and placement of learners with special needs in education is usually done at the Educational Assessment and Resource Centres (EARC) which are run by the Educational Assessment and Resource Services Programme (EARSP). The EARSP falls under the Director of Quality Assurance and Standards. Each EARC is headed by an assessment teacher supported by assessment teachers who are trained in different disciplines of disability and a district committee under the District Education Officer. The policy directs that after assessing the children, the centre should have a follow-up activity for each child (MOE, 2006).

It is stated that the assessment of a child involves several persons including the child, the parent or guardian, a psychologist, assessment teacher(s), a physiotherapist, an ophthalmologist and a paediatrician. Others include the ear nose and throat (ENT) specialists, social workers, regular teachers, audiologists (or specialist teacher in assessment of hearing impairment) and a speech therapist or speech teacher (MOE, 2006).

The government policies also state that the purpose of educational assessment is to carry out screening and diagnostic educational assessment, document information on the learner for reference by others, establish whether a learner requires special needs education and make an educational plan for the learners. Other objectives of educational assessment include monitoring and evaluating the progress of a learner, determining the type of assistive devices and learning

resources required by the learner and recommending suitable placement and/or referral (MOE, 2006).

It is however noted that the assessment teachers posted to the centres (EARC) are not trained in assessment. They conduct their service with the knowledge acquired when they trained as special teachers. It is also noted that the assessment team in the district is made of assessment teachers and other professionals from other ministries like Health and Social Services. According to the Ministry of Education, this multidisciplinary approach is only conducted informally since it has not been formalised. To ensure appropriate assessment, the government has indicated that the directorate of quality assurance and standards shall conduct regular in-service and professional development courses for teachers deployed to work as assessment teachers in EARC (MOE, 2009).

#### ***Progress monitoring:***

According to the government, learners with SEN except those with mental handicaps, severe cases of cerebral palsy and the deaf blind, sit the same examinations as their non-disabled peers both at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (end of primary school) and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (end of secondary school) levels. However, the exams should be moderated to cater for the special learning needs occasioned by the handicap. For example, in a geography exam, maps are modified for candidates who are blind to feel and answer questions through touch. All learners with special needs in education are also given an extra 30 minutes per examination paper (MOE, 2006). It is also stated that barrier free transition of SEN learners through the various educational levels in accordance with their abilities should be facilitated. The government however recognises that the current examination system is limiting and rigid and denies the majority of learners with SEN and disabilities opportunities for higher education (MOE, 2009).

#### ***Physical resources***

The government indicates that enrolment of learners with SEN in educational institutions is very low. Statistics show that there were 23,459 pupils with disability enrolled in primary schools in 2003 with a significant increase after introduction of FPE. It is however noted that the various learning institutions are ill equipped and school environments unfavourable for learners with disabilities leading to a high dropout rate. Other problems include a lack of coordination among service providers and inadequate supervision and monitoring of special needs programs in the

use of available resources. It is recommended that the government should intensify monitoring, supervision and quality control in all schools to ensure that children with special needs are provided for without discrimination (MOE, 2009).

The government recognises that learners with specific disabilities and SEN require specialised educational resources at individual and school levels depending on the nature and extent of disability. The high cost of special equipment is hindering the government's goal to provide education for all in line with the global goal of UPE. This is aggravated further by the fact that the majority of children with special needs come from poor families which cannot participate in cost sharing where this is required. The government also recognises that appropriate teaching and learning materials for SEN are not adequate because most of the materials available in the market are mainly developed for the regular curricula and regular students (MOE, 2009).

The government also recognises that the needs of a learner with SEN are far beyond what the government provides. Under FPE in Kenya, every child in regular and special institution receives Kenya shillings (Kshs) 1,020 for tuition annually. This is far below the cost of education for a learner with SEN. According to the task force on special needs appraisal (2003), a learner with SEN requires assistive/functional devices, learning resources such as Braille machines, support services such as occupational therapy, mandatory medication such as drugs and environmental adaptations such as ramps. The taskforce recommended Kshs. 17,000 for a day scholar and Kshs. 32,000 for a boarder with SEN (MOE, 2008).

### ***Parent-teacher partnerships***

The SEN policy in Kenya recognises that parents and the community are important partners in the whole process of educating children with SEN. The parents provide primary care, security and protection to children with special needs. They also play a central role in the socialisation process of the child and inculcate life principles like spiritual and moral values for character development. Parents and the community are responsible for the immediate survival needs of the child from conception including proper nutrition, immunization, and growth monitoring. They ensure birth registration, safeguard children's rights and ensure children access primary services. Another important responsibility of parents and the community according to the policy is that they have a duty of early identification of disabilities, assessment and intervention. It is therefore imperative that parents and the community work in collaboration with the government to ensure

children and learners with SEN have equal access to quality and relevant education (MOE, 2009).

It has however been noted that most parents, families and communities are not involved in the education of children with SEN and disabilities. The SEN policy in Kenya recommends that parents, other learners and the communities should be educated on the needs of learners with SEN. Lack of awareness of learners with SEN by service providers, policy makers and the community is a common problem. The government regrets that in some cases, local communities are not aware of special needs programmes and EARC within their localities. Worse still, Ministry of Education and other government officers are not fully sensitized on SEN (MOE, 2009).

### ***Staff training***

The SEN policy in Kenya states that the success of special needs education service requires specialised personnel in terms of teachers and other staff. Insufficient number of trained teachers has an effect on teacher: learner ratios in learning institutions. It is also noted that some special institutions are lacking teachers while some who are specially trained are posted in schools where their services are not required. SEN teachers also do not have an established promotional structure or scheme of service and this could be the reason why many of them opt for other forms of employment after training (MOE, 2009).

Most teachers in Kenya who are in charge of SEN programs hold diplomas in special education. The few teachers who undertake an undergraduate degree in inclusive education work in the Ministry of Education offices. The SEN courses are run by the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE). The objectives of the curriculum for Diploma in Special Needs education are to train teachers with relevant knowledge, skills and techniques for identification and screening of learners with special needs, provide the trainees with broad knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to meet the needs of learners with special needs and train teachers with relevant knowledge and skills for teaching and management of learners with special needs. Other objectives of the course include preparing the trainees, the school and the community to be more responsive to the diversity of educational needs, providing trainees with appropriate knowledge and skills for management of special schools and integrated programmes and providing the trainees with appropriate skills to enable them to carry out basic research in special needs education (MOE, 2006)

The diploma in Special Needs Education course is designed to take 3080 hours. It is divided into 2 modules and teaching practice. Module I takes 1040 hours, module II takes 1560 hours while teaching practice takes 480 hours. Each teacher taking a Diploma in special needs education is required to attend a period of attachment in an institution providing educational or special needs services to learners with special needs in his/her area of specialisation. This attachment lasts for either 4 or 7 weeks depending on the area of specialisation. The activities during the attachment shall include identification of learners with special needs, development and implementation of an Individualised Education Plan. The attachment is assessed internally by training institutions (MOE, 2006).

The government recognises that resource mobilisation is imperative for the success of SEN services. Human resources required include specially trained teaching staff, support staff such as teacher aides, professionals in assessment, sign language interpreters, note takers, counselling psychologists, paramedics and medical specialists, social workers, parents and the community as a whole. The government indicates that it is providing required specialised teaching staff, albeit challenges faced in having required numbers and that there is need for teachers in regular schools to be in-serviced in SEN to ensure inclusive education is mainstreamed (MOE, 2009).

The next section will present evidence from observational data.

### **Observational data**

All the children in this study were labelled as having mental handicaps (MH) although some of them had accompanying physical and medical needs. As indicated in chapter 5, observations were carried out in inclusive settings where children with mild SEN learnt together with their nondisabled peers, in special education units for those who were labelled as severely handicapped, and out of class sessions where all the children played together. The purpose of the observations was to get a picture of the learning environment in terms of physical facilities, level of staffing and inclusive practices and not to examine the learning process. This was because this thesis was concerned with the perspectives of stakeholders. The next sections will report on these three aspects.

### ***Physical facilities***

The physical facilities such as buildings and books were considered. The children with SEN whose special needs were considered mild shared classrooms with their nondisabled peers. In the classes, the children with SEN did not in most cases share desks and text books with their peers, they had their own. The teachers explained that this was in order to give the children special attention or that the children, both with SEN and regular, were not willing to share books and desks. The teacher in district B stated that the child with SEN in her class was physically violent and would hit others when in “bad moods” if they shared a desk or text book.

### ***Level of staffing***

In the inclusive settings, the teacher: pupil ratio was an average of 1:40 and no teaching assistants were available. There was no evidence that the presence of teacher assistants or a reduction in the teacher: pupil ratio would improve the learning environment as the classes were mostly orderly.

In the special education units, there was an average teacher: pupil ratio of 6 pupils to 1/2 teachers. In district A, there was one SEN teacher while in district B and C, there were 2 SEN teachers. In district B and C, 1 teacher exclusively attended the special education unit while the other was assigned lessons in the regular classes. There was no indication that the SEN teachers assisted the regular teachers in managing children with SEN in the regular classes.

### ***Inclusive practices***

As indicated earlier, the children with SEN in the regular classes had desks and text books to themselves while their peers shared. Although the teachers justified this action by indicating that it was a way of providing individual attention and dealing with behaviour issues, this clearly set the children with SEN as separate from their non-disabled peers. The teachers also indicated that the regular children did not want to share these facilities with the children with SEN. During out of class observations, the children with SEN were allowed to play with their peers in the fields but there was evidence that there was no free interaction with each other. The children with SEN were either timid or too rough for the other children.

The children with SEN in the special education units attended separate classes and operated under a different timetable. This timetable did not seem to be followed, at least on the occasions I was in the schools as the children spent much of the time in unscheduled programmes or simply

doing “nothing”. There were no plans to re-integrate these children to mainstream classes or have them spend any learning time with their peers in regular classes. Their classes ended at lunch time (about 1pm) after which they went back home. During the rare occasions when they interacted with their peers (at break times), there was a great degree of unwillingness from both ends to play together. The children in the units also consisted of varying ages, from as young as 5/6 years to 15/16 years. They all learnt together and there was no designated next level for them.

There was evidence of either unclear or very low expectations of teachers on the pupils with SEN in the inclusive settings. Most learning was teacher-centred and the teachers used question and answer sessions to get feedback from the pupils. During these sessions, the children with SEN never raised their hands to answer questions nor were they selected to answer questions. On inquiry, the teachers complained that the children with SEN did not answer questions correctly nor complete assignments given. The district B teacher commented after class:

He (boy with SEN) does not want to answer questions in class, does not finish work given and gets all sums wrong (maths lesson) but he always thinks he gets them right.

There was a kind of reluctance by the teachers to “push” the children with SEN to participate in the learning process. For example in district A, one SEN pupil stopped taking instructions from the teacher halfway through the lesson and the teacher did not intervene. Asked about it after the lesson, the teacher said,

That is normal. He can sometimes walk out of class. I don’t like to push him too hard. I would just let him walk out.

Overall, there was a feeling that increased resources, whether physical or human, would not significantly improve the quality of learning for the children with SEN in these schools. The regular teachers seemed to be “keeping” the children with SEN in their classes without clear plans or expectations. Those children in the special units operated like they were in a special school within a mainstream school.

The next section will explore the disconnections between the various stakeholders who participated in this study.



## **Disconnection between government officials/departments**

Actually these people (quality assurance and standards officers) are not aware of what is being done in SEN...It is their responsibility but they do not have the knowledge to assess what is going on in the SEN classes. They cannot advise the SEN teachers on their work because they do not know. The inspection also happens rarely, this year we have been out I think once... [CSC].

### ***Lack of confidence in and support for each other***

In this section, the disconnect that will be reported is that between the SEN coordinators on one hand and the other arms of the district education office notably the department of quality assurance and standards, the district education officer and the ministry of education headquarters. The SEN coordinators in this study talked about their role as being responsible for issues of SEN in the district. According to them, one of their responsibilities was to organise seminars for parents and teachers on issues of SEN. The officers were also expected to visit schools and give advice to teachers and parents, tasks they said were hampered by lack of resources. In relation to his role, one of them said:

Organise seminars for teachers and parents. It is not easy to organise seminars for parents due to lack of resources for example transport means [ASC].

The SEN coordinators complained that their recommendations on the education of children with SEN were not taken up by those in authority. One coordinator who had been appointed to be in charge of a region to adapt the curriculum for children with SEN did so but his work was not implemented:

I adapted the curriculum for the region and sent a copy to Nairobi (Ministry Headquarters) because I was made in charge. You see someone told me it was good work but nothing has happened [CSC].

The SEN coordinators stated that they did not have confidence in managers of schools for children with SEN. The coordinators cast doubt over the training of those in charge of SEN programmes right from the district to the ministry headquarters:

Last time I was at a rehabilitation office, I was trying to talk with the manager; I was surprised the manager didn't have much knowledge about special education. He was qualified with a Bachelor of Education degree but not qualified in special education. I felt that he was not the right person for the job. Even in the Ministry, someone managing us is not qualified in special education [CSC].

Another issue of disconnection between the government officials was related to quality assurance and standards. The SEN coordinators stated that the quality assurance and standards officers who were responsible for issues of quality in education did not have the skills to supervise the education of children with SEN. They indicated that the quality assurance and standards officers were not trained and had no interest in the area of SEN:

They do nothing. They should be trained on issues of disability. They are not trained. Those trained have no interest in SEN. They have a negative opinion. They want SEN teachers to teach other classes in schools [BSC].

The issue of inability to inspect schools that catered for children with SEN was raised by the quality assurance and standards officers themselves. The officers agreed that they were not trained in SEN and therefore did not have the skills to inspect schools with children who had SEN:

I can say we don't have adequate skills. There are certain cases like mentally handicapped; it becomes a very big challenge to quality assurance officers because that one requires a very serious special needs person to be able to understand [BQS].

The quality assurance and standards officers indicated that one of their responsibilities was to monitor the process of learning in the schools:

Our role as the quality assurance officers is to ensure that there is quality teaching and learning in our schools [BQS].

However, when asked about how the progress of children with SEN was monitored, the officers said that they were not able to tell how it was done:

I feel in this area I may not be able to give you a proper answer...about progress monitoring, because as I have said I also find it difficult to understand how it is done [CQS].

The SEN coordinators complained that children with SEN were blamed by the education office and teachers for the poor performance of schools in national examinations:

They are complaining that the district performs lower in national examinations because of the rising number of children with SEN sitting for exams. I have even been asked by the DEO (District Education Officer) about the same [CSC].

The issue of performance in examinations was also raised by the quality assurance and standards officers. They indicated that due to competition among schools, children with SEN were likely to be excluded from regular classes:

Schools are complaining that performance normally goes down in schools where there are children with special needs. They cannot compete with other schools because these ones (children with SEN) will pull the mean of the school down...So most of the school head teachers will prefer to keep the normal children who can give them good grades to warrant promotion[BQS].

The SEN coordinators complained that the officers at the national office did not implement recommendations on how to improve the education of children with SEN. A SEN coordinator gave an example of a course he and other professionals attended abroad in order to give recommendations to help streamline the practice of inclusive education. According to the officer, their recommendations were not taken into account:

I was among the 29 people who were sent to Denmark by the government to attend a course on inclusive practices. We were to advise the government on how to implement it...and made very good recommendations. When we were waiting for implementation, do you know what the government said? The treasury did not have enough funds... [CSC].

Another issue that was raised in this study was to do with progress monitoring of children with SEN. According to the SEN coordinators, the officers in the ministry of education head office were reluctant to regularly review reports from the districts:

We used to make and send comprehensive reports to the head quarters every month. The government people in Nairobi (ministry head office) said it was too much and that they did not have time to read the reports every month. They said we send the reports every term and then later said we send annually. Finally the monitoring is not effective [CSC].

The SEN coordinators indicated that the government allocated extra funding for children with SEN. The coordinators complained that this money was not spent in a way that benefited the children. According to the SEN coordinators, the head teachers found other projects more important and that they could not monitor this expenditure due to lack of funding:

As I said, the money is being used in other projects which they (head teachers) feel are more important in the schools. We try to make a follow-up but you know the government is not facilitating us [CSC].

The SEN coordinators in this study said that it was their responsibility to facilitate the process of assessing children for placement in special education. However, the SEN coordinators regretted that some assessment was done in schools by the teachers although that was not procedural. The coordinators indicated that the head teachers by-passed them to present a list of all children with SEN to the district office in order to receive funding:

If a child is in the same school, the teachers can do placement. This is not procedural as any placement needs placement consent. The teacher can be in trouble if he is sued...In the office, I have records of those children who have passed through my office but not those who have been identified locally. However, the head teachers must present a list of all children classified as having SEN to the ministry of education for purposes of receiving money allocated for them[ASC].

Another SEN coordinator confirmed this situation by indicating that some children were placed in special education at the school level without assessment:

When I took a surprise visit to schools, I found out every school had more children than I had assessed. This means there is placement going on in the schools without proper assessment [CSC].

In this study, the SEN coordinators and the quality assurance and standards officers held different perceptions on important issues such as the nature and delivery of the curriculum. The SEN coordinators were critical of the available curriculum stating that it was not sensitive to the local needs of learners. They felt that the curriculum should be tailored to reflect the unique activities that were prevalent in local areas:

You cannot have a national curriculum for independence because it is different for a child who needs to be independent in Nyamira (a district in Kenya) and needs to learn farming and say a child who needs to be independent in Luoland (lakeside region) who wants to do fishing as an income generating activity[CSC].

When asked about their role, the district quality assurance and standards officers said that it was their responsibility to ensure that the curriculum was implemented well in both the regular and SEN classes. However, the quality assurance and standards officers had different perceptions about the curriculum. One of the officers felt that the curriculum was relevant and had been customised to suit the needs of various learners:

The existing curriculum has been customised to suit the specific disabilities that the children are having [AQS].

Another quality assurance and standards officer stated that the curriculum did not cater for the individual needs of the learners:

There are some difficulties in those children coping with the curriculum because it is supposed to be taught to the normal children...It does not cater for the individual weaknesses of those children [BQS].

The third officer stated that although he had not been to a class where children with SEN were taught, he thought the curriculum was adequate and catered for the needs of the children with SEN:

I have not as at now monitored a class that special education teachers are teaching. So maybe I may not give a very good comment on this one but I think it caters for their needs [CQS].

There was also disagreement about staffing in the special education units. The SEN coordinators questioned the continued existence of some units and saw them as a waste of time as there were no facilities and that the children were following a regular curriculum with low staffing levels:

These children are of various levels but they are handled by one teacher. This is the same as keeping this child busy but not assisting that child much [CSC].

The SEN coordinators said that it appeared they were fighting to have children with SEN receive services that they deserved. In connection with staffing, the coordinators indicated that the district education officers were unwilling to support the education of children with SEN:

The DEO put pressure on the staffing officer not to add more special education teachers. After a serious war; I was able to improve the staffing [CSC].

### ***The home-based programme***

Some children with SEN in Kenya were said to be attending a home-based programme. According to the SEN coordinators, this was a programme where children were supposed to be followed up to their homes to ensure there was a connection between what they learnt in school and what was at home. It also served children who were not able to come to school for various reasons. According to the SEN coordinators, this programme was not functional because the government was not funding it:

For those who are not coming to school, the programme is not highly functional. Why? The government used to allocate funds for that. For the last four years, no funding [CSC].

During visits to schools in this study, it was noticed that children with SEN especially the ones in the units did not come back to school for the afternoon classes. When asked why this was the case, the SEN coordinators responded that the SEN teachers needed the afternoon time to attend to the home-based programme:

This is done to enable the SEN teachers attend to the children who are at home under the home-based programme and some of the children who may not have come to school for some reason [ASC].

This assertion was supported by one SEN teacher who however said that the programme was difficult to implement because the homes of the children were far from school:

There are times when we are told to go out for home-based visits and you know some of these children come from very far. So that is another challenge, travelling far, visiting them at their homes, money [BST].

Another SEN teacher agreed that it was hard to implement the home-based programme but gave a different reason, saying that the SEN teachers were overloaded with teaching mainstream classes as well as the SEN classes:

The head teacher and the ministry of education office are saying that the SNE teachers are doing less work and that they should be assigned more subjects in the regular classes. So you find that if you attend the SEN class up to noon, in the afternoon you are in the regular classes [CST].

However, another SEN teacher remarked that the home-based programme was going on well and that he visited those children at home:

According to Kenya we have this home-based programmes where we normally visit them at home for example I have got 5 at home. We have some who cannot move from home to school. We cannot communicate to them because of their mental in that case we normally talk to their parents by visiting homes [AST].

This position taken by this SEN teacher was in contrast with what was found out. During visits to the parents of children whose children did not come to school, I was accompanied by the teacher and it was the first time both of us were visiting the homes. Secondly, records from school showed that there were more children registered under the home-based programme than the 5 he was referring to. Both teachers and SEN coordinators however agreed that the home-based programme faced some difficulties in its implementation. When asked how the home-based programme was

contributing to quality education for children with SEN, 1 SEN teacher suggested that the children were better off boarding in the schools:

It is not contributing at all. In fact I think in my opinion, every school with a special unit should have a residential place for those children. We should have a dormitory where learners who come from within the environment can stay [CST].

The SEN coordinators also agreed that the home-based programme was not functioning well but they had to present a picture that it was operational in fear of being reprimanded by higher authorities:

But officially as a government official statement, we will say it is on because you don't say it is on, you will be told to pack and go you know, step aside [CSC].

The SEN coordinators complained that the district education office was spending money meant for programmes such as the home-based programme for other purposes. They stated that the education of children with SEN was given less priority. According to one SEN coordinator, SEN issues were allocated money after all other sectors:

When it comes to funding, they first fund secondary school education, then fund primary education and if there is any money left, they give to special education. Sometimes there is no money left so special education including my office doesn't get anything [BSC].

The SEN coordinators indicated that in order to get funding for SEN programmes, one had to put pressure on the education office by becoming more assertive and sociable:

Sometimes I am assertive. I invited the D.E.O to my office and told him that the department is not functioning well because we don't have the funding so can you fund? He approved some funding and told me he could not fund my lunches but he could only fund my travelling [CSC].

This section examined how the education officers/government departments directly linked to the education of children with SEN related to each other. There was evidence of confusion, lack of clarity and conflict between the government departments in regard to the education of children with SEN. The next section will examine how the officers/departments related to the schools.

## **Disconnect between government officials/departments and schools**

### ***Identification and placement of children in special education***

Interviews with government officers and teachers revealed that there was a lack of a healthy working relationship between them in the delivery of quality education for children with SEN. The teachers received less professional help and direction in monitoring education at the schools. One of the issues raised was about identifying and placing children in special education. It was understood and implemented differently in the schools. The head teachers indicated that they were aware the process should involve all stakeholders. When asked who was involved in the identification and placement of children in special education, one head teacher said:

The SNE teacher, the school management, head teacher even the staff...the parents, even the office (district SEN office) because we do send monthly returns [BHT].

The head teachers however stated that some assessment and placement of children in special education was done in the schools without involving the education office as required:

There are some parents who know very well that this child according to her age and the way she behaves she needs special attention. Then a parent has to come and say this one I don't think she is well. Then you assess and see where she belongs, or he belongs [CHT].

The SEN teachers also indicated that they were aware of the procedure for assessment and placement of children in special education. They all agreed that it had to involve the assessment centres at the district education office:

My most important role first is to identify them by calling education assessment officers to make decisions whether they continue with the other learners. Another thing is that you cannot separate them without informing their parents first [AST].

However, the SEN teachers stated that they also assessed children and placed them in inclusive or special classes:

Within the school if we have a parent who has come for example with a learner, we can assess them and place him in the regular class or special unit...after interviewing them, after giving them some questions, after assessing them, then we do placement[BST].

Another issue that was raised is regarding the children with SEN who attended mainstream classes. According to the head teachers, these children were identified as slow learners and given extra support with their education:



Normally we identify that they (children with SEN in inclusive settings) are slow learners but they are taught with the others. They are only identified by a teacher for remedial (extra) teaching when a teacher may feel they are weak [CHT].

The regular teachers also indicated that they could decide that a certain child needs to be placed in special education. This could be as a result of the child not performing or behaving like the “normal” children:

I have not known how it (placement in special education) is done but according to what I think, mostly, we use characteristics such as the physical appearance of a child, those ones who cannot be able to handle a pen, those who cannot even recognise letters or numbers from the black board and write and there are those who look absent minded in class [CT1].

The regular teachers seemed to think this was a good method of identifying children for placement in special education. The teachers however felt that sometimes they could be guessing regarding which children needed to be placed in special education. One of the reasons that they gave was the large class sizes in the schools:

I feel it is ok. It is a good method. However, sometimes we don't recognise them because of the number of children that we have in our classes. I think sometimes we are guessing [AT1].

The SEN coordinators indicated that the role of identifying children for placement in special education was officially assigned to the educational assessment and resource centres (EARC) under the district SEN coordinators. Despite the contradicting responses from the teachers, one coordinator stated that he was in charge of the process and it was working well:

Am happy with it because I own it. I am SEN coordinator. I assess these children, refer them to hospital, and collaborate with other stakeholders whom we call multi-disciplinary team. Then I give referrals. It is adequately taken care of. [BSC].

The position taken by the SEN coordinator was contradicted by the regular teachers. Asked what role the district coordinators played in the identification and assessment of children for placement in special education, the regular teachers stated that they (SEN coordinators) rarely came to the schools:

They don't come to help in identification. They don't even know them (children with SEN). We have never seen them in this school. It is us teachers who recognise them and then we tell the office (CT2).

The whole issue of assessing children for placement in special education portrayed a disconnection between policy guidelines, Ministry of Education officials/departments and the schools. According to the SEN teachers, lack of physical and human resources was a major cause of the confusion:

The problem is that there is wrong identification due to lack of personnel and equipment. Let us take a look at our district. The district SEN coordinator is a specialist in physically handicapped children but he does assessment for all types of disabilities. If the system was organised, you know we are supposed to get learners directly referred from the district level not the other way round [CST].

### ***Progress monitoring and quality assurance***

Another area of disconnection between the government officers and the schools was the monitoring of the progress of the education of children with SEN. The SEN coordinators complained that although they designed good programmes to be followed by the teachers, the latter were not willing to follow them:

I designed this (shows document) as a progress report form then sent it to the teachers to use to plan together with parents but when I tried to discuss it with teachers, they said they are doing the IEP(individual education plans) professionally themselves. That process they refused and because I don't have control over them, I find it to be a waste of time [CSC].

Some teachers in this study stated that they were worried about including children with SEN in their classes as this would affect the school's academic performance. This stemmed from the fact that the teachers' performance was viewed in terms of how the children performed in examinations. One head teacher said:

They (mainstream teachers) are normally very serious because their mean scores are low and normally don't like pupils who are scoring too low but they are only caught by circumstances they(children with SEN) are here, they cannot chase them away [CHT].

This idea was confirmed in interviews with regular teachers. When asked what challenges they faced in teaching children with SEN in their classes, the teachers said that these children scored low marks thus affecting the school's mean score:

One of the challenges we do face when we have a special case in class is very low performance because the children don't catch up with the rest so when you test them in an exam, they may get low marks bringing the mean standard score of the class down[CTF4].

The children in inclusive settings were assumed to be having mild special needs and could therefore function in the regular classrooms. However, teachers indicated that they did not expect them to perform as well as their non-disabled peers due to their needs. As a result, the teachers stated that they would discourage such children from sitting for the examinations. One head teacher said:

Like now there is one whom we called the parent...the kid cannot even sit for KCPE (Kenya Certificate of Primary education exam) because the kid cannot even write the name. So we advised the boy. The boy looked quite energetic. We advised the parent to take him for vocational training and the parent accepted... [BHT].

The issue of monitoring the progress of children with SEN was also raised by the head teachers. They said that they found it hard to describe the progress of these children:

Like now we normally conduct examinations but we have never given them exams. But maybe their teacher has got some skills because I can see them writing and then their work is being marked but the level is what I will also go and find out [CHT].

The head teachers in this study lamented that the quality assurance and standards officers who were responsible for the inspection of schools rarely came for inspection and when they did, they did not offer helpful information regarding the education of children with SEN:

Actually they rarely come and when they do, such classes are ignored. I have never seen anybody commenting on the special needs education. And even when they come because they are not skilled in that part, they have never assessed... [CHT].

This position was echoed by the SEN teachers who stated that they received little help from the quality assurance and standards officers as the officers did not understand issues of SEN:

This one (quality assurance and standards) is bad because we don't get much help from them...the district quality assurance and standards officers are not helpful. They don't know what we are doing [AST].

Another dilemma that was pointed by the head teachers was concerned with transition of children with SEN from one level of schooling to another. The head teachers stated that they were not sure about what transition to the next level meant especially for those children in the special education units:

Which class do they belong to and where will they end to? That one has been left a question for me to wonder and I was about to go to the officer and ask: which class are we going to level these ones? Is it class one, class two, if they are left like that, how do we monitor them, do we keep them here forever?[CHT].

Another issue that showed the level of disconnection between the ministry officials and the schools was in relation to learning schedules for children with SEN. It was noted that in the three schools in this study, children with SEN especially those in the special education units finished classes at noon and did not come back for afternoon classes. When asked about this, the teachers and officers at the district gave various explanations. One of the explanations was that the children were not able to stay in school the whole day. The teachers were however unable to state explicitly whether the finishing of classes for children in the units at lunch time was a government or school decision. One SEN teacher said:

This one is both government and school. The school thinks that these learners cannot learn anything so that when they are in school, they are just given less activities. You find them moving around here looking for food or just moving from class to class. There is no policy, no timetable [CST].

Another area of conflict between the schools and government departments in the districts was about whether SEN teachers should teach regular classes as well. The SEN coordinators felt that SEN teachers should only teach SEN pupils. The SEN teachers held the same opinion. The SEN teachers complained that they were given lessons in the regular classes. One of them said:

The head teacher and the ministry of education office are saying that the SNE teachers are doing less work and that they should be assigned more subjects in the regular classes. So you find that if you attend the special unit up to noon, in the afternoon you are in the regular classes [CST].

The SEN teachers also felt that the government officials reported issues of SEN in a way that was not appropriate. They felt that the reporting was done in a general way instead of targeting what was helpful for these children:

I think this monitoring is not effective. These are special learners and their progress should not be reported collectively. The reports are written collectively for example that they (children with SEN) don't have physical facilities when some of them don't even use the physical facilities [CST].

### ***Resources***

The schools in this study blamed the government for poor services for children with SEN. They accused the government of irregular disbursement of funds meant for the education of these children. When asked about the adequacy of resources to support the education of children with SEN, one head teacher said:

It is less, insufficient. First, it is not even regular. You see the first disbursement was in the year 2007. They gave us Kenya shillings 48,000 and then another payment last year (2009) so that is two years. How do those kids survive in between there? [BHT].

A shortage of staffing was also an issue that was raised by the teachers. According to the SEN coordinators, one of their duties was to ensure that each school serving children with SEN had a SEN teacher. As indicated earlier, there was what one SEN coordinator referred to as a “battle” between the district education officers in regard to posting of SEN teachers to the schools. The head teachers also felt that the staffing levels were a problem. One of them said:

You see that the number of teachers is bit small. According to their curriculum, a teacher is supposed to have 4 children. Now they are more than 4 so they need another teacher so that they can be assisted well [CHT].

### **Summary**

The evidence provided in this section shows that there was a clear lack of coordination between the schools and the relevant Ministry of Education departments at the district office in regard to the education of children with SEN. The policy guidelines such as identification of children with SEN, learning schedules, quality assurance and standards and resourcing were understood and interpreted differently by the schools. The next section will examine how the SEN teachers related with the regular teachers in the schools.

### **Disconnect between SEN teachers and regular teachers**

There was evidence in this study that even within the schools, there was some tension between the SEN teachers and the regular teachers in regard to the education of children with SEN. There was a feeling by the regular teachers that children with SEN were a responsibility of the SEN teacher (s) in the schools. Indeed the government officers who were interviewed confirmed that they would make sure each school which had a special education unit had a trained SEN teacher. When asked about his specific role in the education of children with SEN, one SEN coordinator said:

Ensure each school with a unit has a qualified teacher [ASC].

The head teachers also preferred that all teachers be trained in SEN:

We need more to train yes, because even the regular teachers they also need to be trained. This is a special talent. You see we are just trained as teachers but we have got to be trained on how to handle special cases [CHT].

There was evidence in this study that the idea of special teachers was driving a wedge between the SEN and regular teachers. There was a feeling among the SEN teachers that they were “experts” and had responsibility over children with SEN. One SEN teacher said:

Let me say that the knowledge (from taking SEN courses) has helped me handle learners with SEN much better because I can now go to details and go to individual cases unlike these teachers (regular teachers) who say that this is a problem...especially one of the teachers says that we want to start a special school here [CST].

The SEN teachers also indicated that they did not want to teach in the regular classes. They felt that it was extra work to teach in the special units and then be allocated more lessons in the regular classes:

There are times when I used to be given lessons in the upper primary classes. It was hectic. So I talked to the head teacher and she understood-I was relieved [BST].

The SEN teachers complained that the regular teachers did not see the education of children with SEN as their responsibility. It was felt that the regular teachers did not value the work of the SEN teachers and “threw out” children with SEN from their classes. One SEN teacher said:

You find that other teachers don’t like them in their classes...teachers sometimes throw them out of class. The work I am doing is not seen as that important so the school does not value my work. They don’t see the importance of these children. They give me little time to teach them [AST].

The SEN teachers also complained that when they were not in school, the regular teachers accused them of disrupting the school by leaving the children with SEN unattended. The SEN teachers said they preferred to ask the children in the special education units to remain at home when they were out of school. One of them said:

Like now when they see that we (SEN teachers) are not there, these learners are chased off, they are making noise, they are doing this and that, so the whole day they end up accusing us and saying that we have turned their school to be a mad school...so normally when we are not here, we tell these learners not to come to school especially those ones who are not inclusive [CST].

The SEN teachers attributed the lack of support from the regular teachers to lack of knowledge and negative attitudes. They lamented that even the head teachers had no knowledge of SEN. One SEN teacher expressed:

Another thing is that the head teachers don't know what SNE is. My head teacher was asking me the other day what the initials SNE stand for. We can call it lack of knowledge [CST].

The idea that children with SEN were the responsibility of the SEN teachers was evident among the regular teachers:

I feel please these children are supposed to be taken to their special school and taught by their special teachers or specialists [ATF7].

Having examined the disconnection between the regular and SEN teachers in the schools, the next section will look at the disconnection between the schools and the parents.

### **Disconnect between the schools and parents**

There was evidence from interviews with parents that there was poor communication between them and the schools. The parents said they did not know what progress their children were making in school because they received little information. This was especially for those children who were in the special education units as expressed by these parents:

I have never seen any result from any examination/test...My son can come home with an exercise book with nothing written on it [CP3]

There are no ways I can know about his progress because he cannot read, write or do anything that the other children can do [AP1].

Some parents indicated that even if records of performance were to be sent home, they could not make a difference in what they knew about the progress of their children. This was because reports sent home at the end of each term by teachers indicated the marks scored in subjects and the overall rank of the child as compared to others in the class. Because children with SEN were likely to perform poorly as compared to their peers, this was unlikely to be helpful to the parents. One parent said:

She brings a report card (record of performance) home but I am not aware of the contents/what it says. I don't think the report card is helpful because it cannot reflect what the child should learn. The report card is about whom was number what in class and my daughter will be the last one [CP2].

On the other hand, teachers blamed the parents for focussing on the wrong parameters of achievement for their children. The teachers argued that parents seemed to measure learning progress in terms of academic achievement. One SEN teacher said:

The problem is that parents are only concerned with academic achievement. They want their children to know how to read and write, know how to do mathematics...they come and complain that their children do not know even the meaning of English words "mother" and "father". It is hard to explain to the parents what we are trying to achieve with their children [CST].

According to some parents, the teachers did not invite them to school to discuss the education of their children. Those who were invited to school said they did not attend because they were busy at home. Some of them said:

I have never been called to school to discuss about the education of my child [CP1].

They call us to school to discuss about the child's education but many times I don't attend because there is too much work at home [BP5].

Many parents in this study said they did not know what their children were learning in school. They did not also know what level or class their children were operating at. One parent said:

I have not been to his class to see what he is taught but I think he attends the special class and sometimes joins the normal class [AP5].

The teachers however blamed the parents for not being concerned with the education of their children. The teachers felt that the parents did not get involved in the education of their children. One head teacher said:

You know entirely these children are left with us, we carry the burden. You know the parent is just at home [CHT].

Another area of potential partnership between parents and teachers would be the home-based programme. There were some children who were not able to come to school for various reasons. As indicated earlier, the SEN coordinators and teachers said that the programme was non-



functional. This was also confirmed by parents whose children were registered under the program. When asked what programme her child was following at home, one parent said:

There is no specific programme that my child is following. I have never come to school to see the teacher about the learning of my child. I have been here once or twice when visitors like you want to talk to us but not to see the teacher [BP8].

Teachers however agreed that the home-based programme was an area of potential partnership, one that could enable the parents get involved in the education of their children. One regular teacher said:

The home-based programme can be beneficial...it can enable the parents receive information...most of the parents are not informed on whether these children need to go to school. The programme can also enable the parents establish a good relationship with the teacher. Through this relationship, the parents will be able to learn how to handle their children [CT1].

Parents in this study were curious to know what their children could do because they felt that their children were not able to benefit from schooling. They said that they needed to get some information and direction from the teachers. Some of them said:

I don't see my child learning anything. I would like the teachers to tell me that my child is not able to do well in class and that I should find something else that she can do [BP2].

May be one teacher could be coming at home to tell us how to help these children [BP5].

The SEN coordinators were also of the view that teachers should visit the parents at home and give them advice on how to work with the children:

What I mean is that we have asked our teachers that for those children who are in inclusive education settings, they should find time to visit the children at their homes and probably give guidance and counselling to the parents [BSC]

There was also a feeling among the parents that educating their children was the responsibility of the teachers. Parents felt that it was the teachers who had the knowledge to know what the children needed to learn:

My daughter is attending class 4. That is the class she has chosen to be in. I agreed with the teacher that it is alright. I have given them (school) the child to teach. It is them to know the best way to do it [AP2].

Despite the absence of meetings and regular contact, the parents had confidence in the teachers and trusted the judgments they made about their children. An example was in the identification and placement of children in special education. The parents were confident that the teachers were able to make decisions on the placement of their children in special education. Some of them said:

There was no assessment. The teachers decided [AP2].

I took him (child) to nursery when he was 6 years old. Teachers knew from our discussion that there was something wrong with his brain (intelligence) [AP4].

Some parents in this study also indicated that teachers made decisions and indeed placed their children in special education without consulting them. One parent was surprised when he went to school for parents' day only to learn that his daughter was in the special education unit:

I did not know about the child's disability until she was in class one. I just thought she was not doing well in class. When I went to her school one day, I was surprised when the teacher lined up children with SEN and she was one of them [BP7].

There was some skepticism by parents about how much teachers were able to accommodate children with certain levels of disability. The parents gave this as a reason why they did not take their children to school. This was evident where children had severe or both physical and mental disabilities. One parent said:

He has to be taken to the toilet and be assisted as he cannot even remove his own clothes. I don't think there is a teacher who was going to accept to do that [CP6].

Teachers in this study blamed the parents for the lack of partnership between them. The teachers stated that the parents had negative attitudes towards their children and therefore did not come to school or send their children to school. One head teacher said:

The parents of these children some of them have a negative attitude towards their children. They don't come to school; they don't bring them (children with SEN) to school [BHT].

The teachers also suggested that it was sometimes a waste of time to send reports about the progress of children with SEN to the parents. They gave reasons such as illiteracy suggesting that because the parents could not read or write, there was no need to send the reports. The teachers said that parents did not understand issues of curriculum and learning and therefore there was no need to involve them in such matters. One SEN teacher said:

We only involve the parents when it comes to matters related to health, matters related to either physical planning or basic needs like clothes and other things but in terms of learning and curriculum development, we don't involve them[CST].

Another area of misunderstanding between the parents and schools was about the details of programmes such as the home-based programme. The teachers indicated that the parents' expectations were different from what the programme actually provided. One head teacher said:

Like now they say that we should buy the child a sewing machine and everything not knowing that with us we offer the skills to help the child in his daily life. They expect that we should even build a house for them which is not possible [BHT].

The SEN teachers and head teachers both lamented that parents of children with SEN did not get involved in school committees where important decisions about how the school is run and issues to do with allocation of money for various projects were discussed. The SEN teachers blamed this state of affairs for the lack of sufficient funding for issues of SEN. They argued that because the parents of children were not in the committees to articulate the needs of their children, adequate funding was unavailable. One SEN teacher said:

The chairman of the school committee is a parent of a normal child, the secretary is the head teacher and the treasurer has been appointed from the regular children's parents. When you tell them you need some money, my friend you are just dreaming [CST].

However, the head teachers blamed the parents for not getting involved in the school committees. They stated that parents of children with SEN were appointed to the committees but refused to participate:

Like now they need a representative in the school management committee so we appointed one. She is not ready to attend. I don't know why [BHT].

There was evidence that the partnership between the parents of children with SEN and teachers was not ideal. The teachers seemed to undervalue the contribution of the parents because of their lack of understanding of curriculum issues. The teachers were of the opinion that because the parents were illiterate, they could not understand curriculum issues or what was best for their children.

## **Summary**

This section highlighted what appeared to be a disconnection between the various stakeholders that had responsibility over the education of children with SEN. There was a lack of confidence and cooperation between the various departments that were to ensure children with SEN received quality education. These included the SEN coordinators, the quality assurance and standards officers and the district education officers. The relationships between the government departments and the schools were also wanting. There was no clear dissemination of government guidelines to the schools. Relations between the schools and the parents were poor. There was little contact between the schools and the parents regarding the education of children with SEN. In schools, there was some conflict of interest between the regular teachers and SEN teachers over the education of children with SEN. Overall, there appeared to be a blame game between the various stakeholders with each taking a defensive position in a case of “it is not my fault”. What was however clear was that each of the stakeholders acknowledged poor education services for children with SEN without taking responsibility. The next chapter will examine how the participants in this study perceived disability and children with SEN.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS II: “THEY ARE NOT LIKE OTHER CHILDREN”**

Most of these children don't know how to read they are not even interested...when you are teaching they are doing their own things... it disturbs you since we are not trained for the same, I feel please these children are supposed to be taken to their special school and taught by their special teachers or specialists... last year when we went for sports, the child who was mentally disabled was about to beat another madam. I think that they should have their own school and far away from others (all of them laughing). No those people are very active sometimes [ATF7].

This chapter presents the theme “they are not like other children”. It is divided into three sections; “Perceptions about children with SEN”, “Inclusive education, integration and special education, which way” and “all they need is life skills”.

### **Perceptions about children with SEN**

In this study, many participants especially the teachers and parents appeared candid in their descriptions of children with SEN. In interviews and casual discussions, the teachers indicated that children with SEN were different from the “normal” children and therefore should be handled by specialists, be in special classes or be separated from their non-disabled peers. This was more apparent with regular teachers who felt that teaching children with SEN was problematic. Both teachers and parents regarded children with SEN as having low intelligence and therefore unable to access education like their peers. In particular, the parents felt embarrassed to have children with SEN. This section will be discussed under the headings “descriptions of disability and children with SEN”, “they need to be treated differently” and “their behaviour is hard to understand”.

### ***Descriptions of disability and children with SEN***

In this study, children with SEN were described using different terms. Although the terms used were different, they all seemed to have negative connotations, portraying children with SEN as being different in a degrading way. Children with SEN were described as being mad. One regular teacher said:

Actually we have one child, who looks like a bit mad, a bit disorganised [CT2].

Answering a question on what role children with SEN could play in the society as a result of receiving good education; another regular teacher used the term “dunderheads” to refer to children with SEN:

These ones whom we may call as dunderheads are at least changing because we expect this knowledge to transform them to be people in the society who will contribute at least a small effort in society development [CT2].

Regular teachers also used the term “insane” to describe children with SEN. Answering a question on how the progress of children with SEN was monitored and reported, one regular teacher said:

The reason is that when you look at how children are performing in your subject, you find that because of these children who are insane, they are bringing the mean score so low [AT2].

Children with SEN were also described as being abnormal and therefore should be separated from their peers. One quality assurance and standards officer stated:

When the number increases and it is discovered that they can form their own schools, we go and recommend for separation so that they can have their own school and the normal children have their different school [BQS].

The teachers in this study also felt that if children with SEN received good education, they may become “normal”. When discussing the progress of children with SEN, one head teacher indicated that the children were becoming “normal” as a result of attending school:

They say that they are now becoming normal. There are those ones who did not even communicate, but now you can see them smiling, they can talk and they can walk. Some may turn to be normal sometime [CHT].

The idea of becoming “normal” was also shared by the SEN coordinators. When asked about the goals of education for children with SEN, one coordinator indicated that the education should enable the children to lead a near “normal” life:

Goals of special education should be assisting the disabled children to lead a near normal life where the word near is strong because it is not possible they lead a normal life [BSC].

In reference to the curriculum, the regular teachers felt that children with SEN should have a separate curriculum. This curriculum according to them should be one that is different from the one used by the “normal” children:

The kind of curriculum we have now in our primary school system mostly caters for children who are normal. It has to be different from the one we use in our normal learning institutions [BT1].

SEN teachers in this study who were the “experts” because they were trained in the area of SEN also used the term normal and abnormal to refer to children with SEN. Commenting on how children with SEN were included in regular school programmes, one SEN teacher said:

If they are opening a book and find a good picture, they tend to uproot or tear it so the normal pupils may refuse to share books with them. In class, some learners who are normal do not want to sit with the special ones [CST].

The regular teachers also described children with SEN as being unable to learn or complete work that was given by the teachers. They gave that as a reason why the children were not progressing from one class to another:

Because they need to be taught in a special way whereby we realise if they are integrated in a class most of the time they don’t learn. That’s why you find them repeating a class several times; they can’t finish the work given by the teachers [BTF6].

The children with SEN were also described by the regular teachers as being unable to concentrate and compete with other children. They were described as unstable and anti-social:

Concentration is very low, they can’t compete with others, they get tired quickly and they can’t even write the exam, they can’t pass. They change moods and they like isolating themselves [BTF7].

The cultural beliefs about disability and children with SEN was another issue. Some felt that the birth of a child with a disability was a result of a curse or witchcraft. One teacher said:

As teachers we should talk to those parents of these children with SEN not to take these children of theirs as a curse. Some of them think it is a curse and some think that its witchcraft [BTF3].

Parents in this study lamented that their children were different from their peers. They stated that their children were in lower classes compared to their age mates and performed poorly in class tests:

It is very hard because at his age, he should be in class seven [BP4].

The parents also indicated that their children had lower intelligence than their peers. They used local terms such as “*omongongo*” (lacks direction), “*omoriri*” (silly/stupid), “*amongo abungogete*” (non-functional/insufficient brains) and “*riochi*” (foolish) to describe their children. They said that their children went to school because other children went to school but not to learn. One parent expressed:

They call my child “*riochi*” (local word for foolish/stupid/silly). I tell them, “why do you call my child foolish, I know she is foolish” [BP2].

The parents also described their children as being burdens and unhelpful. This was because the children could not participate in basic domestic chores in the home. One parent expressed:

They should be able to sweep the house, make their beds and not urinate in bed. Sometimes I feel like I am working for people who are just there, doing nothing, waiting to eat and sleep [AP7].

The SEN coordinators who were “specialists” in the area of SEN held similar perceptions. One SEN coordinator described children with mental handicaps as “great eaters”. When asked why he thought so, he stated that these children could not tell when they had eaten enough:

They have no thinking to stop at some point and say they have had enough. It is because of their intelligence which is below average [ASC].

Another coordinator expressed the same view stating that children with SEN had no limits as to how much food they ate. When asked why children with SEN were provided with food in school, he said:

Those who are mentally handicapped feel hungry very fast. I don’t know why. They can’t stand hunger for a long time. These children do not get satisfied with food quickly. They have no limits as to how much food they eat. They are not ashamed of eating too much. They don’t understand what they are [ASC].



Participants in this study appeared to concur that children with SEN were different from their peers. This difference was largely negative in that it depicted children with SEN as being lesser human beings or abnormal. Such descriptions or perceptions were likely to lead to different treatment of children with SEN. The following section will examine how the negative perceptions would influence the process of education for children with SEN.

### ***They need to be treated differently***

I feel that they are supposed to be set aside not in my class because sometimes they give me a hard time. They don't listen, they make a lot of noise, they are very dirty and they have a lot of mucus. Sometimes they don't take bath, they smell bad. Like mostly ladies become adults but they don't even take care of themselves. So I feel if they should be set aside so that we can work well with these others [AT1].

The teachers in this study attributed the lack of interest in the education of children with SEN by the parents to the notion of "unhelpfulness". The teachers stated that parents questioned what the children with SEN would help when they grow up. One SEN teacher stated:

They have a low opinion of their children. The question in their minds is to do with what the children will help them in the future [ASC].

The regular teachers expressed the same concern albeit in a different way. They said that the children with SEN will not be of much help in the future. When asked about what responsibility she had over the education of children with SEN, one teacher said:

I could but you know if you work with these kids, you know they are not of good help in future. If you are teaching the ones who are mentally handicapped, you know you won't meet them anywhere. You only meet and finish with them here because they are never going to move out of the village. The normal ones can get employment elsewhere in Nairobi (capital city). You can meet somewhere maybe they are big people (in good jobs) and they can help you in one way or the other unlike the mentally handicapped [AT1].

The SEN coordinators stated that children with SEN were discriminated against. They argued that the education of children with SEN was given less priority in planning and funding. When asked why the process of identifying children for placement in special education was not done appropriately, the SEN coordinators laid blame on lack of funding:

Even the government is playing a greater part in spoiling special education. When it comes to funding, they first fund secondary school education, then fund primary education and if there is

any money left, they give to special education. Sometimes there is no money left so special education including my office doesn't get anything [CSC].

The SEN coordinators also stated that even when the little or irregular funding got to the schools, it was diverted to other use. They stated that this stemmed from a perception that spending money on the education of children with SEN was a "waste of money":

The teachers actually misuse this money. Instead of purchasing what is supposed to be purchased for these pupils, the money is converted to other projects for example classes for other children...other projects which they feel are more important in the schools [CSC].

The parents in this study were also of the view that their children should be separated from the non-disabled children. They felt that their children could benefit from a separate education setting:

These children (with SEN) should have their own school with things like playgrounds adapted to their needs [BP4].

Another area in which children with SEN were treated differently is assessment for placement in special education. Some parents in this study felt that it was not necessary to have their children assessed because the children were evidently disabled:

My child is evidently disabled so there was no need for assessment. She talks in a disorganised manner [BP1].

The teachers in this study stated that children with SEN were given nicknames by the school community. The regular teachers acknowledged that these nicknames or labels influenced the behaviour of the children. During a focus group discussion, one teacher said:

Sometimes we call them names...there is one who says "chimchim" (makes sounds because of improper speech) we call him "chimchim" isn't it? (some teachers say yeah) and he knows he is a special child sometimes he wants to develop well but because of the name we are giving him and the way we are treating him, he calls himself special [ATF7].

The regular teachers also indicated that they had low expectations of children with SEN. As a result, they confined their teaching on the notion that children with SEN could only learn "life skills" They attributed this perception to negative attitudes towards children with SEN:

It means I try to bind myself within a small area instead of expanding maybe, we can even expand beyond writing, number work or even those who can do speaking [CT2].

Although some of the children with SEN in the education units were ten years and over, the regular teachers said that they treated them like children beginning primary school or in lower primary school:

We treat them as those ones of class one two and three (lower primary). I think they get tired quickly. Their life is like that but if it were my wish, they could have mattress like the small kids in town nursery schools so that they rest a bit then they go out for games [BHT].

The idea of separating children with SEN from their peers was shared by the quality assurance and standards officers. They stated that they recommended the separation of children with SEN from the regular classes:

When the number increases and it is discovered that they can form their own schools, we go and recommend for separation so that they can have their own school and the normal children have their different school[BQS].

Another quality assurance and standards officer held the same view. He suggested that in order to improve the quality of education for children with SEN, there should be special institutions for them:

In order to improve the quality of education for children with SEN we should come up with some kind of centre for special needs. We can have one centre where the hearing impaired, the visually impaired and all these others basically can be accommodated in one unit [CQS].

This perception was shared by regular teachers who also advocated for exclusion of children with SEN. It was their preference that children with SEN should be taught separately by specially trained teachers:

With me I feel this should be given a different institution not to be mixing with the others. Two, the personnel should be trained to be of big help...like the mentally disabled ones should be put together [ATF1].

The quality assurance and standards officers stated that due to pressure to perform well in national examinations, children with SEN were being excluded from regular schooling. This was because the presence of children with SEN in regular schooling lowered the overall grades of the schools. One quality assurance and standards officer said:

We are now trying to remove the issue of integration in most of the schools because of performance. Schools are complaining that performance normally goes down in schools where there are children with special needs. They cannot compete with other schools because these ones (children with SEN) will pull the mean of the school down [BQS].

The issue of examinations and consequent competition was voiced by the teachers as well. They indicated that they had the children with SEN in their classes or schools because they were forced by the system. One head teacher said:

Actually they (mainstream teachers) are normally very serious because their mean scores are low and normally don't like pupils who are scoring too low but they are only caught by circumstances they are here, they cannot chase them away [CHT].

The idea of separating children with SEN was also experienced in class observations and visits to the schools. For example during a class observation in one of the schools, one child with SEN in an inclusive setting was allocated a desk on his own while the others shared desks. When asked why, the teacher said that the child would become physically aggressive and hit other pupils when in "bad moods". Another common characteristic was that children with SEN in inclusive settings were not selected to answer questions in the classes.

In interviews with teachers and the education officers, there were mixed reactions in relation to how much the children with SEN interacted with their nondisabled peers. Some teachers felt that children with SEN would benefit from regular interactions with the nondisabled peers and even indicated that some of the children had "improved" through this interaction. However, other teachers felt that the children with SEN were discriminated against by their nondisabled peers. In observations that were done outside the classrooms when children with SEN played with their nondisabled peers, there was evidence that the nondisabled peers were treating the children with SEN in a different way. This took the form of laughing when the children with SEN did not act "normally" or just letting them play on their own.

Another way in which children with SEN were treated in a different way was in relation to staffing. The SEN coordinators indicated that each school that had children with SEN was allocated a specially trained teacher:

In every school, we are trying to make sure that there's a specially trained teacher who is responsible for the children with SEN [ASC].

The SEN coordinators in this study lamented that children with SEN especially those in special education units were not included in regular school programs. They said that the children were operating as if they were in a separate school:

I told him (head teacher of a school) that it is unfair. The special unit was very far from the normal classes... I even talked to the District Education Officer... It's as if it's a special school within a school. It is a neighbour...As they (children with SEN) eat, the other pupils are playing – the others don't know whether that is part of the school [CSC].

The head teachers indicated that children with SEN especially those in the special education units were allowed to attend any classes that they wished. While responding to a question about inclusive practices, one head teacher stated that the children with SEN were free to interact with their peers especially when their teacher was absent:

They move from class to class, they are comfortable with the other groups. At times you can see them in nursery, sitting with class of nursery, being taught by the nursery teacher especially when their teacher is not there [CHT].

There was evidence that the wider society also treated children with SEN different from their peers. When questioned if there had been reported cases of abuse for children with SEN, one coordinator stated that there had been cases of sexual abuse but when investigations started, the parents made deals with the abusers. The deals were meant to prevent the abusers from being prosecuted:

There have been cases of abuse. We had a case where a child was raped. When the teacher tried to question, the parents were making local agreements. I took it from here and made sure justice was done [CSC].

A similar incident was narrated by the head teacher of another school. She said that a girl child with SEN stopped coming to school because she was being harassed by boys on her way to school:

This other one refused to come to school because the boys were harassing her – you see she is now in adolescent stage and boys were harassing her on the way [BHT].

In another incident narrated by a parent, a child with SEN had been raped but the parent could not take action because of fear of harassment from the community. The parent said that the community members prevailed upon her not punish a “normal” member of the society because of one that was “abnormal”:

While coming from school one day, some boy sexually assaulted (raped?) her. I did not follow up with authorities because I feared the whole thing may turn against me. I did not take any action for fear of a negative reaction from the village/neighbours. They may say, “Are you taking our son to prison because of that “richara” (stupid/foolish/silly person) [BP1].

The SEN coordinators also complained that the teachers in schools did not treat the education of children with SEN like that of the nondisabled children. The coordinators expressed their concern that teachers did not keep professional records related to children with SEN although they were expected to:

Teachers are expected to prepare professional record sheets which they don't because they are engaged in teaching other classes [ASC].

The government officers in this study blamed parents for not facilitating the attendance of their children in school. They said that parents of children with SEN kept these children at home to work while their peers went to school. One quality assurance and standards officer said:

Teachers were saying that in most cases parents with those pupils who are a problem to them (parents) come very fast when school opens, in fact the first day they come and report. But those ones who are obedient, they overstay at home because parents like using them maybe to send them, help them work at home [BQS].

This situation was supported by information from the parents. They confessed that they indeed asked their children with SEN to stay at home and work for them. One parent said:

I also wanted him to stay at home and take care of the cows as I was sick and you know his father died [AP8].

There were cases of epileptic children who were also diagnosed with MH. In a visit to one of the children's homes, I visited a parent whose child had epilepsy and the parent expressed that she did not know how to manage her son's seizures. The parent explained to me that they had to hold onto the child when he was having a seizure so that the child could stop “throwing himself around”. The parent also stated that she was not willing to let her child go to school because people could not help him when he was having a seizure for fear of contracting the disease. This contagion belief was held in the local community.

There were other cases where children with SEN were economically exploited by their own parents. One parent explained that her daughter dropped out of school because she was placed in a class of very young and less intelligent children. The parent then stated that the girl was working as a house girl:

She is currently working as a house girl around the community, helping take and collect children from school, cooking and washing clothes [BP7].

Although the parents were not asked who got paid for this girl's work, the SEN teacher had indicated that the girl was actually taken out of school to work so that the parents could get some money because they felt it was useless for her to be in school.

The teachers in this study also accused the parents of neglecting their children. Commenting on parent-teacher partnerships, one head teacher gave an example of children who had been neglected by their parents to the extent that they had "*jiggers*" (small wingless insects which live as parasites in human feet. They are unsettling and can even affect the shape of the feet). She said:

The house of that parent where there were jiggers was so bad we wanted to arrest him. Are you seeing that? Those kids were cleaned and removed jiggers. Madam (SEN teacher) had to take them to be cleaned [BHT].

As expressed early, most participants in this study were of the view that children with SEN should be separated from the other children. When asked about the available facilities, teachers wanted separate facilities for children with SEN. The reason given was that the nondisabled children were not happy to share certain facilities with the children with SEN. One head teacher said:

We have not constructed latrines for them they use with the others...We have not had a big problem (with sharing of toilets) but other children complain that... (Name of pupil) and... (Name of pupil) they mess the toilets and they don't know how to clean toilets [CHT].

In the schools where this study took place, the children in the special education units were supplied with school uniforms and given food in school. This caused some concern and so the teachers and the officers at the district were asked why children with SEN had to be given food in school and not their peers. The common responses were that children with SEN liked to eat, felt hungry so quickly or were hungry all the time. One head teacher said:

You know these ones; they like to eat all the time. Even now you saw them preparing something for themselves, so they like eating and without it, they want to move away from the school [CHT].

All the participants except the parents seemed to concur that children with SEN needed to be given food in order to be motivated to come to school. Although some teachers indicated that the other reason was that parents of children with SEN were poor and could not afford food or did not give their children enough food because they did not value them, there was no evidence from the parents interviews that this was the case. Although it was unanimous that children with SEN got hungry quickly or needed more food than the other children, there was no explanation as to why the participants held this view. One of the head teachers who said confidently that children with SEN felt hungry quickly confessed that he did not know why:

I have not established the problem clearly but I think it is important that they get some food because they easily get hungry [CHT].

Another issue that was of concern was that children with SEN finished their classes and went home at lunch time. There were varied reasons given for this arrangement. The regular teachers said that the children with SEN got tired and hungry and had to go home and rest:

I think it is because the school cannot be able to give them lunch...Also I think they have played enough so they go home to rest. There is no resting place in school [BT2].

### ***Their behaviour is hard to understand***

In this study, participants across the districts expressed a lack of understanding or problems dealing with the behaviour of children with SEN. The quality assurance and standards officers for example said that they found children with SEN to be violent, uncooperative and needed training to understand their behaviour: One of them said:

You know these children are very hard to understand, they are very moody and also they are very arrogant when they refuse, they have refused. And you see with us we don't have that technical, those skills to understand their behaviour [CQS].

The teachers in this study, both regular and SEN also indicated that they found it hard to deal with children with SEN especially when their moods were bad. One SEN teacher said:



There is a lot of work more especially when their (children with SEN) moods are bad... They may fight, they may run out of class, they may decide not even to write, so it is a bit difficult [BST].

The teachers also expressed that children with SEN were disruptive in school. Their behaviour was described as interfering with the normal learning of the school. When asked about the challenges faced when teaching children with SEN, a head teacher lamented:

They can break school taps, can tear some books, because they don't know, they can jump over desks and break, they write the walls, they can enter a class when the teacher is teaching, they interrupt the learning because they can go touch the others when the teacher is teaching, they can even bang the door and at times they just go to the road [CHT].

The teachers also indicated that children with SEN needed to be followed from one activity to another because of their behaviour. As a result, some teachers suggested that children with SEN should be attended in a teacher: pupil ratio of 1:1. One SEN teacher said:

It should have been 1:1. Some people like (name of pupil) they need to be followed from one activity to another so if you put them in a group...there are 2 girls when you are talking in class (Name of pupil) is out, when you are instructing(name of pupil) is pinching the other[CST]

During class observations in this study, there was no evidence that the children with SEN in the units were behaving in a manner that required 1:1 staffing. It was not clear from the observations what role extra staff would play.

Regular teachers in this study expressed that they were finding it hard to understand and deal with the behaviour patterns of children with SEN. When asked about the challenges they faced when teaching children with SEN, they used terms such as “disinterested”, “disturbing”, “violent”, “funny”, “disruptive”, “unbecoming”, “temperamental”, “abusive”, “destructive”, “very rude”, “very rough”, “dirty”, “very naughty” and “immoral” to describe the behaviour of children with SEN. The regular teachers also stated that these children did not care about the “unacceptable” behaviour or its consequences. They felt that the children simply did what they wanted to do without care for procedure. One teacher said:

Sometimes they use abusive language. They feel comfortable when they are abusing. And even us teachers, they abuse us. Whatever they want to do at a certain time they do it. Even if it means removing clothes, they can remove clothes at any time. They don't bother which sex they belong [BTF7].

Regular teachers also viewed children with SEN as being undisciplined. They saw the children as influencing or encouraging negative behaviour in the schools as they could not be punished like their nondisabled peers:

These children are not disciplined and you know you cannot punish them like the normal ones. This can make the normal ones to question why you are punishing them and not the others. They feel they should be treated like the insane ones. That one affects the level of discipline in the school [AT2].

The issues around behaviour were not restricted to the schools. The parents at home also found difficulties with the behaviour of their children. This was more common with children who were physically aggressive. It resulted in some of the parents keeping their children at home:

My daughter stays at home because she becomes physically aggressive to other children and throws stones at them [BP8].

There was overwhelming evidence that children with SEN were described in ways that depicted them as different from their peers. Children with SEN were not seen as “normal” human beings. This perception resulted in a situation where the children with SEN were treated differently in schools and the wider society. They were seen as people who needed to live life in a different way. There was also confusion as the boundary between behaviour problems and SEN. Typical descriptions of children with SEN were behaviour related leading to the danger that behaviour problems may be equated to SEN. Given the assertion that children with SEN should be separated from the other children, the next section will examine how the doctrines of inclusion, integration and special education were given meaning in this study.

### **Inclusive education, integration and special education: Which way?**

But we have had several challenges because education in Kenya is a bit hypocritical. There are sometimes when we assume to be at a certain level, when we are far off. In any case, the government is pretending when we are talking of inclusive education ([CSC]).

As noted earlier, there was evidence that respondents felt and treated children with SEN differently. Parents, teachers, the wider society and the government officers seemed to prefer the separation of children with SEN from regular schooling. Children with SEN were seen as different and treated with less respect in comparison with their peers. In light of that, this section will examine the lack of clarity between inclusion, integration and special education. This section will

be presented under the headings “the government emphasis is on inclusive education” and “the home-based programme”.

***The government emphasis is on inclusive education***

Throughout interviews in this study, there was confusion as to what was being practised in schools as inclusive education, integration or special education. There seemed to be a difference between what was propagated as government policy and what the participants in this study either understood or preferred. The programmes and schedules in the schools in this study seemed to deliberately exclude children with SEN from regular schooling. Although it not possible to determine whether the regular teachers did not want the children with SEN in their classes, there was evidence that they had difficulties understanding and dealing with these children. The notion of “normal” and “abnormal” in regard to the differences between children with SEN and their peers served to justify the exclusion of children with SEN from regular schooling.

The SEN coordinators expressed that although the government was propagating an inclusive type of education for children with SEN, this was not practical. They indicated that the model the policy was propagating was foreign and difficult to implement in Kenya:

There are sometimes when we assume to be at a certain level, when we are far off. What do I exactly mean? When I trained for special education in 1991, we had a lot of lecturers but someone could teach you as if the set up was the USA or Britain because most of our lecturers were foreign trained [CSC].

One SEN coordinator narrated an experience where 29 officers including him were sponsored by the government of Kenya to study the practice of inclusive education in Belgium so that they could advice the government on its implementation. On their return, the officers made recommendations which were not implemented due to lack of funds:

When we were waiting for implementation, do you know what the government said? The treasury did not have enough funds. When we said maximum 35 children per class, they said maximum 55. They did not look at the reasons why we had made those recommendations [CSC].

According to the SEN coordinator, inclusive education was successful in Belgium because of superior resources which meant lower teacher: pupil ratio, a situation that Kenya could not afford:

They are doing better because if it is in regular classes, there is a maximum of 12 children in a class. If it is special education, it is 3 or 4 in a class. You cannot afford such a luxury here, you cannot afford the buildings, leave alone teachers and facilities [CSC].

The other issue is that the philosophy of inclusion seemed to have different understandings among the respondents in this study. One quality assurance and standards officer said that the education of children with SEN had developed from integration to inclusion and then special education:

We started by integration and now we have what we call inclusion which is a system where children are taken to normal schools. When the number increase and it is discovered that they can form their own schools, we go and recommend for separation so that they can have their own school and the normal children have their different school [BQS].

The SEN coordinators also gave different meanings of the term integration. According to one SEN coordinator, integration meant that children with SEN would use both regular classes and special classes:

These programmes are three: one is special schools, integrated and inclusive... When we talk of integrated here we mean the child will be given a humble time to attend a class for a few minutes and he gets back to the special needs class, he gets some socialisation that is psycho-social, he gets ideas on how to integrate or play about with other children in groups then he gets back to the unit [BSC].

Another SEN coordinator indicated that integration meant children with SEN would attend the same classes as the other children:

You know we have been having special schools to cater for all the children with SEN but now there is an integrated programme. They just get to class and learn with the rest [BSC].

The SEN teachers in this study recognised that there was confusion as to what system the children with SEN were going through. They suggested that there should be school-based policies to articulate clearly what children with SEN should learn:

This school should have a policy which would champion the needs of these learners. The policy should stipulate what and how these children should learn. The policy should state that these children should get the same services as the other children. Their programmes should not be seen as a waste of funds [CST]

The head teachers in this study expressed their confusion as to what inclusion meant for the transition of children who were in special education units. Responding to a question on how the progress of children with SEN was monitored, one head teacher said:

This is what I have been thinking about because, which class do they belong to and where will they end to? That one has been left a question for me even to wonder and I was about to go to the officer (SEN coordinator) and ask: which class are we going to level these ones? If they are left like that, how do we monitor them? [CHT].

Another issue that was raised by teachers in this study is concerning the purpose of inclusion for children with SEN. One SEN teacher stated that children with SEN could not be compared with their nondisabled peers and therefore inclusion for them was meant to make them feel part of the community:

There is no comparison with other learners and no exams. They learn life skills and separate teaching is allowed and they have a separate syllabus. Inclusion is meant to make them feel part of the community but not for academic purposes [AST].

The confusion around inclusion, integration and special education was also raised by the regular teachers. They suggested that there was need for a clear structure to indicate what these children should learn:

I would wish to say that one; there must be a good structure and programme in which the children are catered for. For instance, they should spell out clearly what they should learn...activities must be followed because if you have them and they are not followed then you are not going to achieve anything [CT2].

The issue of inclusion was also confounded by the existence of SEN teachers in schools. This situation caused some tension between regular and SEN teachers. The SEN teachers lamented that the regular teachers had a negative attitude towards children with SEN and did not see teaching these children as being their responsibility. One SEN teacher said:

There are some of our teachers who have a negative attitude towards our cause. Like now when you want to find out how the children (SEN pupils in mainstream classes) in various classes are doing, they are not ready to tell me how they are progressing because they feel that they are working for me to earn without working [BST].

This situation was confirmed by the regular teachers. They said that posting of SEN teachers to schools may make the regular teachers treat children with SEN as strangers:

Well because the government has trained the special needs teachers, if they are there, why are these children included in regular classes? That is my question [AT2].

### *The home-based programme*

The notion of inclusion was also contradicted by the existence of a home-based programme. Asked to describe the home-based programme, one SEN coordinator said:

There are two programmes; one there are children who are fully home-based and there are children who come to school but still need to be assisted at home[BSC].

There were varied understandings of the home-based programme and what kind of services it delivered to the children at home. One head teacher said:

Home-based? Those ones you can find maybe they are over-age. But the government has not really given us a hand to assist those ones who are home-based due to scarcity of funds because we are supposed to identify. So that you can support him/her. If it is the shoes which are a problem, you assist her bit like cost sharing so that the child looks good [BHT].

The head teacher in this interview identified “over-age” as one of the reasons why some children could not come to school. This was confirmed by the parents. One parent whose child had dropped out of school said:

My son stopped school because he became too old for primary school. He refused to go to school saying that he could not share a class with little children [AP8].

The head teachers did not appear to have a clear picture of what the home-based programme was. When asked to describe the home-based programme, one of them said,

I don't know much about this programme but I think it is the programme where teachers move round the villages to see those children who are not able to be here. I have never interacted with the teacher after she has gone out so that she can tell me the problems she encounters [CHT].

The SEN teachers also indicated that although they were supposed to direct the programme, it was not successful due to lack of funding. When asked how the programme was contributing to quality education for children with SEN, One SEN teacher said:

It is not very much functional because for one, we don't have the facilities which we can use especially the stationery. At the same time we don't have a clear guideline on what to do with these people. We are just trying to advice on life skills [AST].

When asked which materials/stationery that he required in order to make the home-based programme a success, the SEN teacher replied:

Things like files. We need files. We need materials on which we can prepare some good things like questionnaires and guidelines; where we can write reports for these children so that we know what we have done and what we have not done[AST].

The SEN coordinators also supported the view that the home-based programme was not functional due to lack of government funding:

For those who are not coming to school, the programme is not highly functional. Why? The government used to allocate funds for that. For the last four years, no funding [CSC].

The parents whose children were registered under the home-based programme expressed frustration, despair, fear and a lack of understanding about what their children could benefit from schooling or whether they could manage schooling:

This child has been unwell for a long time. He has not been able to sit or walk and that is why he has not been to school. I attempted to take him to school some time ago but because of the way he is...Who was going to work with him? Who was going to take him to school and get him back? He cannot walk or sit on his own [CP6].

The parents whose children were registered under the home-based programme indicated that there was no particular programme that the children were following at home. The parents also gave reasons why they were not allowing their children to come to school. One of them was concerns around the safety of the children:

Although my child is registered in the local school, there is no set programme for me or the teacher to follow at home. The teacher came home to tell me that the boy can come to school and that I don't have to pay any money. However, I am scared that the boy may not be safe/arrive in school and come home safely because there is a river between the school and home. I am also scared that the boy may become physically aggressive to other children [BP6].

The terms integration, inclusion and special education were not understood in specific ways by those who were interviewed. The result was practice that was not aligned to a specific ideology. The system seemed to be creating a distinction between two forms of education; one for children with SEN and a second for the "normal" children. The following section will examine what skills participants in this study felt were important for children with SEN.

### **All they need is life skills**

Despite all the disconnections between the various government departments over the education of children with SEN, the negative attitudes towards disability and children with SEN and the contradictions pitting inclusion against special education, there was one area where the participants in this study appeared to concur. This was to do with what skills children with SEN required to learn. The following section will examine what skills the participants felt were important, why the skills were important and how the skills could be acquired.

### ***Skills that children with SEN need to learn***

There was a general agreement among all the participants in this study that children with SEN needed to be independent. The parents were concerned that they had to remain at home and take care of their children which would deter them from going out to fend for the children. The parents were also worried that they had to provide for the children and in return receive nothing from these children. Other concerns that parents expressed included the children using public transport on their own, remaining home on their own, and travelling to school on their own among others. One parent expressed:

I would like the girl to become independent to help me and herself. She needs to get some skills to get into a job to help herself [CP1].

Participants in this study seemed to agree that the curriculum offered to children with SEN was not relevant. They felt that the curriculum was hard for children with SEN to grasp and that they should be taught different skills. One head teacher said:

In my opinion it is not relevant because it becomes so hard for them to grasp like the others (non-disabled) so to my opinion I feel they should be taught other skills like this art and craft (AHT).

This was supported by a SEN teacher:

Because most of these students don't write they need something to do things physically, some kind of art and craft because their brain will take them long to learn. I have one who cannot write but when you bring this physical thing, he starts touching it. (ASC).

The terms "life skills" and "daily living activities" were very prominent when participants talked about the skills important for children with SEN. The teachers talked about the children learning to



take care of their bodies, socialise with other members of the society and learn basic counting skills. One SEN teacher said:

What I think is good for them because they have special needs is to teach them daily living activities and in doing so when they go out they will be able to do things on their own (AST).

Overall, there was a feeling that the skills that children with SEN needed were to help them “fit” in the wider society and become independent. A SEN coordinator said:

Is to make them to be self-reliant in such a way that they can operate independently in the society. It is to equip them with daily living skills... In other words, they fit in the society in which they leave (2SC).

In the first set of interviews, parents were asked what they perceived as quality education for their children with SEN. Although the parents described what their children were not able to do for instance the inability to read and write, this appeared to be based on what was expected of all children attending school. Some parents said:

He cannot write although he is 16 years old (AP1).

She cannot read or write (CP5).

She has been in the nursery class for 5 years. She has not learnt to write even his own name (AP5).

In the second round of interviews, a set of prompts was developed to enable the parents think about what skills could improve the quality of life for their children. These prompts were divided into various sections, that is, self-care skills, domestic chore skills, skills for community living, skills for employment, communication and social skills, academic skills, motor skills and skills for “appropriate” behaviour.

In regard to self-care skills, parents indicated that they would have liked their children to be able to learn to take care of their personal care needs such as washing themselves, dress themselves, use the toilet independently and wash their own clothes. The parents were also worried that their children were not able to tell the difference between different types of food, could not eat appropriately and brush their own teeth and hair:

These children (parent had 2 disabled children) cannot wash their own bodies and cannot allow anyone to shave their hair... (AP7).

My son cannot wash himself or his hands. He cannot brush his hair or teeth. He uses the toilet (pit latrine) anywhere and we have to clean. He does not go to the toilet although I think he knows where it is (BP6).

This boy can brush his hair but needs someone to model. He can dress himself with difficulty but cannot do the buttons (CP6).

The teachers and district SEN coordinators also emphasised the importance of self-care skills for the children with SEN. They indicated that the children needed to be aware of the types of meals they ate. They also indicated that the children should be equipped with skills for self grooming for example going to the barber to have their hair cut:

They should be able to go to the barber and have their hair cut (CHT).

They can know about the manner of dressing, the idea of feeding, washing and toileting (ASC).

You know most of them don't bath. We have to train them how to be clean, how to wash themselves (AT1).

Parents in this study were of the opinion that their children should learn domestic chore skills. These are skills that would enable their children be of help while at home. They wanted their children to be able to prepare simple meals and wash dishes after meals, make their beds and sweep the houses, fetch water from the river and collect firewood. Parents also wanted their children to be able to take care of livestock, clear bushes in the compound to make them clean (boys) and help pick vegetables from the garden (girls):

At his age, this boy should be able to take care of livestock (feed cows, goats and sheep).He cannot do that at the moment. If you let him take care of the animals, he may leave them to eat people's crops or eat food that is left out here to dry (AP6).

She cannot cook any food. She tries to sweep the house but she cannot do it independently. I have been to the small garden with her and she cannot even help pick the vegetables (BP8).

The boy can get drinking water himself but cannot wash dishes. He cannot make his bed or sweep the house (CP6).

The teachers and SEN coordinators also felt that the domestic chore skills were important. They said that skills such as collecting firewood and water can enable the children to be supportive of their families:

Examples of skills include skills like fetching firewood and some household chores which they can do to support the family (AST).

They can be taught some cooking which will be important in their lives (BHT).

Another aspect of skills that was deemed important for participants in this study is skills of community living. The parents stated that they wanted their children to learn how to count and determine the value of money, know their way around the community, use public transport and recognise unfamiliar places. They also wanted their children to develop skills to determine socially acceptable behaviour and identify people by their names:

We can send him to the shops but he does not know how much change to receive back. If I must send him, I must give him the correct money. He does not know the cost of things (BP6).

He does not know his way around very well. I would like him to know his way around so that we can send him to the market (AP6).

He is not going out because we fear he may be knocked by vehicles. You see our house is very near the road (CP6).

The teachers and SEN coordinators were in agreement that children with SEN required skills for community living. They stated that they would have liked the children to learn to identify money and get/give the correct change when shopping and take part in community activities:

I think they need to be taught how to identify money, how to make change, how to give change, how to identify notes, coins and the rest (CST).

They should be taught on the good morals that are expected of them in the society and at the same time in the school (CT2).

They can learn to lead others especially in events such as flag raising or scouts (BSC).

Skills for employment were also identified as important for children with SEN to learn. This appeared to be directed more at the pupils whose age was beyond primary school although they were still registered as being in primary school. The parents in this study felt that children with SEN should be taught skills that could enable them find some kind of job. They identified jobs that such children could do as including carpentry, repairing shoes and radios, tailoring, farming and woodwork and other jobs such as poultry and working as cooks and grounds men:

I would like my child to be taught life skills like carpentry... (AP1).

He plays “embegete” (traditional music instrument) very well and they should have helped him towards that line but the teachers just wanted him to be in class with his peers (AP3).

I think if she gets training, she can do something like tailoring. It is something she looks interested in. It is something that she can manage because her brain is not very good (BP7).

She needs to get some skills to get into a job to help herself (CP1).

The teachers and government officers also supported the idea that children with SEN needed skills to enable them get jobs. They stated that the children needed skills to get into employment in various fields such as carpentry, tailoring and farming. They also felt that the children could also get self-employed in various fields:

Education can also help them start income generating businesses such as selling maize, groundnuts, etc (BST).

These children can do small activities like handcraft, carpentry, tailoring, building and construction... they can also do sewing and work with leather materials to make shoes (AHT).

If a child with mild MH comes from a family where there are zero grazing (rearing cattle for milk), this child is suited to tender for these animals very well. In that way, he becomes a very good farmer (CSC).

Communication and social skills is another area of significance that was identified by participants in this study. The parents wanted their children to be able to interact with other people in an “appropriate” way. They also wanted their children to interact with people even when they did not know them and show affection to and share things and space with family and friends:

I would like my child to be taught life skills such as socialising with people... (AP1).

I wish my child can learn to talk so that he can tell us what he wants, or if he has been bullied/abused, something like that (BP3).

He does not have friends because he just stays at home. I am telling you if there is a way this boy can be able to walk, go out there and play and make friends, I would be very happy. It is hard because nobody stays at home during the day and so he is all alone (CP6).

The teachers and SEN coordinators also expressed that children with SEN required learning communication and social skills. These skills would enable them interact with other members of the society and even start families:

Good education for these children is that which can enable them to communicate to the rest of the pupils (BTF3).

The curriculum must be different...they can be taught how to... socialise with others (BT2).

They can be given an opportunity to marry. I have had two students who married and have two clever children in high school (CSC).

Some parents also felt that their children should learn some academic skills. This included writing, reading, simple maths like counting:

She cannot read or write but she can count to 10 (CP1).

She needs to learn to read so that she is able to get/read directions if she needs to access community services (BP7).

I would like her to learn to count. This can help her in using money and to know the days of the week. She has a disease (epilepsy) which requires that we tell the doctor how many times she has had seizures. If she learns to count, she can do this on her own (BP8).

Although this was not prevalent, there are some teachers who felt that children with SEN should learn some academic skills especially writing and reading:

They should learn simple calculations like mathematics and communication skills so that when they are sent to some place, they can behave like the normal ones (CHT).

They can do some business because if they know how to count, they can count money (AT1).

Why can't they learn English? Don't you think there is a way they can learn English in their system? I think there are these common subjects like mathematics which we cannot do away with (BT1).

There were some parents in this study whose children had poor motor skills. These parents' priority was for their children to learn to walk. The parents said that the inability of the children to walk placed a great responsibility on the parents to physically do everything for the children:

These children can stay in the same place all day. They rarely move from where they are (AP7).

This boy cannot sit on the chair so he sits on the floor. He can walk very short distances. Sometimes we lock him in the house if there is no one at home (3P6).

I think they (children with SEN) should have something like a special field or special facilities for them to play with. Like my son, he is weak and cannot compete with others when running around (BP3).

Many parents in this study stated that they had problems dealing with what they felt was unacceptable behaviour by their children. Their common problem was dealing with the children's aggressive behaviour. They wanted their children to stop being physically aggressive, getting upset for "no good reason" and crying for long periods of time:

He (child) destroys his things at home when he becomes upset for no apparent reason (AP1).

My child has tempers. He cannot play well with others because he hits them... (BP4).

If he is upset with his mother, he can even take off the clothes that his mother bought him and throw them at her. He can also hit out. He can become physically aggressive (AP6).

The regular teachers in this study also felt that children with SEN should learn acceptable behaviour. They expressed their discomfort with the children's behaviour. They used words such

as disruptive, violent, abusive, temperamental, rough, rude, and naughty among others to describe the behaviour of children with SEN:

Some of them are not interested. When you are teaching, they are doing their own things...it disturbs you (ATF7).

They lose memory very fast. It is also easy for them to lose tempers (BTF4).

Sometimes we do harass these children because they may do something contrary to what we expect them to do. We normally treat them as the normal ones at times (CTF6).

The district quality assurance and standards officers also indicated that they found it hard to understand the behaviour of children with SEN especially those with mental handicaps:

You know these children are very hard to understand, they are very moody and also they are very arrogant. When they refuse, they have refused and you see with us we don't have that technical, those skills to understand their behaviour (CSC).

Having listed the skills that were perceived to be important for children with SEN to learn, the next section will examine why the participants felt these skills were important.

### ***Why these skills are important***

The participants in this study expressed various ways in which the skills learnt by the children with SEN would be beneficial to the children, their families and the wider society. One of the most important issues raised by parents was the inability of their children to communicate. Parents wanted their children to learn to "talk" so that they could for instance report if they had been abused or bullied. This stemmed from the fact that the parents were worried about the safety of their children in school or on their way to school:

I wish my child can learn to talk so that he can tell us what he wants, or if he has been bullied/abused, something like that [BP3].

It is hard to engage with him or know what he is thinking. He cannot even express needs or even ask for food if he is hungry [AP8].

Another challenge facing parents in this study was dealing with aggressive behaviour by their children. It is another reason why they felt that if their children could develop communication skills, they could say what was upsetting them instead of being physically aggressive:

I would like my daughter to stop being physically aggressive and throwing stones when she is upset. May be she can say things to us or other children when she is upset instead of throwing stones [BP8].

As stated earlier, the parents wanted their children to know the value of money in order for them to tell when they had been given the correct/wrong change in the shops. Many children in this study had little or no knowledge of the value of money and those who did could not use money in the shops:

I can send him to the shops but he cannot tell the right change. I have to give him the correct money otherwise a bad shopkeeper can give him the wrong change [AP8].

The importance of knowing the value of money was shared by the teachers. When asked what role the children with SEN can play in the society as a result of receiving good education, the teachers talked of the children engaging in some form of business:

They can do some business if they learn how to count money [AT1].

Another worry that was expressed by the parents in this study was that their children were not safe in the community. An example that was given is the use of public transport. The fear was that the children could not independently pay for their tickets, were scared of getting into vehicles or could not even come off the vehicles at the right destination. One parent who had two disabled children expressed:

They have used public transport only once when I was taking them to hospital. They were running away or holding onto people when they saw vehicles. Even once in the vehicles, they had to hold onto an adult. I decided I am not going to take them on public transport any more [AP2].

The parents in this study expressed disappointment that they were not able to share the joy of relating to their children, play with them and show love and affection for each other. The parents were frustrated that they were denied that kind of relationship. They therefore wanted their children to learn social skills in order to appreciate relationships:

This boy does not seem to show affection for anyone. I had an accident some time when a stick got stuck in my leg and there was a lot of blood coming out. He was here. He just looked and walked away [AP8].

According to the parents, one of the reasons why some children were not able to attend school was because they had poor motor skills. An example is a 14-15 year old boy (parents were not sure) who had never been to school. Although there was no clear evidence that the child's physical disability was in such a way that he could not walk, he had not been able to walk. The father expressed that he would like his son to be able to walk so that he could move around as the parents were forced to be checking on him at all times:

I wish he can learn to walk so that he can even leave where he is. He just stays here...I have a business down there but I have to come home all the time to check on him [CP6].

Some parents said that they had to lock their children in the house or tie them with ropes when there was no one in the home for safety reasons. This is why they wanted their children to know their way around the community and be conversant with safety issues

Sometimes we lock him in the house if there is no one in the home or around [CP6].

As I am here, she is tied with ropes in the house at home. If released, she runs away and gets lost and then it becomes hard work looking for her. This has happened before [BP8].

Another issue of concern to the parents in this study regarding safety was the emergence of motorbikes as a means of transport. They said that motorbikes had become a common means of transport because they were able to negotiate rural all weather roads and were cheaper than other forms of transport. The parents were therefore keen for their children to learn safety skills. One parent who had two children with SEN said:

These children are not able to cross the road safely on their own. There are so many motorbikes around and I cannot let them go to the roads [AP7].

Depending on the age of the parents, there was concern about the future of the children when the parents died. The parents expressed that although it was the responsibility of the wider or extended family to take care of children in the event of the death of the parents, the concern was that because their children did not have very basic skills like toileting, it may be hard for the relatives to accept them. It was also an expectation that if children were being taken care of by relatives, they should be able to help in house chores. One older single mother who had two disabled children expressed:

I would like them to be able to cook simple meals. How long am I going to do everything for them? What if I died? Who will take care of them if they are like this? They should be able to



collect water from the river, collect firewood, wash dishes and wash their own hands. It is when a relative can agree to live with them if I died [AP7].

The parents in this study expressed that they had little hope of their children passing examinations and getting white collar jobs but still wanted their children to learn to read and write. One of the reasons that parents gave for this position is that the ability to read could enable the children read directions and postings in order to access community services:

She needs to learn to read so that she is able to get/read directions if she needs to access services in the community [BP7].

As mentioned earlier, parents felt that with training, their children could venture in income generating activities like tailoring. According to the parents, this called for the children to learn the skills of reading and writing so that they could for example write the names and measurements of their customers:

She can also learn to read and write because even tailors need to read and write people's names [AP2].

Another issue that informed the parents' desire for their children to learn the art of writing is so that the children are able to read telephone numbers and call their relatives, read instructions on how to take medication and write the name of their town if they got lost:

I would like this girl to know how to read so that she can even read telephone numbers to call her relatives or read instructions on how to take medication [CP1].

Another parent whose child suffered from epilepsy expressed a similar sentiment and added that she needed her child to be able to count as well:

I would like her to learn to count. This can help her in using money, to know the days of the week. This disease she has requires that we tell the doctor how many times she has had seizures. If she learns to count, she can do this on her own [BP8].

This position was shared by teachers in this study:

If a child knows how to read and write, they can write a letter, communicate using these simple things like mobile phones [CT1].

Another area of concern for parents in this study was the ability of their children to interact with people that they did not know. Given the importance of extended families in rural Kenyan settings, they were disappointed that their children were not able to relate with members of the wider family:

If somebody came here and was planning to steal from the house, she would not question or talk to them .She does not talk to people that she does not know. This is a big girl, she needs to be talking to people whether she knows them or not. We have relatives and friends coming over to visit, she is not interested [AP2].

Although there was a general agreement as to the importance of the skills that children with SEN needed, there was one issue that was unique to the teachers. This was that the successful acquisition of skills by children with SEN could encourage other children with SEN or their parents to come to school/bring their children to school. One regular teacher said:

If they are well educated and become productive in the society, it will motivate other parents who have disabled children to take them to school...they can also be role models in the society [BT1].

After examining why the participants felt certain skills were important for children with SEN, the next section will focus on how they felt the skills could be achieved.

### ***How these skills can be achieved***

Although the teachers expressed their desire to have children with SEN separated from the other children, they still felt that children with SEN were likely to benefit from interacting with their nondisabled peers. They suggested that parents may need “encouragement” from teachers to bring these children to school:

They can play together... they can even learn communication skills for those who were unable to communicate before but as they socialise with the rest they can be able to communicate either verbally or with signs (ATF4).

This perspective was supported by the SEN coordinators. In reference to children who were under the home-based programme, the SEN coordinators felt that the children were losing the interaction with their peers which could enhance their learning:

Three quarters in learning situation is involved in peer tutoring therefore being at home hinders the child's development [BSC].

Another factor that was identified as being a hindrance to quality education for children with SEN was insufficient staffing. From the government officers to the teachers, there was a feeling that with extra staff, the education of children with SEN would be a lot better. The participants indicated that the system required more teachers and support staff. One quality assurance and standards officer said:

I think we have a problem with staffing. We don't have sufficient trained SEN teachers to handle the number of children that we are currently having [CQS].

This idea was shared by the teachers:

We need to have teachers whereby a teacher may be having 2 or 3 children to handle... We also need to have those who assist, how do we call them? We need to have those ones here with us to assist where necessary. Because sometimes, you may be in class, one might run away to the field so you need somebody to go and look for that one outside as you continue working with these ones in class. So they are very necessary [CST].

During observations in this study, there was no evidence that more teachers or the presence of support staff could make a difference in the learning of the children. In the units for example, there were an average of 6 children per class and their needs were not in such a way that they caused significant problems in the classes. Apart from the fact that those children in inclusive settings performed poorly in tests, there were no reports that they caused any significant problems that could be solved by the presence of support staff or more teachers.

Another problem that respondents in this study identified was a lack of equipment or facilities. There was a feeling that the facilities were either non-existent, inadequate or not disability friendly. One quality assurance and standards officer expressed:

For one, I think most of our physical facilities including classrooms and the sanitation facilities are not constructed with these children in mind. They are constructed to cater for the normal children... [BQS].

This position was supported by the teachers in the schools. One SEN teacher said:

We have no barrier free toilets...The fields are not conducive especially when we have allowed everybody outside let us say from class 1-8, some fear interacting freely with the normal ones in the field. So we could have had a big field... those who cannot surely interact well with the normal they can have a separate field [CST].

The fields that were available in the three schools in this study were quite big. There was a standard football field in each of the schools. The only time that the children in the special education units could interact with the nondisabled children is during such times as games time or play time. As mentioned earlier, all the children in this study did not have significant physical disabilities that could deter them from using the regular facilities or playing with their peers. Another aspect of lack of equipment that was identified by the teachers was in regard to the children who were home-based. There was a suggestion that money for these children should be used to buy some equipment which they could use to practice skills such as farming and carpentry. A SEN teacher said:

When money has come here, we are supposed to buy them uniforms; farm tools for example a jembe or panga (local farm tools). Those who are able to do some carpentry or have vocational skills are supposed to be bought some equipment [CST].

There was evidence in this study that even when participants talked of lack of resources, they did not appear to be sure what resources would be required and how they would be helpful in promoting the quality of education for children with SEN. The following conversation with one head teacher is testimony:

R: How do you think the quality of education for children with SEN can be achieved?

CHT: We lack some of the materials... When I go to the office, I can see materials which can help these children learn by manipulating things. Because of lack of materials, they are now dormant...

R: Do you have any example in mind of the materials that you may require?

CHT: I used to see them in terms of boxes. I have never observed what is in the box but I can see various boxes that belong to the SNE class.

Another way in which skills for children with SEN could be achieved as suggested by the teachers in schools was to let the children learn by practice. In relation to the use of money, one regular teacher expressed:

I think as teachers and parents, we should show these children how to deal with money. We can do this by sending them to the shops; introduce them to buying small things in order for them to know how to exchange money for commodities [CTI].

This was supported by another teacher:

These children can also run errands for example being sent to deliver a letter somewhere. If the child is able to cross the road, they should also allow them to go to the shop to buy something. When they are buying for them things like clothes or shoes, they should go with these children just like any other normal child. This is so that the child can also choose the clothes or shoes that they like [AT2].

Another area that was seen as important in the education of children with SEN was training. Most participants felt that special training was required in order to ensure quality education for children with SEN. According to one quality assurance and standards officer, teacher training was an area that the government had made a lot of progress. The evidence he gave was that many teachers were opting to train in the area of SEN:

This is where we have made a lot of strides. We have the training agency that is; The Kenya Institute for Special Education...and it is very competitive nowadays because our teachers have shown interest [AQS].

The quality assurance and standards officers were however concerned that because training in the area of SEN was a personal choice by the regular teachers who had to foot the bill, it was not possible to tell if the choice was motivated by the desire to teach children with SEN. This was because the reward for taking the training was a promotion to a higher grade and better pay. The concerns were therefore that some teachers may have gone into training not because they were interested in the education of children with SEN but because they wanted the promotion and better pay:

I can say we have a good number of teachers who are interested in the area of SEN. But it is obvious that we shall also have a good number who want promotion or employment... A teacher who has a certificate or a diploma in special needs is likely to get a job faster than the one who has general training... [BQS].

The quality assurance and standards officers also indicated that they needed training in order to be able to supervise the education of children with SEN. This concern was raised by the SEN coordinators and teachers as well. One quality assurance and standards officer said:

We were not trained on special needs education, so actually it becomes difficult even for us to actually monitor and also offer advice on what the SEN teachers are supposed to be doing in those special education units [CQS].

The SEN coordinators also questioned the training of the SEN teachers indicating that it was not detailed. Responding to concerns about how much SEN teachers were able to provide the expertise needed in the schools, one SEN coordinator said:

It is not a reality because the training is not compact. It is something that we just talk about. While we realize that we may have a specially trained teacher in every school, these teachers are not necessarily experts in all areas [BQS].

The issue of the suitability of the curriculum was discussed a lot in this study. There was a general view that the curriculum for children with SEN was not appropriate. Respondents felt that the curriculum had to be “different”, “simplified”, “adjusted” or adapted. One SEN teacher said:

According to my opinion this curriculum is not all that helping so it needs people to sit especially those who are experts to choose other curriculum [AST].

The issue of the curriculum was also raised by the parents. Some parents felt that their children were being taught skills that were not going to be helpful in their lives. They felt that their children should be taught skills that were in line with the children’s talents:

My son disappeared from home and I do not know where he is. He was attending this school. He plays “embegete” (traditional music instrument) very well and they should have helped him towards that line but the teachers just wanted him to be in class with his peers [AP3].

The SEN coordinators stated that the curriculum had to be based on the local life of the children for it to be helpful to children with SEN. They suggested that the curriculum should be designed in such a way that it reflected the life in the localities where the children were born and brought up:

There should be proper guidelines on a local curriculum. You cannot have a national curriculum for independence because it is different for a child who needs to be independent in Nyamira (a district in Kenya) and say a child who needs to be independent in Luoland (lakeside region) and wants to do fishing, as an income generating activity [CSC].

Another suggestion by the teachers in regard to the success of education for children with SEN was in relation to progress monitoring. This was in response to the poor performance of children with SEN in class tests and national examinations. The teachers felt that there was need for a different progress monitoring system:

The parents don't see the need to come to school because all they are told is how their children are performing poorly. If the government had a plan for them, they could have set aside a different way of monitoring and reporting the progress of these children [AT1].

Another issue that was identified as impacting on the education of children with SEN was the support available for teachers in the schools. The SEN coordinators felt that they had the responsibility to give the schools assistance:

I need to visit schools and see how the teachers have planned for the education of these children, look at the materials available and advice the teachers on how to teach these children [ASC].

However, the coordinators stated that they were not able to carry out their duties because of lack of funding:

You are supposed to adapt and implement the MH curriculum, but it is implementation which has been hampered by funding...Actually most of the coordinators are very frustrated. Some of them are just sitting there [CSC].

The regular teachers indicated that their input was not sought in designing the education of children with SEN. Responding to a question on the nature of the curriculum available for children with SEN, one regular teacher expressed:

The suggestions of the teachers should be communicated to the curriculum developers so that teachers can say for example, "we feel these children should be taught like this" [ATF4].

It can be noted that there was a general agreement as to what skills children with SEN needed to learn. These are skills that were generally described as "life skills". It was also evident that the participants agreed that these skills were to enable the children function in the wider society and become independent. Various ways in which these skills could be achieved were suggested. These ways ranged from provision of physical and human resources, a relevant curriculum and consultation between the various stakeholders.

## **Summary**

The last two chapters discussed the main findings of this study. It was noted that there were disconnections between the various stakeholders that were responsible for the education of children with SEN. There was a lack of partnership between relevant government departments, the government departments and schools, regular and SEN teachers and finally between the schools and the parents. There were also negative perceptions about disability and children with SEN.

Children with SEN were described as being “abnormal” and therefore treated differently. There was evidence of tension between SEN teachers who were seen as the “experts” and the regular teachers. The latter felt that the education of children with SEN was the responsibility of the “experts”. Children with SEN were described in terms of “unacceptable” or “inappropriate” behaviour. There was also confusion about what doctrine was being articulated or practised between inclusion, integration and special education. The existence of a non-functional home-based programme defeated the purpose and meaning of the philosophy of inclusion. However, there was a general agreement on what skills children with SEN required to learn, why the skills were important and how they could be achieved. The next chapter will present a discussion of the findings.



## **CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will interpret the perspectives and experiences of the participants in light of reviewed literature in chapter two and three, the theoretical thinking reviewed in chapter four and current research. It will also examine the differences and similarities of the findings at the levels of theory and practice, examining how the SEN policy in Kenya is understood by the participants. The chapter begins with a discussion of notions of “experts” and “special” and how the two serve to exclude children with SEN from regular schooling and life. The second section will examine whether the curriculum for children with SEN was poorly designed and implemented or culturally inappropriate. The last section will explore the role of parents in upholding the participation rights of children with SEN.

The issues raised in this chapter are a reflection of the main themes of the study. These include the disconnections between the various stakeholders responsible for the education of children with SEN and how the learning difficulties of children with SEN were used to regard them as lesser citizens who were not entitled to rights like other citizens.

### **Notions of “experts” and “special” and their contribution to the exclusion of children with SEN**

#### ***Why are the notions persistent?***

Although the international and national (Kenyan) emphasis on educating children with SEN is on inclusion, special education continues to be identified as a separate form of provision. One of the reasons for this is the continued supply of children with the labels of SEN which come with additional resources. The resources make special education more attractive to parents than the possibility of stigma associated with exclusion (Powell, 2009). In this study, children with SEN in the special education units had separate classes and rarely interacted with their peers. Those whose needs were classified as mild were included in regular classes but the regular teachers were emphatic that they were not benefiting from the education provided because they could not academically perform as well as their peers. The presence of these children labelled as mentally handicapped was used as a reference to special education in the schools. It also justified the existence of SEN teachers in the schools and SEN coordinators in the districts. The retention of

special education and the drive for inclusion of children with SEN have been justified by the same principles: those of equity and social justice (Christensen & Dorn, 1997). The argument by the teachers in this study that children with SEN needed separate special teaching can be seen as coming from the perspective that it is in the best interest of these children and therefore justifiable.

The government of Kenya recognises SEN as a distinct service. There is a specific department whose responsibility is special education. Kenya's policy on SEN aims to rehabilitate children with SEN, provide them with skills to adjust to the environment and provide specially trained teachers. Teachers are trained to identify children with SEN and teach them appropriately (MOE, 2009; Mukuria & Korir, 2006; Wainaina, 2005). The SEN coordinators in this study stated that one of their main responsibilities was to ensure that each school with a special education unit had a SEN teacher. The government also articulates through policy that the learning needs of children with SEN and the nondisabled ones are not entirely the same and therefore curriculum for the two should be different (MOE, 2001). The Kenya Institute of Education defines special education as education of children who have learning difficulties as a result of not coping with the normal school organisation and instruction methods (MOE, 2009). Most participants in this study echoed the government position that children with SEN could not cope with the regular curriculum because the curriculum was "supposed to be taught to the normal children" and that curriculum for children with SEN should be "different from the one we use in our normal learning institutions".

Interestingly, the SEN policy in Kenya also provides that children with disabilities need to be included in regular schooling unless there are compelling circumstances that suggest otherwise. The SEN coordinators in this study appeared to be in what they called a "battle" with regular education staff to have these children included in regular schooling and get other services. They accused the district education office of not availing funds for services such as organising seminars for parents and teachers and to support the home-based programme, the Ministry of Education for failure to adapt the curriculum according to their recommendations and generally undermining "special education". The SEN coordinators also said they had to engage in a "serious war" with the district education office in order to secure enough supply of SEN teachers. This seemed to cultivate a notion that children with disabilities must use disability as a platform to access regular schooling and other services. Priestly (2000) argues that policy articulation presents children with SEN as a vulnerable group who then have to use this "vulnerability" to access services. The creation of special education alongside regular education in many policy articulations creates two conflicting positions. This, according to Osler and Osler (2002) makes special education appear

like a non-structural battle between different groups instead of being a rational and equitable response to children's difficulties.

Another "battle" observed in this study was between the SEN coordinators and other officers who due to the nature of their work had a role to play in the education of children with SEN. An example was the quality assurance and standards officers and managers of rehabilitation centres. The coordinators accused these officers of lacking the knowledge and interest in the education of children with SEN. Interestingly, the quality assurance and standards officers concurred that they did not have the skills necessary to supervise the education of children with SEN although it was their responsibility. This is consistent with a survey in Kenya by Ajuoga *et al* (2010) which found out that the officers were unanimous that they needed additional training overall although they ranked SEN lowest in their priority of areas of further training. There was also a "battle" between regular teachers and SEN teachers in this study where the latter saw themselves as the "experts" while the former said they did not have the relevant skills. In fact, the SEN teachers accused the head teachers and district education officers of forcing them to teach regular classes. This supports the argument that the historical construction of special education separated children into "normal" and "abnormal". The result has been a focus on learner deficits and the belief that only "experts" can meet the educational needs of children with SEN (Ballard, 1990; Heung & Grossman, 2007; Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000). The Ministry of Education in Kenya appears to present an ambiguous policy on inclusion that brings forth variations in expectations and practice.

Children with SEN in this study appeared to occupy the role of "others". For instance, the SEN coordinators complained that funds were provided for the SEN section after all other sections had been funded and that was if there was any surplus money. They complained that the head teachers in the schools spent money meant for children with SEN for other projects which were seen as more important. They also accused regular teachers of not preparing professional records for children with SEN because they were busy teaching "normal" classes. The head teachers also complained that the ministry of education did not avail money for children with SEN regularly. This is consistent with various studies that have found that children with disabilities occupy the role of "others" and are considered a distinct group whose needs are addressed after those of the more able ones have been addressed (Heung & Grossman, 2007; LaNear & Frattura, 2009). The problem would be how a distinction is made between one group of children and another. Osler and Starkey (2005) argue that there is an oversimplified understanding of what a "normal" learner is. This ignores the fact that even within the group of "normal" learners, there can be differences. The

assertion by participants in this study that children with SEN were “abnormal”, “insane”, “dunderheads”, “less intelligent”, “food-mongers”, “destructive”, “abusive” and “disruptive” can therefore be problematic and lead to unfair treatment of children with SEN. Indeed, the SEN teachers complained that the regular teachers did not value the work of teaching children with SEN and sometimes “threw” or “chased” them out of the regular classes; accusing the SEN teachers of “turning their school to be a mad school”. It should be noted that the participants based their labels on a comparison between children with SEN and their peers in terms of behaviour and response to the regular school curriculum. It is not obvious that these factors are sufficient to label a child “abnormal”. It is also not obvious at what level of curriculum response and behaviour a child can be labelled “abnormal”.

There is another school of thought suggesting that although it is not clear how teachers may acquire the “special” skills to teach diverse students, they nevertheless need skills and professional help in order to put in place responsive teaching strategies (Florian, 2008; MacArthur *et al*, 2007; Winzer & Mazurek, 2005) to avoid a situation where children will be taught in exclusion, inadequately in regular classes (Mutua & Dimitrov, 2001; Stough, 2003) or what Slee and Allan (2001) refer to as exclusion of the included. This was the position that was taken by most participants in this study. The quality assurance and standards officers said that they needed special skills in order to supervise the education of children with SEN although they said it was their role to ensure “quality teaching and learning” in schools, the regular teachers said that they needed special skills to teach children with SEN, the SEN coordinators and the SEN teachers (experts) concurred although the coordinators criticised the training available. The SEN teachers also stated that they were better placed to teach children with SEN because of their “special training”. This may explain why the concept of inclusion faces significant resistance from the core stakeholders in the education sector. Research has shown that teachers do not demonstrate responsibility to disabled students (O’Neill *et al*, 2009; Winzer & Mazurek, 2005). This depicts a struggle by practitioners to find ways of including children with disabilities in what would be a reformed education system. It has been demonstrated (e.g. Fisher & Meyer, 2002) that the inclusion of children with SEN in regular schooling can lead to gains in terms of development and social competence.

Another issue to deal with is what the place of “special education” and “experts” would be if schools were to become truly inclusive. It has been argued that special education is an attempt to address the individual needs of particular learners and therefore in its absence, schools may not be

able to provide for everyone (Florian, 2008). Inclusive education may also deny children with SEN access to an IEP Plan which is a legal document in some countries (Wehmeyer *et al*, 2001). The regular teachers in this study questioned why children with SEN were included in regular classes if there were SEN (specially trained) teachers. Some of the teachers criticised the idea of sending SEN teachers to schools as it made it look like they “owned” the children with SEN. The head teachers did not even know what transition and progress meant for children with SEN. They asked questions such as “which class do they belong to and where will they end? Some scholars (e.g. Winzer & Mazurek, 2005) have advocated for partial inclusion where students are placed in general settings where appropriate with a focus on selecting a setting where they succeed. Winzer and Mazurek (1998) argue that if the needs of a child with SEN are not met in regular classroom, it would be in the best interest of that child to be placed in a special classroom. It has also been argued that ignoring children’s impairment-related differences and identity and make them conform to a majority culture may imply denying diversity among children and therefore not the best option (MacArthur *et al*, 2007). A report by UNESCO (2000) warns that the policy of inclusive education should be applied carefully lest some children and their needs disappear in a monolithic setting that would extend the disability status. The policy guidelines in Kenya use the term special education to refer to the education of children with SEN which is consistent with the use of the term in other countries such as New Zealand (O’Neill *et al*, 2009). Would you then fault teachers for taking a position as outsiders in the education of children with SEN or is special education prevailing, as Tomlinson (1982; 1985) argues, because its presence makes professionals in the field of SEN relevant and may be a diversionary tactic to depoliticise school failure?

The education system in Kenya emphasises examinations and participants in this study echoed that notion. The quality assurance and standards officers and regular teachers felt that the presence of children with SEN in the schools was lowering the overall performance of the schools. The teachers argued that because their performance was judged on the performance in examinations, there was no reason why they would have children who performed poorly in their classes. This is similar to what Lister (2006) observed in a study about the UK education system which focuses on children for who they will be in the future and what they will contribute to the economy at the expense of the quality of children’s lives, equality and rights. At individual level, regular teachers in this study voiced the idea that they would rather focus on the “normal” children who they can contact in later life for help. They also accused the parents of having little interest in the education of their children because of the same reasons. This may be the reason why some parents withdrew their children from school to work and earn the family some money. Such a social investment

model may not adequately address the needs of certain children who may be regarded as unworthy of investment.

Schools not just in Kenya but at a global level are under intense pressure for increased performance which may undermine a combined effort of all the stakeholders involved in the education of children with SEN (Neel *et al*, 2003). The emphasis on academic performance presents teachers and education systems with two conflicting philosophies; one of accommodating differences in class and the other a stress on academic achievement of students in a high-stakes examination-based education system. Given that children with SEN may find the general curriculum demanding, it would be difficult for teachers to illustrate that their teaching has produced learning where effective learning is viewed in terms of academic achievement (Arbeiter & Hartley, 2002; Benjamin, 2005; Heung & Grossman, 2007; Winzer & Mazurek, 2005). The quality assurance and standards officers in this study said that teachers were not willing to have children with SEN in their classes because they were lowering the mean grades of their performance. The SEN coordinators complained that head teachers were refusing to register children with SEN for the final primary school examination because of the same concerns. My interpretation is that this is a result of the dilemma in which schools find themselves in and not necessarily their unwillingness to accommodate all children in their classes.

What is interesting, if not confusing in the Kenyan situation is that the district education officers were accountable to the Ministry of Education for the performance of schools in examinations. In turn, head teachers had to account to the district education office if their schools were not performing well in examinations. The head teachers passed on the pressure to the teachers. On the other hand, the government emphasises free inclusive primary education where schools cannot turn away any children regardless of their ability. This is the provision that the SEN coordinators used to press for the registration of children with SEN in national examinations. This situation created a serious dilemma for all regular staff. How were they to meet the demands of the national curriculum and accommodate children with SEN at the same time? If examinations were not the measure of the success of an education system, what would be the alternative?

Critiques of an examination-based system (e.g. Wolhuter, 2007) have argued that examinations tend to measure the ability of children to recall facts and not the ability to use the knowledge received in the service of the community. But how would students and their teachers be rewarded for “working hard” in schools in the absence of an examinations or testing system? At the end of

each school term in Kenyan primary schools, there is a closing ceremony where children who perform well in tests and their teachers are rewarded for good academic performance. How would you reward children whose performance in the tests is wanting? This brings into play the argument that justice is about people receiving what they deserve in terms of input and output (Nozick, 1976). This has led to the characterisation of schools as places where children are rewarded according to academic success (Christensen & Dorn, 1997; Gale, 2000). The head teachers in this study did not know how to describe the success or transition of children with SEN because they did not sit for the regular exams and when they did, they performed poorly. The skeptics according to Kittay (2001) would question why public resources should be invested in a group of children who would not produce output instead of putting those resources in children who would reciprocate. Whatever the positions taken by different schools of thought, it is evident that the education of children with SEN is perceived as being outside “normal” school structures. The next section will examine if children with SEN should be educated separately.

### ***Should children with SEN learn separately?***

The notions “special” and “experts” are used in this study to support the argument that children with SEN needed to be separated from their nondisabled peers. The participants seemed to attribute the difficulties experienced by children with SEN to deficiencies within the children. They seemed to operate within the deficit theory which explains failure by children to deficits or inadequacies located within children (Brown, 2005; Clark, Dyson, Millward & Skidmore, 1995; Skidmore, 1996). The participants described children with SEN using terms such as “abnormal” and “insane”. This would sound like permanent conditions which would make it unsafe for these children to learn with their nondisabled peers. This is consistent with the deficit theory which views disability as a stable and permanent condition which calls for special schools where special resources can be availed to address the needs of these children (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2005; Skidmore, 2004). There was no indication that the participants attributed any of the difficulties children with SEN encountered to school organisation or the society. Some participants criticised the available curriculum as being irrelevant and identified lack of resources as a hindrance to the education of children with SEN. This may point to deficiencies in the schools as outlined in the organisational theory (Skidmore, 1996). Other participants referred to the negative attitudes towards disability and children with SEN and uncooperative or poor families which may relate to the ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Skidmore, 1996; McLaughlin & Jordan, 2005; Mitchell, 2005). However, there is no evidence to suggest that the participants did not generally point a finger at the deficits of the children; it was the children who could not cope with the

curriculum; the poor attitudes towards children with SEN existed because the children were “abnormal”.

The position by many participants in this study that children with SEN should be separated from their peers contrasts with internationally recognised children’s rights and Kenya’s commitment to FPE for all children. The perception by regular teachers in this study that there were “normal” and “abnormal” children goes against the commitment to establish a world fit for all children. The teachers’ argument that children with SEN should be separated from their peers is a violation of the children’s rights. The UN principles apply to all children in all countries. Teachers have a particular role to play in ending discrimination against certain groups of children. This is a big ask for teachers in circumstances like those in this study where the education system did not view children with SEN as a viable investment and where the regular teachers were unaware of legislation regarding children with SEN despite its existence. The issues raised by the teachers such as children with SEN being disruptive, dirty, moody among others are not sufficient to suggest these children could not learn together with their peers. Children with SEN may look and behave in different ways but that does not mean they are not rights-holding children like any other.

Children are entitled to human rights equal to other human beings (Alanen, 2010) and when these rights are violated, adults are implicated (Dillon, 2010). Violating the rights of children with SEN is therefore the same as violating the rights of any other person. It has been argued that placing children in special education violates their rights, assumes that disability is a permanent condition and only serves to isolate children with SEN and not address their differences (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2005; Nilhom, 2006; Tomlinson, 1982). Campbell (2002) argues that there is a tendency to regard disabled children as children in need of services and protection as opposed to children who have rights like any other children. The Children’s Act in Kenya (2001) commits to give effect to the principles of the CRC and the African charter on the rights and welfare of the child. The Act makes specific reference to the rights of disabled children by stating that a disabled child shall have a right to be treated with dignity and provided with appropriate medical care, education and training free of charge or at reduced cost. Why then do we have teachers strongly regarding children with SEN as lesser human beings, describing them using very derogatory terms like “dirty” and “insane” among others? Why would we have children with SEN at home (in a non-functional home-based programme) because they are not able to come to school due to their disabilities and yet the government propagates FPE for all children?



Some of the guiding principles of the SNE (The policy documents in Kenya use the term SNE as opposed to SEN) policy in Kenya (2009) are a guarantee for the rights of children with SEN including equal access to all educational institutions, non-discriminative enrolment and retention of learners with SEN in any institution of learning and barrier free transition of SEN learners through the various educational levels in accordance with their abilities. Other rights include a learner-centred curriculum and responsive learning systems and materials, protection of the human dignity and rights of learners with disabilities. The Kenyan constitution (2010) provides that children with disabilities have a right to benefit from a full and decent life in conditions that ensure dignity, enhance self-reliance and facilitate active participation in society. These provisions clearly indicate that it is the schools and the education systems which need to change their ways in order to ensure children with SEN have an appropriate education. This is contrary to what the participants, especially the regular teachers and the quality assurance and standards officers articulated. It was also contrary to what was in practice for instance the fact that children were at home receiving no services at all.

Osler and Starkey (2005) argue that children's rights to an education in line with the principles set out in Article 29 of the CRC advocate for a common standard for curriculum development, ensuring that children are prepared to co-exist together, respect for equality and diversity and recognising that we depend on each other at local, national and international levels. The CRC specifies that a disabled child has a right to special care, education and training to facilitate a dignified life, become self-reliant, and achieve social integration (Article 23). The CRC uses the phrase "in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration" in Article 23 (3) which according to Hodgkin and Newell (2007) reveals a preference for inclusive education. This is what the SEN policy in Kenya advocates and what the constitution of Kenya provides for. However, most participants in this study did not feel this was practical. For example, the regular teachers were emphatic that children with SEN should be taken to "their special school" where they can be taught by "their special teachers". This was not surprising because during focus group discussions the regular teachers stated that they did not know if there was any special legislation that provided for the rights of children with disabilities. The SEN coordinators stated that the government of Kenya was "pretending" when talking about inclusive education.

It was noted earlier in this chapter that one of the reasons why notions of "special" and "experts" persist is the central position of examinations in the Kenyan education system, and indeed many education systems. This provided teachers with the explanation that if their competence was

pegged on academic performance that would be undermined by children with SEN, then they would rather not have them in their classes. The requirement that teachers test all children is likely to put pressure on them to teach to tests. In a regime centred on examinations, there is a likelihood that those children at the top will be under pressure to do better while those at the lower order may become dispirited and interruptive. These are issues that cannot be divorced from the experiences of the teachers. Osler and Starkey (2005) argue that a regime of testing violates the rights of learners, undermines the confidence of those with learning difficulties and implies that teachers will not adapt their practices to meet the needs of children with SEN. This is consistent with what the regular staff in this study stated. The teachers may justify their position by arguing that the system requires certain performance from them. However, the teachers need to be guided by policy and legislation which require that they do not discriminate against children with SEN.

Contrary to policy articulation, it appeared that there was a deliberate programme by those in authority to separate children with SEN from regular schooling. In establishing special education units, one quality assurance and standards officer stated that when children with SEN increased in number, they recommended that they can have “their own school” and the “normal” children can have “their different school”. They were of the view that separating children with SEN from their peers would improve the general quality of education. As noted earlier, this was the same position that was taken by the regular teachers. The SEN coordinators also complained that the special education units operated like special schools within mainstream schools. This was confirmed in visits to the schools as the children in the special education units had classrooms away from their peers. However, it has been argued that special education itself does not necessarily refer to separating children with SEN from regular schooling but to instruction that is specially designed to meet the needs of children who are exceptional. It is founded on the understanding that all children can reach their full potential given the opportunity, effective teaching, modified environment and proper resources (Kopetz & Itimu, 2008; Zadjia, 2005). This shifts attention from children with SEN to the opportunities available, effective teaching and proper resources. Other researchers (Oloo, 2006; Phyllis, 2005) argue that disability needs to be viewed as being socially constructed. If the wider society accepted inclusion, it would make it possible for children with SEN to attend a school that they would if they were not disabled (Meyer *et al*, 1992). It should be noted that most teachers in this study hailed from the local community and their perceptions were likely to be guided by their cultural understanding of disabled people as opposed to policy and legislation and therefore a reflection of society attitudes towards disability. Winzer (1993) argues that the attitudes

of members of a society towards the education and care of children with disabilities are a reflection of how these people are treated.

Most participants in this study were of the view that children with SEN would not benefit from regular schooling and instead interfered with the smooth learning of the nondisabled children. They saw children with SEN as undermining the discipline and academic levels of the schools. Research has however shown that if children with SEN were allowed to participate in activities together with their nondisabled peers, the latter would come to accept them. In a study carried out in Egypt (Ray, 2010), one non-disabled girl said:

In the beginning we feared disabled children, now we have come to love them like brothers and sisters, they have their rights and we have to help them get them (p. 68).

Policies for the education of children with SEN should be accompanied by information regarding how the education of children with SEN alongside their nondisabled peers will not only benefit the children themselves but also their communities in signalling to the wide society the value of diversity (Campbell, 2002). Children with disabilities who are included have access to enhanced opportunities to learn skills needed for their communities from nondisabled peers who, in turn, can develop new capacities to adapt and grow in today's diverse world (Meyer, 2001). Ray (2010) argues that as children grow, the significance of their peers and older children in directing their behaviour and forming their values increases. Studies have shown that children with disabilities benefit from learning when they spend more time in regular classrooms and their presence does not have a negative influence on the achievement of those without SEN (Demeris *et al*, 2007). Another study (MacArthur *et al*, 2007) found that gains will increase when teachers acquire more knowledge of and experience with a variety of students. Such teachers are likely to explore pedagogies that promote respect for diversity and the active participation of all students in the process of learning.

Schools are expected to be inclusive and act in the best interest of all children (Osler & Starkey, 2005) so that separating children with SEN is seen as locating the problem within individuals and not schools and their ways of teaching (Ainscow, 1999; Dyson, 2001; Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000). Emphasis needs to be placed on eliminating barriers for both teachers and children by restructuring schools so that they can accommodate all children (Ainscow, 1999; Heung & Grossman, 2007; Thomazet, 2009; Slee & Allan, 2001; Swain & Cook, 2005; Powell, 2009). SEN

are not caused solely by deficiencies within the child but interaction between the child and the environment (Warnock, 1978) and therefore differences in learners should be seen as an essential part of reality (Heung & Grossman, 2007). The role of education should be to support that diversity through transforming educational pedagogy in order to achieve what Swain and Cook (2001) refer to as evaluating and celebrating difference. But what does this mean for teachers who are guided by a contradicting education policy and cultural perception which regard children with SEN as a liability? What would it mean for schools to restructure? What seemed to be understood by teachers in this study was “special education” (they referred to the SEN teacher as “*the teacher of special*”) and mainstream education and therefore inclusive education was something vague. In this study, teachers took little responsibility for the poor services available to children with SEN. Where they did not blame the inadequacy of resources, they blamed the children for being unable to fit in the regular education system, the parents for being disinterested or blamed each other.

Florian (2008) observes that it is important to explore how teachers can be supported to develop the knowledge, beliefs and practices that support inclusion. Teachers need to be dissuaded from the notion that they are not qualified to teach disabled or children with additional needs. The argument is that teachers have much of the knowledge and many of the skills required to teach all children, but they may lack the confidence to put them into action in helping children who are experiencing difficulties in learning. The general perception by respondents in this study was that the differences among children with SEN could be addressed by separating them from their peers. Gutman (2004) argues that past and present inequalities need to be addressed through curricular design so that all members of the society are aware of the oppressions and contributions (past and present) of members of historically oppressed groups of citizens.

Articulating that schools become inclusive in contexts where most school personnel are clearly opposed to inclusion is an exercise in futility. The mainstream education stakeholders in this study viewed the education of children with SEN as requiring something more than what was available in regular schooling. This finding is consistent with other research which have found out that mainstream staff view inclusive education as a policy doomed to fail (Jordan *et al*, 2009; Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000; Swain & Cook, 2001). Although teachers on their own cannot restructure schools to reflect inclusion, Florian (2008) argues that they can choose to transform the way they work in their classrooms. Other research (Arbiter & Hartley, 2002; Kagan, 1992; Wamae & Kan’gethe-Kamau, 2004) have found that teachers who are opposed to inclusion show little concern about different needs in their classes and have negative attitudes towards children with

disabilities. It is argued that attitudes may have a stronger impact on the response to children with disabilities in classrooms than the availability of resources, the technical knowledge or specialised teaching strategies by teachers. Stanovich and Jordan (2000) argue that teachers who are effective overall with all their students are also more likely to be skilled in inclusive practices. Although participants in this study blamed the lack of “special” or extra resources for the poor quality education available to children with SEN, observations in the study revealed that extra resources in terms of buildings, desks, books and staff would not make a significant impact in the education of these children. The thinking and practice by teachers were evidently exclusionist, indicating that the real problem was with perceptions and not necessarily resources. The children with SEN in inclusive settings were “visitors” in the classes while those in the units operated as if they were in a separate school all together.

Participants in this study described children with SEN using derogatory terms. They did not recognise children with SEN as full members of the society. They described them in demeaning ways probably because of their perceived minimum economic contribution to the well being of their families and society. Fraser (2000) has argued that recognition is a question of perceived social status and not that of identity. It can be seen as a form of injustice which can be addressed by a focus on positioning the misrecognised group as a full member of society, capable of participating on equal status with the rest. Ray (2010) argues that children in the poorest and most difficult situations have no opportunities to realise their potential, enjoy a quality life and be part of the society due to a violation of their rights. But how would you convince regular staff like the teachers in this study to recognise “abnormal” or “insane” children as having equal status in the society? How can it be conceived that children with SEN are full members of the society when they do not make the contribution that the nondisabled members of the society would?

It was also found in this study that children with SEN suffered abuse (including rape) in their schools and communities. Some parents withdrew their children from school due to fear of abuse on their way to school. Some children were sexually abused but their parents could not take action for fear of reprisal from the society members who did not value the children. In one incident, a SEN coordinator had to intervene to ensure a man who raped a child with SEN was prosecuted because the parents of the child were making “local arrangements” to protect the perpetrator. Local arrangements would include the offender paying the parents some money in order for them not to press charges. A similar finding was reported in a UN study on violence against children which showed that violence and abuse are very common in homes, schools and communities especially

against groups that are already marginalised (Ray, 2010). The lack of respect and value for children with disabilities evidenced by the protection of those who abused them appear to reflect cultural perceptions of children with SEN. Teachers and government officers made reference to the fact that parents did not value their children's education and saw them as a curse from their ancestors. In a study carried out in Egypt (Ray, 2010), the birth of a child with a disability was viewed as shameful, and such children were neglected and excluded from interacting with other children or participating in the life of their families and communities. In a review of SEN education in Kenya, Mukuria and Korir (2006) observe that the unspoken societal consensus is that the productive individuals must be given the limited available resources first. This is likely to exclude children with SEN.

Another problem according to Dyson (2001) is that the notion of "specialness" does not have a clear functional definition of where a line can be drawn between special and ordinary. It is left to the professionals to make judgements within their context. In this study, it was found that the process of placing children in special education was confusing. The government of Kenya placed the responsibility on a multi-professional committee which did not exist in the rural districts. The SEN coordinators felt it was their responsibility but said they were not resourced to do it. They conceded that children were being placed in special education without proper assessment. It was however interesting that one of the three SEN coordinators stated that the placement of children in special education was well done. He said he "owns" the process and it was "adequately" taken care of. The teachers in the schools said they were able to tell children who required special education through their "different" or "inappropriate behaviour", poor performance in academic work and "physical appearance" while the parents did not think there was need for assessment as their children were evidently disabled. The teachers blamed the SEN coordinators for not coming to schools to help in the assessment of children for placement in special education. The likelihood is that children were placed in special education without a clear plan on what educational process they were to pursue. Dyson (2001) suggests that since large numbers of children experience similar difficulties, systematic rather than individualised intervention is more likely to be an appropriate approach by practitioners and policy makers. It has been argued that there could be no such thing as regular schools in an inclusive education system as special schools will not exist (Swain & Cook, 2001) and that disability injustice can be addressed by restructuring the systems that give rise to disability discrimination and a deconstruction aimed at destabilising discrimination against disabled people and guaranteeing rights to all members (Fraser, 1995; Carvalho, 2008).

### ***Conclusion***

It has been noted that despite advocacy for inclusive education, notions of “special” and “experts” still persist for various reasons. Some of them include the continued supply of children with the label of SEN, the position that special education will ensure equity and social justice for children with SEN and the classification of SEN by governments as a distinct and special service. Other reasons include the existence of SEN teachers (experts) alongside regular teachers, lack of empirical demonstration that inclusion can work and emphasis on examinations and academic performance.

Should children with SEN then be taught separately? It was illustrated that all children are entitled to free, compulsory and quality primary education, discrimination is a violation of children’s rights and that special education does not necessarily mean separation but teaching to meet the needs of exceptional children. It was also observed that inclusive education will benefit both children and the wide society, that separating children is locating the problem within individuals and not a disabling surrounding and that we need to respect and celebrate diversity. Good teachers overall will be successful in teaching all children and therefore focus should be turned to eliminating barriers for both teachers and children with disabilities.

### **Curriculum for children with SEN: Problems with design and implementation or cultural misfit?**

In this section, I will argue that despite the government emphasis on inclusion, the education offered to children with SEN was described using the terms integration, inclusion and special education. There was no clear indication of what participants understood as the policy in practice for the education of these children. The participants were also in agreement that the education provided to these children was irrelevant.

Another argument I will present is that given most participants agreed on what skills children with SEN should learn, the problem with the education of these children was not a poorly implemented but a culturally inappropriate curriculum which did not address the learning needs of these children. It appeared that the Kenyan government was propagating an inclusive policy as practised in countries where it has evolved through stages. I will argue that the teaching culture where teachers are accustomed to performance related education, the social culture which views people

with disabilities in a negative way and a political-economic culture where the government does not give SEN education priority will have a negative influence on the education of children with SEN.

### *Locating the place of children with SEN in a culture*

Neglect for people with disabilities in African communities was informed by superstitions such as disability being a curse from the gods (Ihuna, 1984, pp. 35-6 cited in Mukuria & Korir, 2006). There were no institutions for people with disabilities and therefore the onus of caring for the disabled rested with individual families. The result was neglect, killing or hiding of such people from the public. These superstitions still exist in Kenya. Teachers in this study accused parents of regarding their disabled children as a “curse” or a result of “witchcraft”. For example, one parent in this study whose child had epilepsy was concerned that her son may die in school if he had a seizure. This was because in the local culture, epilepsy was thought to be transmitted from one person to another. Parents in this study lamented that they did not have any support from the government in educating and caring for their children. There were parents whose children had medical needs and physical disabilities in addition to intellectual disabilities or mental handicaps as they were officially referred to. One parent whose son was both physically and mentally handicapped said that he was willing to have his child in school but was not able to “carry” the child to and from school every day. He was also worried that the teachers will not be able to cater for the child’s self-care needs like toileting. This concern was shared by many other parents whose children did not come to school and were registered in a non-functional home-based programme despite being entitled to a free and inclusive primary education legally.

Addressing issues of injustice or inaccessible education for children with SEN requires a re-examination of our culture (McDermott & Varrene, 1995) and the cultural politics of social institutions such as schools (Gale, 2000; Young & Quibell, 2000). Schools are situated in and interact with society and therefore they are part and parcel of the whole village life. It is not easy to legislate against culturally entrenched discrimination as culture consists of values which, according to Priestley (1998) play a core role in the continued manifestation of disabling attitudes. It implies that the focus should not be just children’s impairment but disabling attitudes and a disabling environment. Teachers in the schools in this study represented the local community and so their views can easily be seen as the views of the community which held negative attitudes towards disabled people. Going back to the examples of the children who did not come to school, the institution of the government can also be seen to be creating a disabling environment by propagating FPE for all children on one hand and failing to provide the means for all children to be



in school on the other. The SEN coordinators accused the government of “playing a greater part in spoiling special education”. The government may argue that there is scarcity of resources. Opponents of this explanation may argue that it is a question of priorities.

Many participants in this study were wary of the pressures of the national curriculum which they felt did not meet the needs of children with SEN. They stated that the available curriculum was designed for “normal” children and therefore not suited to the “abnormal” children. Coupled with very negative attitudes towards children with SEN, the latter appeared to be in a school system where they were like passengers or what the teachers referred to as “keeping the child busy”. One head teacher summarised the situation in the schools by stating that the children with SEN were in regular school because the government “wants” them in regular schools and that the schools/teachers cannot “chase them away” as they would be working against a government directive. Demands of the national curriculum can promote an approach where teachers do not consider whether what they are teaching is related to the children’s experiences of cultures and therefore consistent with the CRC’s position on the respect of a child’s cultural identity, culture and values (Osler and Hill, 1999). But where can we place the blame? All the stakeholders in this study agreed on what skills children with SEN needed to learn, the importance of these skills and how they could be achieved. For example, they suggested that children with SEN could be taught cattle rearing skills which they can use to help their parents at home and rear their own cattle in future. They suggested that schools should be facilitated to purchase a cow which can be used in practical cattle rearing practices. Why can’t we teach them these skills instead of applying a national, rigid and irrelevant curriculum?

Special education is documented as having developed from the period of neglect through the period of segregation, integration and now inclusion. This history is however typically associated with the northern countries. It is therefore problematic for the Kenyan government to place a great emphasis on inclusion without redefining what inclusion would mean in a Kenyan rural context. The history and development of special education in the northern world has allowed these countries to learn from mistakes or critique and provide a better system. Although the past has nothing much to offer other than stories of thwarted initiatives and shattered ideas (Dyson, 2001), it still provides a point from where a system can evaluate itself because as Peters (1993) argues, a historical perspective is vital to a comprehensive analysis of any educational context. Meyer (2003) argues that adopting experiences from other countries without local and cultural adaptations is a form of colonialism and domination that is unacceptable. Baker and Wiseman (2007) argue

that while EFA is a noble goal, it cannot be implemented without considering each country's specific local contexts and challenges.

This study was informed by the CRC's position that children with SEN have a right to an appropriate education. Although the CRC is a universally accepted document, there has been concern that the drafting process involved over-representation from industrialized countries (Osler & Starkey, 2005). One critique of the CRC (Alanen, 2010) is that it is based on a modern western concept of the self which ignores children's everyday lives. The implementation of the CRC can itself vary from country to country depending on the circumstances and traditions of particular nations (Woodhouse & Johnson, 2009). Putman (1979) argues that special education may be seen as a luxury in less developed countries because of the high costs involved and the small number of children that benefit from it. This means that richer countries are likely to spend more on education and therefore provide special education for a higher number of children with SEN. The government of Kenya gives the high cost of educating children with SEN as a reason for poor services for these children. The parents and teachers in this study did not value the education of children with SEN in the same way as they did for their nondisabled peers. The skills that they wanted children with SEN to learn such as self care (washing hands, clothes, toileting, etc) are not what would be seen as typical benefits of schooling. The parents and teachers saw the benefits of education as including being able to give back to the community when they (children) complete schooling. This is what the regular teachers may have implied when they stated that they did not expect any help from the children with SEN in the future. What would then motivate the parents and teachers to invest any time and money in facilitating the education of children with SEN? In the developing or majority world, the significance attributed to the institution of the family requires that all members contribute to the well-being of the family (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010) and therefore children with disabilities can find themselves neglected in families where survival requires all family members to make a contribution (Putman, 1979). It explains why some parents withdrew their children from a "useless" form of education in order to work and generate some money for the family.

It is not easy to establish what informed the SEN policy and curriculum development in Kenya. Published literature on inclusive education and child rights in Africa is scarce. The literature available is in the form of country reports written by authors from the northern countries. These reports depict northern perspectives while practitioners from African countries appear to look to literature from the northern countries. This information may not be relevant to Africa (Muuya,

2002). Similarly, the accuracy of reports on inclusive education and child rights in Africa can be questioned. The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) prepares reports of states parties on the CRC. In preparing a report on Kenya (2007), the OMCT sent a preparatory team to Nairobi (capital city) and spent three days receiving information from organisations dealing with child protection. It is simplistic to expect that a report prepared in the capital city in three days can reflect on issues of child rights in Kenya. Many of the teachers in this study were not even aware of the CRC or special legislation for children with SEN. Perspectives in the rural areas would be influenced by many other local factors which means that special education provision and understanding of child rights may be different from those in urban areas. Concern has also been raised that the limited research that has been conducted is concentrated in urban areas at the expense of rural areas whose situations may be very different. Muuya (2002) concurs that urban characteristics in Kenya are likely to imply that special education provision is more developed in these areas than elsewhere. This may explain why Booth and Ainscow (1998) argue that there cannot be a single national perspective on inclusion or exclusion.

### ***What education can meet the needs of children with SEN?***

Most participants in this study (except the parents) used the terms inclusion, integration and special education as if they meant the same thing. It should be noted that government (Kenyan) policy advocates for inclusive education. However, what seemed to be practiced was integration rather than inclusion. This is consistent with what Arbeiter and Hartley (2002) found in a study in Uganda. They found that the use of the term integration was not meant to differentiate it from inclusion but because the difference between the two terms was not clear to the participants. For example, a quality assurance and standards officer in this study stated that they were trying to “remove the issue of integration” due to complaints about academic performance. Another officer (quality assurance) said that they “started with integration” and moved on to “inclusion” which according to him meant that children with SEN were taken to “normal” schools. One SEN coordinator stated that the government is “pretending” when talking of inclusive education and at the same time said that the government was “spoiling special education”. Another coordinator defined an integrated programme as one where children with SEN “just get to class and learn with the rest”. A SEN teacher stated that inclusion was meant to make children with SEN “feel part of the community” and not for “academic purposes”. Just like in this study, the study in Uganda (Arbeiter & Hartley, 2002) found that schools practised integration rather than inclusion.

A conference report by the government of Kenya (MOE, 2004) outlined that the policy of inclusion and integration was being implemented to reach the majority of children with SEN. It is not clear if these terms were used to mean the same thing or two different forms of provision. Ainscow *et al* (2006) contend that the confusion over the meaning of inclusion arises from the fact that inclusion has come to mean many things from including children with disabilities in mainstream schools to the broad notion of responding to diversity. The different definitions and meanings, according to Morton and Gordon (2006) create confusion to the emerging teacher who may not understand clearly what inclusion entails. The existence of inclusive education, special education, integration and mainstream education appeared to create confusion in the schools in this study. The teachers both SEN and regular recognised this confusion and suggested that there was need for an explicit policy to “stipulate what these children should learn”.

It is also important to note that inclusion as defined and practised in the western world can be misleading if used as a model in a Kenyan rural context. This is why the coordinators were making a claim that the government was “pretending” when articulating the policy of inclusion. One SEN coordinator complained that when he was being trained in the area of SEN, the lecturers taught “as if the set up was USA or Britain” because they were trained in these countries. The government sent the coordinators to western countries such as Belgium to learn issues on inclusive education which could not be implemented in Kenya due to, as claimed by the SEN coordinators, lack of sufficient funds for western like buildings and staffing levels. One coordinator remarked that Kenya could not “afford such a luxury”, referring to buildings, teacher: pupil ratios and general facilities in countries like Belgium.

According to the Kenyan government, indicators of quality in relation to the FPE policy include primary school completion rate, gross enrolment rate, repetition rate and drop-out rate. Other indicators include the textbook: pupil ratio, pupil: teacher ratio, KCPE examination performance and additional funds (World Bank, 2009). What relevance would these indicators have for children with SEN especially those in the special education units? This question is precipitated by the fact that these children did not complete primary school in an ideal sense of completion, their enrolment was haphazard with some at home and others attending school irregularly, the children varied in age from 5 years to 22 years old attending the same special education unit, did not use any meaningful text books, did not sit for KCPE exams or if they did, performed very poorly and their transition from one stage to another was unclear. One head teacher confessed that the children with SEN did not sit for exams and he could not tell how their skills were tested or which level of

schooling the children could be said to be in. Parents of children who did not come to school stated that their children had refused to come to school because they were too old and could not share classes with very young children. Tan *et al*, (2008) suggest that a qualitative kind of knowledge should be about how well and not how much students learn as well as how students can make connections of the knowledge they learn. Cummings (2008) criticizes curriculum designers for preparing students to pass examinations relevant to international and national capital markets and in the process using illustrations from foreign countries which may be unfamiliar to rural children. Heung and Grossman (2007) agree that placing value on individualism and self-advocacy is a western understanding which cannot find relevance in developing countries.

There were concerns about the curriculum that was in place for children with SEN especially those in the special education units and those on the home-based programme. Many participants felt that the curriculum was irrelevant to the needs of the learners. The SEN coordinators for example suggested that children who came from agricultural areas needed skills for agriculture as these are skills they could relate to, while those who came from fishing areas needed to be taught fishing skills. It is possible that if those in charge of implementing the curriculum feel it is irrelevant, they are likely to engage in what Duemer and Mendez-Morse (2002) refer to as policy mutation. This makes it important, according to Browder *et al* (2007), to consider how parents and teachers value and define access to the general curriculum for children. Most participants in this study were in agreement that children with SEN needed to learn life skills such as personal care. They felt that a national curriculum was not appropriate as children's learning could be influenced by local and personal characteristics ranging from economic activities practised at home to their individual skill needs. This is consistent with other research conducted in Kenya. Schools attended by disabled children in Kenya were found to be academic in their aims and unable to address education for children with mental handicaps (Mukuria & Korir, 2006) while a survey of head teachers found that there was an emphasis on the skills of personal care as opposed to a broad curriculum and preparation for employment. Meyer *et al* (1992) suggest that a quality education plan for children with disabilities needs to make reference to functional skills that the children will need in order to operate in community settings.

It has been argued that learner and family needs associated with culture and community are consistently ignored in the process of curriculum development and implementation (Hoover, 2009). In many cases, there is a disconnection between children's lives and the school context schedules, language and culture and therefore there is need to match curriculum with cultural

beliefs and priorities (Heung & Grossman, 2007). The skills identified by many participants in this study as being important for children with SEN have a strong link not just to the needs of the children but the families and society as well. For instance, the skills of counting/knowing the value of money, using public transport and safety awareness and cooking meals among others have a link to the role of children in the society. Children perform the role of running errands in the society, being sent to the shops, preparing meals for younger siblings and performing other chores in the family and the skills outlined would be handy. The inability by children with SEN to perform these chores contributed to the perception by parents that they were “useless”.

Another example is the medium of instruction in Kenyan schools which is predominantly English. Cummings (2008) states that in some school systems, the language of instruction from the first grade is in a metropolitan language that is unfamiliar to most young children. When asked how they would identify children with SEN in their classes, regular teachers in this study identified academic performance as one of the major indicators. Most subjects in the Kenyan education curriculum would be taught and examined in English which is not the language of the local children. Children in rural areas who communicate mostly in their mother tongue are likely to take longer to master another language. As Hoover (2009) argues, this may lead to placement of children in special education due to perceived poor concept thinking skills.

### ***Conclusion***

It has been noted that the education of children with SEN is characterised by cultural dimensions such as superstitions in some cultures calling for an examination of the cultures of schools and the wider society. Insistence on inclusive education without defining it within local contexts and examining the history of SEN issues will be an exercise in futility. The success of the principles of the CRC will be influenced to a large extent by local factors. As a result, there is need for the design and implementation of policy in the area of SEN to be informed by local experiences, research and literature. There is also need to harmonise national policy expectations with family and community expectations so that there is a connection between schooling and children’s lives.

## **Upholding participation rights of children with SEN; what role for parents?**

### ***Introduction***

In this section, I will argue that although children are entitled to participation rights, children in Kenya (especially in rural areas) have excessive “respect” or “fear” for adults so that it may be hard for them to raise their concerns. In this study, perceptions about children with SEN meant that the parents and teachers did not consider them capable of making decisions about what was right for them. I will therefore argue that as a starting point, parents of children with SEN need to be empowered to articulate the rights of their children in what I want to call participation by “proxy”.

The participation of children in decisions that affect their lives is a right which enables them exercise other rights and change the way they relate to adults (Ray, 2010). However, disabled children are regarded as requiring services as opposed to having rights like any other children (Campbell, 2002) and are likely to suffer all forms of abuse across cultures (Moore *et al*, 2008). Despite government policy, disabled children and young people are usually denied their right to participate in decision-making. Although there has been an increase in the participation of children and young people, disabled children, especially those with complex needs or communication impairments are less likely than their peers to be consulted in decisions about their lives. The ones likely to be consulted are the more able and articulate ones. Disabled children experience discrimination and oppression on two grounds; being children and being disabled (Franklin & Sloper, 2008). It is significant that the voices of this group are heard so that their needs can be met. Prasad (2005) argues that critical research therefore seeks to empower individuals and confront injustice in the society. The CRC makes it clear that children are entitled to provision rights (adequate food, healthcare and education), protection rights and participation rights (Osler and Starkey, 2005). However, the implementation of these principles is patchy and differs from one political and cultural context to another (Woodhead, 2010). Apart from children with disabilities, children living in the poorest and most difficult situations suffer marginalisation in the forms of extreme poverty, violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, discrimination and social exclusion (Ray, 2010). A crucial question would be this: what about children who come from poor and difficult situations and are disabled at the same time like those in this study? These children are dealing with childhood, disability and poor and difficult conditions all at the same time. The children in this study, especially those in the special education units, had communication difficulties and their parents were poor and living in difficult circumstances.

### ***The difficulties of participation for children with SEN***

This section will explore some of the difficulties associated with the participation of children in decisions that affect their lives giving examples from this study. However, it should be noted that although reference is made to children and young people in general, the difficulties for children with SEN are more pronounced due to additional factors such as communication problems and negative attitudes towards them. The result is that although the same rights may be accorded, inequity still prevails. Young and Quibell (2000) argue that the reasons for this range from lack of awareness by the general public, lack of government funding to a lack of awareness by disabled people themselves. In the focus group discussions in this study, regular teachers stated that they were not aware of any special legislation that protects the rights of children with disabilities. The parents also stated that they were not aware of any legislation concerning children with SEN. The SEN teachers and the coordinators blamed the government for lack of funding while the head teachers were blamed for diverting funds meant for children with SEN to other purposes.

One of the problems with participation is that it presents different meanings in different contexts. Lansdown (2010) captures this dilemma by questioning whether participation means expressing views and having them taken seriously as expressed by the CRC, social engagement as understood in the English-speaking world or taking part in conversations, cultural activities and economic stability of families. It has been argued that participation for children in the majority world where people live in poor and difficult conditions would be concerned with meeting basic needs and contributing to the family well-being. As a result of the collective nature that people live in the majority world, the family and community become more important than individual rights (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010; Ray, 2010; Mason & Bolzan, 2010). It can therefore be observed that participation as used in the western world focuses on children as individuals being prepared to become adults while the majority world will view children as making a contribution to the family and community in the present times. This explains why the parents in this study were more concerned about what their children were not able to do at the time. They wanted their children to be able to be sent to the shops, take care of reared livestock, cook meals, sweep the house, and so on. This is what participation would mean for them.

The children in this study were described by regular teachers as being “abnormal” or “insane” among other terms. The parents felt that their children were “useless”. It should also be noted that many of the children in the special education units had severe communication difficulties. It is therefore difficult to expect the parents and teachers to consult with these children regarding issues



affecting their lives. Can this position be justified? The values of enabling and empowering children to participate are not easy to practice. Listening to very young children is different from listening to older children. However, the fact that very young children are not able to communicate using verbal or written communication does not mean they cannot communicate (Woodhead, 2010). Lansdown (2010) observes that children are able to form views from very young ages using a complex language. Apart from young children, there has been concern about whether there can be meaningful participation for children with cognitive impairments and complex needs (Franklin & Sloper, 2008). This may explain why the SEN teachers in the schools were concerned that the exclusion of the parents of children with SEN from the school committees meant decisions taken did not favour the education of children with SEN. One SEN teacher disapproved of the fact that in the school committee, the chairman was a parent of a “normal” child, the secretary was the head teacher while the treasurer was a parent of “regular” children. He said that expecting money for children with SEN from that committee was like “dreaming”.

There is an argument that children and young people do not have the necessary experience to make appropriate decisions and therefore they should not be expected to participate fully in decision making. Prout, Simmons & Birchall (2006) observe that children are stereotyped as irrational, incompetent and deficient. Osler and Starkey (2005) argue that the emphasis on the children’s inexperience may ignore the fact that even professionals such as teachers may not have the experience to recognise the competence of children. What was however found in this study may not be necessarily that the adults did not want to consult with children with SEN but more a question of why. Why would you consult with “abnormal”, “insane”, “dirty”, “useless” “mad”, “destructive”, or “disruptive” children? Children who go by these descriptions surely cannot make appropriate decisions.

The best interests of the child may be disregarded when they conflict with those of established routines and procedures (Osler & Starkey, 2005). Adults in countries that take a rights-based approach to child issues have raised concern that emphases on child participation rights may interfere with established social order (Mason & Bolzan, 2010). In some cultures, children are seen as the property of their parents and therefore do what they are told to do. Twum-Danso (2010) gives an example of Ghana where consulting children is seen as neither a right nor an obligation for parents, a position that is shared by children and parents. Children who try to become assertive are seen as disrespectful and therefore punished. She identifies some principles that characterise childhood in a Ghanaian context which are dependency, control and ownership, never ending,

obedience and respect. She concludes that these characteristics make it difficult for children to challenge adults even when adults are wrong. Woodhead (2010) argues that it would be theoretical to propagate the participation rights of children in cultures where respect for elders is demanded and enforced by fear. This is typical of a rural Kenyan society where people live in poor conditions and where neither the parents nor the children would be bothered with participation rights in the sense of having their voices heard. This is however not isolated to rural African cultures. Osler and Starkey (2005) observe that Europe of the 19<sup>th</sup> century considered children as property of parents and had to fulfil certain duties for them such as working and supporting their parents at old age. Can it be assumed then that people in countries like Kenya are living in the Europe of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and should therefore be allowed to develop through certain stages in order to internalise the use of participation as it is used in the CRC or should different definitions of participation be incorporated in the CRC? Why would children with SEN such as those in this study not be considered the property of their parents when it is the sole responsibility of the parents to provide for these children, when some of the children depended on the parents on many aspects of their lives including using the toilet?

### ***The case for parents***

Parents in this study were blamed by teachers and government officers for the poor services accessed by children with SEN. The parents were accused of being uncooperative, disinterested in the education of their children (For example, they did not attend school committee meetings when appointed or invited), having poor attitudes towards their children and hiding the children at home. The parents also confirmed that they were sometimes called to school but they did not attend and that they did not know what their children were learning in school. They also said that they asked their children to stay at home and help with tasks such as taking care of the livestock or “tied” them with “ropes” at home for safety reasons. A study in Kenya (Samuels, 2003) found that parents did not think their children with SEN were intelligent enough to benefit from schooling. Another study in Indonesia revealed that issues such as parents’ shame of having a disabled child and the perception that educating children with SEN was not worthy still exist. Such issues, together with beliefs in African communities that disability is a curse from gods (Ndurumo, 1993; Putman, 1979) are likely to discourage parents from pursuing education for children with SEN or even exposing them to the public. Carpenter (2005) points out that when a child is diagnosed with a disability, families become upset, frightened, disturbed and vulnerable. Yamada (2007) argues that parents make choices concerning their children’s education based on their judgement and the motivation behind this may not always be educational but economic and social as well. The parents

in this study perceived their children as being “useless” because they could not make a meaningful contribution to the family or “do anything that their peers can do”. What would then motivate them to invest in their education? Some of the children were enrolled in primary schools when they were old enough to be in secondary school. These were some of the choices that parents of these children made. This is consistent with a UNESCO finding (2005a) that children with disabilities were excluded from schooling or enrolled when they were 10 years old.

It has been argued that a genuine concern for children’s lives would require the identification of the obligations that parents, teachers and the wider community have towards children (O’Neill, 1998). Opponents of children’s rights may argue that the CRC undermines parental authority and makes the rights of children superior to those of parents. However, the CRC outlines the significance of parent-child relationships and even obliges governments to respect the rights and duties of parents (Fineman and Worthington, 2009). It can be counterproductive to separate the promotion of children’s rights from promoting adults’ rights and responsibilities because programmes to empower children in circumstances where parents are deprived of their rights cannot be practical (Woodhead, 2010). Poor parents like those in this study are more worried about the “uselessness” of their children and how the children can become useful. An appropriate education which is a right for these children can make them “useful”. It therefore means that empowering these parents would be empowering the children to participate by “proxy”. It would involve dealing with issues like the perception by parents that their children are “useless” because they do not perform well academically.

The teachers in this study admitted that they did not consult the parents of children with SEN because the parents were not interested in the education of their children. The teachers said that they did not share the progress records of the children with SEN because the parents were illiterate and could not make sense of the reports. Some parents indeed said that they could not understand the progress reports. The teachers also accused the parents of focussing on academic performance of their children and expecting that the schools will buy the children things like sewing machines when the teacher’s work was to provide the skills. It can be argued that the lack of participation by these parents is a lack of participation by the children because the former would be representing the interests of the children. Is this a problem for the parents, the teachers or local culture? In cultures where children are discouraged from challenging adult decisions, Lansdown (2010) argues that programmes should be started where the adults can be sensitised about the nature and significance of children’s participation rights. Another reason for this, as observed by Prout *et al*,

(2006), is that many opportunities for children to participate are created by adults. Fineman and Worthington (2009) argue that we cannot therefore talk about children's rights without discussing the rights of parents. Governments may also claim that if children are not able to appeal directly against a violation of their rights, parents or carers can seek redress on their behalf. This is however to assume that parents have the knowledge and resources to do so (Osler & Starkey, 2005). Pells, (2010) argues that parents know what their children need but they are not able to provide this because of a lack of resources. Given that children are dependent and at the mercy of deliberations made by others (Dillon, 2010; Fineman and Worthington, 2009), we should explore ways in which their rights can be implemented without undermining the rights of those responsible for their care (Fineman and Worthington, 2009). Using the experience of an initiative by CARE international in Rwanda, Pells (2010) argues that participatory practice that is imposed from top downwards will meet resistance from the community. He adds that successful programmes for upholding participatory rights for children need to focus on the everyday environment and relationships of children but not the children in isolation.

The SEN policy in Kenya recognises that parents and the community are important partners in the education of children with SEN as they provide primary care, security and protection to the children. The policy also recognises that parents are responsible for early identification of disabilities, assessment and intervention (MOE, 2009). How can parents carry out these significant responsibilities and be important partners if they do not have the knowledge and means to do so? A lack of awareness about disability and low priority given to children with SEN has led to low enrolment levels of children with SEN in schooling (Kisanji, 1998). In this study, there were a number of children who were enrolled under a home-based programme that was dysfunctional as reported by the teachers and SEN coordinators. The parents stated that they were concerned with issues such as the safety of their children and inability to walk and that was why they did not enrol their children in school. Other parents said that their children were too old to be in primary school. Behind all these, there is a real possibility that the parents did not actually find reason to enrol their children in school. This is a result of the perceived inability of these children to contribute to the stability of the family. An associated problem is that after the introduction of FPE in Kenya, parents chose to wait to enrol their children in the first year of primary school instead of the children starting from ECDC which were not free (Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2007). The result is likely to be late identification of children with SEN and a lack of what Cummings and Williams (2008) refer to as social foundation.

There has however been critique against parents acting on behalf of children. It has been argued that children are able to achieve quality life in the community if they can articulate their own positions and that depending on parents to do this for them is not enough (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010). History has it that adults have acted in harmful ways in the name of the best interests of the child (Lansdown, 2010). It should therefore be acknowledged that while most parents would act in the best interest of the children, there are others who may not (Stainton, 2004). There was evidence in this study that some parents neglected their children. For instance, there were parents whose children had been attacked by *jiggers*, parents whose daughter had been withdrawn from school to work as a house help in order to generate income for the family and parents who tied their children with ropes at home. From the perspective of the CRC and the constitution of Kenya, these are examples of a violation of the rights of the children. But what are the alternatives for the parents? Are they to invest in the education of children who are “valueless” to the family? Is the girl who was withdrawn from school better off earning some income for the family than attending an education system whose benefits are unclear? Are the children who are tied at home not safe from harm and giving the parents some opportunities to do other chores?

### ***Conclusion***

Children have a universal right to participate in decisions that affect them. However, they face many difficulties in exercising this right. Some of these difficulties include lack of awareness of the rights by both the children and the adults, lack of resources, varied understandings of what participation means in different cultural contexts and the perception in some cultures that children are the properties of parents. Other difficulties include the perception that children are not competent enough to make appropriate decisions and the conflict between interests of the children and adults. Disabled children have to deal with two different forms of difficulties; that of being children and disabled at the same time while children in rural poor areas have to deal with an extra barrier of living in poor and difficult circumstances.

In the midst of the difficulties of participation, it is arguable that with training and resources, parents are at a position to articulate the rights of children and hold governments accountable on issues of children’s rights. In countries like Kenya (especially in rural areas), children are regarded as the property of parents and practically, the responsibility of caring for disabled children solely rests with the parents. As a result, parents make decisions and choices about the education of their children. They may choose not to enrol disabled children in schooling due to factors such as perceived unworthiness of these children. Another important point is that the CRC and national

governments recognise the core role of parents as partners in the education of children. Given that most parents will act in the best interest of their children, it is best to trust and empower parents to act on their behalf, at least as a starting point in cultures where children are not able to articulate their views especially when they are much younger and /or disabled.

What is the alternative or way forward then? The question is not whether children can participate but how (Martin & Franklin, 2010). In order for children to express their views in a free atmosphere, they need a cultural change where parents and adults can recognise the significance of listening to children (Lansdown, 2010). Given that participation rights for children will depend on the good will of adults, there is need to challenge what Franklin and Sloper (2008) refer to as ideal participation so that various methods of participation for children with SEN can be explored. There is need for some balance between the right to participation and the right to protection so that we do not place unrealistic expectations on children (Lansdown, 2010). There needs to be opportunities for children and parents to make decisions together, a model like the family group conferences as practised in New Zealand and the UK (Kirby & Laws, 2010). There is need for care in advocacy for children's rights so that it does not lead to, as Mason and Bolzan (2010) observe, separating children as individuals from their communities. Lansdown suggests the use of consultative participation where parents seek children views in an adult-led process but which recognises that children are able to contribute to decisions that affect them.

The lack of partnership experienced between parents and teachers in this study does not augur well for the education of children with SEN. In order to promote effective partnership, Prout *et al*, (2006) suggest the use of what they call a participation chain which includes resources (time, skills and confidence), mobilisation (issues that can bring people together) and dynamics (cultural and institutional factors). They argue that for participatory practices to be sustainable there is need to work with adults so that they can take children's inputs seriously and therefore work towards organisational change or the process of removing barriers to participation. Dillon (2010) argues that children need both protection and empowerment.

## **Summary**

This chapter discussed the findings of this study in the context of reviewed literature and current research. It was noted that notions of "special" and "expert" persist despite the clamour and acceptability of inclusive education. The supply of children with labels of SEN and the recognition of SEN as a distinct form of educational provision promotes the exclusion of certain children from

regular schooling. It was noted that separating children with SEN from regular schooling is a violation of their rights, goes against the much publicised policy of inclusion and celebrating diversity. It was also noted that insisting on inclusive education without a clear contextual definition that takes into consideration cultural characteristics of various communities leaves schools in a dilemma. Lastly, it was observed that children with SEN have many difficulties exercising their participation rights. Due to these difficulties that are typically cultural in the majority world, equipping parents with the knowledge and resources can be a starting point in ensuring the respect for participation and indeed other rights of children with SEN. The next section will present the closing remarks of this study.

## **Conclusion**

### ***Introduction***

This chapter restates the main objective of the study, the methodology used to answer the research questions and the main findings of the study. It also examines the implications of the study on SEN policy and practice in Kenya. The chapter finally explores the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for future research.

### ***Main objective of the study***

The main objective of this study was to investigate what the major stakeholders considered to be quality education for children with SEN in a rural setting in Kenya. In the process, the study aimed to explore how the stakeholders understood and practised the policy of including children with SEN in regular schools. The study utilised a case study approach that is rooted in a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm to answer the research questions. The first question examined the perspectives of government officers; specifically those directly linked with the education of children with SEN, that is, quality assurance and standards officers and special educational needs coordinators. The second question explored the perspectives of teachers; both regular and SEN, while the third question considered how the perspectives of the stakeholders influenced the understanding and practice in relation to the education of children with SEN.

### ***Summary of main findings***

The study revealed many findings which are consistent with other studies. The main finding in this study is that although the government of Kenya articulates the principles of the CRC in legislation and education policy, the education of children with SEN is understood and practised

in contradicting ways. Most participants in this study identified lack of training and resources as the main impediments to the successful implementation of the SEN policy. However, it appeared that underneath the lack of resources and training, there were other significant barriers. One of them was the lack of a practical definition of inclusive education for children with SEN in the midst of special education and regular/mainstream education. What does it mean to include these children? What are the outcomes for inclusion in an environment dominated by a testing/examination regime? Who is special, the children or the education they need? It was also found that the education of children with SEN was viewed as requiring something more than was available in regular schooling. The understanding of inclusive education as articulated by the government was unclear and contradictory to the participants.

The second barrier is linked to the social development theory which in this case was used to identify children with SEN as unworthy of investing in. This was because of the expectations in the families and community that children need to play an economic and social role as a result of schooling. Most participants described children with SEN in negative and demeaning ways and were regarded as the “other” in schools and the community. These negative attitudes are problematic because whereas we may legislate against discrimination, we may not legislate against attitudes. Can positive attitudes be developed/enhanced by training and resources or by curriculum and policy change?

The findings confirm that including children with SEN in regular schooling is problematic. This study identified the huge gap between SEN policy and practice in Kenya on one hand and between curriculum requirements of the national curriculum and what practitioners perceived as being quality education for children with SEN. It contributes to on-going debate about children’s rights and the significance of collaboration between parents and schools on one hand and schools and the relevant government officials on the other in the education of children with SEN. Although there have been studies on the education of children with SEN in Kenya, enough focus has not been placed on the perceptions of the core implementers of the SEN policy especially in rural settings.

### ***Implications for education policy and practice***

The picture that comes out of this study is one where the education of children with SEN leaves much to be desired. However, it is important to state that one of the major achievements for children with SEN in Kenya is that they can access free primary education. During the time



when parents paid school fees, poverty levels meant that the parents would make choices about which children they enrolled in school. The likely scenario is one where children with SEN would miss out due to their perceived less contribution to the family.

It was not the purpose of this study to give prescriptions to SEN policy in Kenya but to provide helpful information. The findings of the study are specific to this group of respondents. However, many primary schools in rural Kenya have similar characteristics and unless there is evidence to the contrary, these perceptions could apply to many local contexts. Research has a role to play in helping design a more relevant policy model for the education of children with SEN. By identifying the perceptions of those responsible for the implementation of the SEN policy, the Ministry of Education officials, curriculum developers at the KIE and teacher training colleges can design ways of addressing contradictions in policy and teacher training.

One of the main barriers to quality education for children with SEN is the contradiction between special education, inclusive education and mainstream education. The bridge between regular and special education staff leaves children with SEN in an articulated inclusive system which excludes them from regular schooling and where regular staffs do not take responsibility for their education. It is necessary for the government to clearly define what inclusion means for the children with SEN so that all stakeholders can understand. It is needless advocating for an inclusive education process that schools do not understand or agree with.

Parents can influence positive approaches to the education of children with SEN and therefore it is important to educate and resource them. Parents have to deal with children who they regard as “useless” due to poor academic performance. They need encouragement in order to develop a positive attitude towards their children and therefore advocate for their rights. The general education system favours academically successful children and unless there is an alternative progress monitoring mechanism, teachers are likely to concentrate on those children who excel academically. There is need for the Ministry of Education to provide incentives/motivation for teachers to include children with SEN in regular schooling. If teachers are recognised for how well children pass in examinations, what is the motivation for them to teach children with SEN when these children will work against that achievement? There is need to design an appropriate and culturally responsive local curriculum that can meet the needs of learners with SEN.

It is important to explore professional development strategies which can persuade regular teachers to change their perception of children with SEN. Regular teachers need to have confidence/self-efficacy that they have the skills to teach all children. Head teachers on the other hand need to be equipped with the skills and techniques of designing clear programmes for the education of children with SEN. It does not augur well when head teachers have little knowledge on what certain children need to learn. This is because the head teachers lead policy implementation in the schools and are the first quality assurance and standards officers in the schools. There is need to review the teacher training programme so that the emerging teacher is equipped with positive attitudes and skills to adapt instruction to suit diverse learners.

There is need for the Ministry of Education to review approaches used to assess the performance and learning outcomes of children with SEN. One recommendation would be to consider functional assessment as opposed to examinations. Because children with SEN do not perform well in examinations, the use of functional and outcome based assessment as an alternative may contribute towards the achievement of equity. There is also need for parents and regular education staff to understand what progress means for their children with SEN.

There was evidence of a disjointed structure in the education of children with SEN right from the education officers to the parents. There is an urgent need to design a collaborative approach to the education of children with SEN. This would include collaboration between the government officers and the schools on one hand and the schools and parents on the other. The SEN teachers need to work closely with the regular teachers so that the latter do not view children with SEN as belonging to the SEN teachers. There is need for a deliberate move to persuade parents to participate in the education of their children.

Another important issue that needs to be addressed is in relation to placement of children in special education. Placing children in special education without a clear assessment of their needs can be problematic. The evidence from this study is that the process articulated in policy is not operational. The human and physical resources provided for in the policy are not available in the districts. There is need to find ways of working with the available resources so that the lack of resources is not an explanation for haphazard placement of children in special education. A related issue is to do with quality assurance and standards. Expecting that staff who are not familiar with SEN issues take responsibility for ensuring an appropriate education for children with SEN is not ideal.

### ***Recommendations on the way forward.***

Although it was not the intention of this thesis to provide prescriptions to policy and practice in the education of children with SEN in Kenya, there are certain recommendations that can be made on the way forward. Some of them include:

- Localise the curriculum so that children with SEN can learn skills that are relevant to their community and later life.
- Design pragmatic procedures for placing children in special education.
- Initiate programmes where recent research in the area of SEN can be shared with the core stakeholders
- Initiate modules/content in the teacher training programmes that specifically target negative attitudes towards children with SEN.
- Assist schools to design school programmes where children with SEN especially those in special education units can share learning experiences with their nondisabled peers.
- Constantly seek the views of teachers and parents in designing educational programmes for children with SEN.
- Create awareness programmes in rural areas to sensitise communities on the rights of children with SEN.
- Consider alternative assessment/progress monitoring procedures for children with SEN.

### ***Limitations of the research***

This study, although intensive and detailed, was qualitative in nature involving qualitative data from a purposive sample of only three schools in three districts in rural Kenya. As a result, these findings are not intended to be generalised to other districts, schools, or even rural schools in Kenya.

Another problem was to do with informed consent by the participants. It is traditional or cultural for people in the local area to welcome visitors and therefore there was no way they would turn me away. Although there is no evidence that this affected the information they provided, there is need to consider that informed consent may mean different things in different societies.

Only those schools with special education units were targeted in this study. It may have been useful to include schools or a school where there were no special education units to find out if

participants had the same perceptions or whether perceptions in the participating schools were influenced by the presence of special education units in the schools. Another group that would have provided useful information to this study is the nondisabled children. Their perceptions would have shed more light about inclusive practices and the extent to which the negative perceptions were entrenched in the society as all the children came from the local area.

It is also important to note that what this study reported were perceptions and not “truth”. Although truth can be problematic to define, perceptions and their interpretation can vary depending on the location, the respondents and researchers involved.

### ***Recommendations for future research***

It is known that good research provides more questions than answers. A single qualitative study like this one cannot provide all answers but can pave way for future lines of inquiry.

The most striking finding was that regular staffs prefer that children with SEN be separated from their nondisabled peers. The government of Kenya favours inclusive education. Why then was a perception favouring segregation so entrenched in the staff? The contradictions about the process of inclusion can inform future research. A study to explore ways in which regular staff can take responsibility for the education of children with SEN may be a viable project.

It may be important to examine areas of teacher training that can address the negative attitudes of regular staff towards disability. This includes a focus on how all children, including the academically weak, can benefit from schooling.

There is also need to investigate how “inclusion” and “celebrating diversity” can be defined in such a way that they are understood and practicable within rural Kenyan contexts. Related to this is the need for an exploration of ways in which parents of disabled children can be encouraged to appreciate the education of their children and not regard them as “useless”. There is need to find ways of accommodating their views on what is “useful” in curriculum design for the children. It is also important to involve the community members in designing approaches that can support the inclusion of children with SEN in community activities. This can contribute to the change of attitudes towards these children and facilitate their enrolment in schools and participation in community life.

A significant lesson learnt from this study is that policy implementers need to be involved at the stage of design. Not doing so runs the risk of designing a policy whose implementation can be different from the original one, a trend that may become hard to reverse. The SEN coordinators in this study said that the government was pretending on matters of inclusion, the regular teachers wanted children with SEN educated separately, the “experts” had no confidence in the regular staff while the quality assurance and standards officers said they did not have the skills to supervise the education of children with SEN. This makes it problematic to understand how the SEN policy would be implemented. This situation begs many questions: Is it better to maintain special schools and equip them to educate certain groups of children or will it become a reason for regular teachers to exclude “problem” children from regular schooling? What is the aim of the SEN policy in Kenya and how is it understood and accepted by the core stakeholders? Is the government propagating “fashionable” inclusion in theory while the practice is exclusion? Is Kenya borrowing an inclusion policy which cannot be applied locally? If not inclusion, what then/next for children with SEN?

To sum up, I would like to raise questions that have been raised by other researchers (e.g. Christensen & Dorn, 1997): Is it not within the realm of social justice that children with disabilities have a right to an individualised education? Don’t other children have a right to education and their achievement show that they deserve it more? Don’t we need to educate everyone for better families and society? Do we need everyone? Is special education drawing resources away from the education of everyone else?

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## **APPENDICES**



## Appendix 1: Information sheets



RESEARCH TITLE: *quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in rural Kenya: perspectives of teachers and parents*

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS PARTICIPATING IN FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

I am a PhD student in the school of Education at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. This research is being undertaken as part of my doctoral studies. The research I am undertaking is investigating the perspectives of teachers and parents on the quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in a rural setting. Data will be collected using focus group discussions, interviews, observations and selected documents. Teachers and parents are in the best position to know what their children/students need and that is why their views are the focus of this research. The university requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I am inviting you and 7 other regular teachers from your school to participate in a focus group discussion. This will be a one off meeting that will take 1-2 hours. A list of issues/questions to be discussed and further information will be provided before the commencement of the discussion. It is expected that the discussion will occur in a comfortable atmosphere and the information shared will be kept confidential.

Should any participants feel the need to withdraw from the project, they may do so without question at any time before the data is analysed. Just let me know at the time.

Response collected will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written report on an anonymous basis. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally. All material and information collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisors will access the collected information. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the school of education and deposited in the university library. It is intended that an article will be submitted for

publication in a scholarly journal. All material will be destroyed 2 years after the end of the project.

All the participants will have a right to check the notes taken after the discussion.

If you have any question or would require further information about the project, please contact me or my supervisors using the details below.

### **Researcher contact details**

### **Supervisors contact details**



RESEARCH TITLE: *quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in rural Kenya; perspectives of teachers and parents*

### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR DISTRICT SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS COORDINATORS**

I am a PhD student in the school of education at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. This research is being undertaken as part of my doctoral studies. The research I am undertaking is investigating the perspectives of teachers and parents on the quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in a rural setting. Data will be collected using focus group discussions, interviews, observations and selected documents. Teachers and parents are in the best position to know what their children/students need and that is why their views are the focus of this research. The university requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I am inviting you to an interview with me at a venue and date to be agreed between January and March 2010. The interview will take between 1-2 hours. I have a list of questions that I will ask you and any unclear issues will be clarified. It is expected that the discussion will occur in a comfortable atmosphere and the information shared will be kept confidential.

Should you feel the need to withdraw from the project, you may do so without question at any time before the data is analysed. Just let me know at the time.

Response collected will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written report on an anonymous basis. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally. All material and information collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisors will access the collected information. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the school of education and deposited in the university library. It is intended that an article will be submitted for publication in a scholarly journal. All material will be destroyed 2 years after the end of the project.

You will have a right to check the notes taken after the discussion.

If you have any question or would require further information about the project, please contact me or my supervisors using the details below.

#### **Researcher contact details**

#### **Supervisors' contact details**



**RESEARCH TITLE:** *quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in rural Kenya: perspectives of teachers and parents*

## INFORMATION SHEET FOR DISTRICT QUALITY ASSURANCE AND STANDARDS OFFICERS

I am a PhD student in the school of Education at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. This research is being undertaken as part of my doctoral studies. The research I am undertaking is investigating the perspectives of teachers and parents on the quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in a rural setting. Data will be collected using focus group discussions, interviews, observations and selected documents. Teachers and parents are in the best position to know what their children/students need and that is why their views are the focus of this research. The university requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I am inviting you to an interview with me at a venue and date to be agreed between January and March 2010. The interview will take between 1-2 hours. I have a list of questions that I will ask you and any unclear issues will be clarified. It is expected that the discussion will occur in a comfortable atmosphere and the information shared will be kept confidential.

Should you feel the need to withdraw from the project, you may do so without question at any time before the data is analysed. Just let me know at the time.

Response collected will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written report on an anonymous basis. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally. All material and information collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisors will access the collected information. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the school of education and deposited in the university library. It is intended that an article will be submitted for publication in a scholarly journal. All material will be destroyed 2 years after the end of the project.

You will have a right to check the notes taken after the discussion.

If you have any question or would require further information about the project, please contact me or my supervisors using the details below.

### **Researcher's contact details**

## Supervisors' contact details



RESEARCH TITLE: *quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in rural Kenya: perspectives of teachers and parents*

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR HEAD TEACHERS

I am a PhD student in the school of Education at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. This research is being undertaken as part of my doctoral studies. The research I am undertaking is investigating the perspectives of teachers and parents on the quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in a rural setting. Data will be collected using focus group discussions, interviews, observations and selected documents. Teachers and parents are in the best position to know what their children/students need and that is why their views are the focus of this research. The university requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I intend to carry out the following procedures in your school as part of this research between January and March 2010:

- ✓ Lead a focus group discussion with 8 regular school teachers.
- ✓ Conduct an interview with the special educational needs teacher.
- ✓ Observe some lessons for children with special educational needs.

I am also inviting you to an interview with me at a venue and date to be agreed upon. I have a list of questions that I will ask you and any unclear issues will be clarified. It is expected that the interview will occur in a comfortable atmosphere and the information shared will be kept confidential.

Should any participant feel the need to withdraw from the project, they may do so without question at any time before the data is analysed. They should just let me know at the time.

Response collected will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written report on an anonymous basis. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally. All material and information collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisors will access the collected information. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the school of education and deposited in the university library. It is intended that an article will be submitted for publication in a scholarly journal. All material will be destroyed 2 years after the end of the project.

All participants will have a right to check the notes taken after the discussion.

If you have any question or would require further information about the project, please contact me or my supervisors using the details below.

#### **Researcher' contact details**

#### **Supervisors' contact details**



**RESEARCH TITLE:** *quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in rural Kenya: perspectives of teachers and parents*

#### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS**

I am a PhD student in the school of Education at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. This research is being undertaken as part of my doctoral studies. The research I am undertaking is investigating the perspectives of teachers and parents on the quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in a rural setting. Data will be collected using focus group discussions, interviews, observations and selected documents. Teachers and parents are in the best position to know what their children/students need and that is why their views are the focus of this research. The university requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I am inviting you to an interview with me at a venue and date to be agreed between January and March 2010. The meeting will take 1-2 hours. I have a list of questions that I will ask you and any unclear issues will be clarified. It is expected that the interview will occur in a comfortable atmosphere and the information shared will be kept confidential.

I will also observe your child participating in some school activities.

Should you or your child feel the need to withdraw from the research, you may do so without question at any time before the data is analysed. Just let me know at the time.

Response collected will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written report on an anonymous basis. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally. All material and information collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisors will access the collected information. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the school of education and deposited in the university library. It is intended that an article will be submitted for publication in a scholarly journal. All material will be destroyed 2 years after the end of the project.

You will have a right to check the notes taken after the discussion.

If you have any question or would require further information about the project, please contact me or my supervisors using the details below.

### **Researcher' contact details**

### **Supervisors' contact details**



RESEARCH TITLE: *quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in rural Kenya: perspectives of teachers and parents*

#### INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS.

I am a PhD student in the school of Education at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. This research is being undertaken as part of my doctoral studies. The research I am undertaking is investigating the perspectives of teachers and parents on the quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in a rural setting. Data will be collected using focus group discussions, interviews, observations and selected documents. Teachers and parents are in the best position to know what their children/students need and that is why their views are the focus of this research. The university requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I am inviting you to an interview with me at a venue and date to be agreed between January and March 2010. The interview will take between 1-2 hours. I have a list of questions that I will ask you and any unclear issues will be clarified. It is expected that the discussion will occur in a comfortable atmosphere and the information shared will be kept confidential.

Should you feel the need to withdraw from the project, you may do so without question at any time before the data is analysed. Just let me know at the time.

Response collected will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written report on an anonymous basis. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally. All material and information collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisors will access the collected information. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the school of education and deposited in the university library. It is intended that an article will be submitted for publication in a scholarly journal. All material will be destroyed 2 years after the end of the project.

You will have a right to check the notes taken after the discussion.

If you have any question or would require further information about the project, please contact me or my supervisors using the details below.



**Researcher's contact details**

**Supervisors' contact details**

## Appendix 2: Consent forms



### CONSENT OF DISTRICT QUALITY ASSURANCE AND STANDARDS OFFICERS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

RESEARCH TITLE: *Quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in rural Kenya: perspectives of teachers and parents*

I have been given and understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I have been invited to an interview with the researcher. The interview may take place outside work hours and may last approximately 2 hours.

I agree to maintain confidentiality in relation to the information I share with the researcher.

I understand that any information I provide during the interview will be kept confidential to the researcher and his supervisors.

I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project (before data collection and analysis is complete) without having to give reasons or without any penalty of any sort.

I understand that the published results will not use my name, or identify my District/office and no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.

I understand that the information I have provided will be used only for this research project.

I understand that when this research is completed, the information obtained will be destroyed.

I am aware that the summary of this research will be available for me to see should I choose to.

*(Please delete the statement that does not apply)*

*I agree to/ do not agree to participate in the research.*

*I wish to/do not wish to receive a summary of the research when it is complete.*

Signed.....

Name/position of participant.....

Date.....



CONSENT OF DISTRICT SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS COORDINATOR TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH.

RESEARCH TITLE: *Quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in rural Kenya: perspectives of teachers and parents*

I have been given and understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I have been invited to an interview with the researcher. The interview may take place outside work hours and may last approximately 2 hours.

I agree to maintain confidentiality in relation to the information I share with the researcher.

I understand that any information I provide during the interview will be kept confidential to the researcher and his supervisors.

I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project (before data collection and analysis is complete) without having to give reasons or without any penalty of any sort.

I understand that the published results will not use my name, or identify my District/office and no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.

I understand that the information I have provided will be used only for this research project.

I understand that when this research is completed, the information obtained will be destroyed.

I am aware that a summary of this research will be available to me to see should I choose to.  
(Please delete the statement that does not apply)

*I agree to/ do not agree to participate in the research*

*I wish to/ do not wish to receive a summary of this study when it is complete*

Signed.....

Name/position of participant.....

Date.....



HEAD TEACHERS AND SCHOOL COMMITTEE CONSENT FOR SCHOOL TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH.

RESEARCH TITLE: *Quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in rural Kenya: perspectives of teachers and parents*

We have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. We have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to our satisfaction.

We understand that 8 teachers from our school will be invited to participate in a focus group discussion while the special educational needs teacher will be interviewed by the researcher. The invitation will be done in a meeting arranged by the researcher. During the meeting, the researcher will give an overview of what the study will involve and the teachers will have an opportunity to ask questions. Each teacher will be given an information sheet about the research and a consent form. They may choose to sign the consent form after the meeting or within the next two days.

We understand that participation is voluntary and there will be no penalty for any teacher who chooses not to participate or who withdraws part-way through the study. Our school's participation is subject to consent by the participants.

We understand that the researcher may request documents related to the school.

We understand that children's participation will involve being observed during class lessons. Due to a possibility that the pupils' age may deter their understanding of the project, consent forms and information sheets will be given to the parents.

We understand that no teacher, pupils or the school will be identified in any publication relating to this research; pseudonyms will be used.

We understand that when this research is completed, the information obtained will be destroyed.

We understand that any information gathered during the research project will be kept confidential to the researcher and his supervisors.

We are aware that a summary of the study will be available for us to see should we choose to.

*(Please delete the statement that does not apply)*

*We agree/ we do not agree* to our school participating in this research.

*We wish/ we do not wish* to receive a summary of the study when it is complete.

Signed.....

Head teacher Name.....Sign.....

School Committee Chairman Name.....Sign.....

School.....

Date.....



PARENTS/GUARDIANS' CONSENT FOR PUPILS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH.

RESEARCH TITLE: *Quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in rural Kenya: perspectives of teachers and parents*

I/we have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I/we have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to our satisfaction.

I/we understand that my/our child will be observed by the researcher while participating in school activities.

I/we understand that the researcher may have access to records related to my/our child.

I/we understand that the published results will not use my/our child's name, or identify his/her teachers or school.

I/we understand that my/our child may withdraw from this research at any time (before data collection and analysis is complete) by telling their teacher or the researcher that they do not wish to participate without having to give reasons and without penalty of any sort

I/we understand that any information collected during the research project will be kept confidential to the researcher and his supervisors and used only for this research project.

I/we understand that when the research is completed, the information obtained will be destroyed.

I am/we are aware that a summary of this report will be available for me/us to see should we choose to.

*(Please delete the statement that does not apply)*

*I/we agree/ do not agree* to my/our child participating in the research

*I/we wish/ do not wish* to receive a summary of this research when it is complete.

Signed.....

Name of parent/Guardian.....

Date.....



PARENTS CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

RESEARCH TITLE: *Quality of education offered to children with special educational Needs in the era of free primary education in rural Kenya: perspectives of teachers and parents*

I/we have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I/we have had an opportunity to ask questions and have then answered to my/our satisfaction.

I/we understand that I/we have been invited to attend an interview by the researcher. The interview will take place at a venue and time that will be agreed upon and will take approximately 2 hours.

I/we agree to maintain confidentiality in relation to the information I/we share with the researcher.

I/we understand that any information I/we provide during the interview will be kept confidential to the researcher and his supervisors.

I/we understand that I/we may withdraw myself/ourselves (or any information I/we have provided) from this research (before data collection and analysis is completed) without having to give reasons or without a penalty of any sort.

I/we understand that the published results will not use my/our name or identify my/our child's school or my/our child's name and no opinions will be attributed to me/us in any way that will identify me/us.

I/we understand that the information I/we have provided will be used only for this research project.

I/we understand that when this research is completed, the information obtained will be destroyed.

I am/we are aware that a summary of this research will be available for me to see should I choose to.

*(Please delete the statement that does not apply)*

*I/we agree/ do not agree* to take part in this research.

*I wish/ do not wish* to receive a summary of this research when it is complete



Signed.....

Name/s of parent/s.....

Date.....



#### TEACHERS CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH.

RESEARCH TITLE: *Quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in rural Kenya: perspectives of teachers and parents*

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I have been invited to attend a focus group discussion with 7 other teachers from my school. This may take place outside work hours and will last about 2 hours.

I agree to maintain confidentiality in regard to discussion within the group.

I understand that any information I provide during the discussion will be kept confidential to the researcher and his supervisors

I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this research (before data collection and analysis is complete) without having to give reasons or without penalty of any sort.

I understand that the published results will not use my name, or identify my school or any of my pupils and no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.

I understand that the information I have provided will be used only for this research project.

I understand that when the research is completed, the information obtained will be destroyed.

I am aware that a summary of this research will be available for me to see when the research is complete should I choose to

*(Please delete the statement that does not apply)*

*I agree/ do not agree* to take part in this research

*I wish/ do not wish to* receive a summary of this research when it is complete

Signed.....

Name of participant.....

Date.....



#### TEACHERS CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (INTERVIEW)

RESEARCH TITLE: *Quality of education offered to children with special educational needs in the era of free primary education in rural Kenya: perspectives of teachers and parents*

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I have been invited to attend an interview with the researcher. The interview may take place outside working hours and will take approximately 2 hours.

I agree to maintain confidentiality in relation to the information I share with the researcher.

I understand that any information I provide during the interview will be kept confidential to the researcher and his supervisors.

I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project (before data collection and analysis is complete) without having to give reasons or without penalty of any sort.

I understand that the published results will not use my name, or identify my school or any of my pupils and no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.

I understand that the information I have provided will be used only for this research project.

I understand that when this project is completed, the information obtained will be destroyed.

I am aware that a summary of this research will be available to me to see when it is complete should I choose to.

*(Please delete one statement)*

*I agree/ do not agree* to take part in this research.

*I wish/ do not wish to* receive a summary of this research when it is complete.

Signed.....

Name of Participant.....

Date.....

### **Appendix 3: Interview questions for first round of data collection**

#### **Focus group discussion questions**

1. What do you perceive to be quality education in relation to children with SEN?
2. How in your opinion is your school working towards quality of education for children with SEN?
3. How in your opinion can parents and teachers cooperate in the education of children with SEN?
4. How would you describe the law that protects the education rights of children with SEN?

#### **Interview questions for SEN teachers**

1. What in your opinion is quality of education for children with SEN in regard to the following:
  - ✓ What the children are taught (existing curriculum)
  - ✓ How the children are taught e.g. 1-1, group, etc (curriculum delivery)
  - ✓ Interaction between children with SEN and their nondisabled peers (inclusive practices)
  - ✓ The number of teachers and support staff (staffing)
  - ✓ Teacher-parent partnerships e.g. meetings over Individual Education Plans (IEPs), home-school diary, etc
  - ✓ Physical facilities
  - ✓ Decisions on placement of children in special units( who is involved, etc)
  - ✓ Staff training and development
  - ✓ Monitoring and professional assistance from quality assurance officers (quality assurance)
  - ✓ Progress monitoring of educational goals e.g. as stated in IEPs
  - ✓ Legislation/statutes and guidelines.
2. Using the headlines in question 1 above, how is your school attempting to ensure quality of education for children with SEN?
3. How do you differentiate/ individualise planning and teaching for children with SEN in your class (es)?

4. What support is available to you from the school in your capacity as a teacher of children with SEN?

**Interview questions for district quality assurance and standards officers (DQASO)**

1. What in your opinion is quality of education for children with SEN in regard to the following:
  - ✓ What the children are taught (existing curriculum)
  - ✓ How the children are taught e.g. 1-1, group, etc (curriculum delivery)
  - ✓ Interaction between children with SEN and their nondisabled peers (inclusive practices)
  - ✓ The number of teachers and support staff (staffing)
  - ✓ Teacher-parent partnerships e.g. meetings over Individual Education Plans (IEPs), home-school diary, etc
  - ✓ Physical facilities
  - ✓ Decisions on placement of children in special units( who is involved, etc)
  - ✓ Staff training and development
  - ✓ Monitoring and professional assistance from quality assurance officers (quality assurance)
  - ✓ Progress monitoring of educational goals e.g. as stated in IEPs
  - ✓ Legislation/statutes and guidelines
2. Using the headlines in question 1 above, how is your District attempting to ensure quality of education for children with SEN?
3. How would you describe the challenges you encounter in promoting quality of education for children with SEN in your district/ how does the government support schools in providing quality education to children with SEN?
4. How would you describe the challenges you encounter in monitoring quality of education for children with SEN in your District?
5. How would you describe your relationship with SEN teachers in promoting and monitoring the quality of education offered to children with SEN?

### **Interview questions for head teachers**

What in your opinion is quality of education for children with SEN in regard to the following:

- ✓ What the children are taught (existing curriculum)
  - ✓ How the children are taught e.g. 1-1, group, etc (curriculum delivery)
  - ✓ Interaction between children with SEN and their nondisabled peers (inclusive practices)
  - ✓ The number of teachers and support staff (staffing)
  - ✓ Teacher-parent partnerships e.g. meetings over Individual Education Plans (IEPs), home-school diary, etc
  - ✓ Physical facilities
  - ✓ Decisions on placement of children in special units( who is involved, etc)
  - ✓ Staff training and development
  - ✓ Monitoring and professional assistance from quality assurance officers (quality assurance)
  - ✓ Progress monitoring of educational goals e.g. as stated in IEPs
  - ✓ Legislation/statutes and guidelines
1. Using the headlines in question 1 above, how is your school attempting to ensure quality education for children with SEN?
  2. How does the school include children with SEN in general planning e.g. design of school rules, timetables, etc?
  3. How does the government support the school in educating children with SEN (e.g. funding)

### **Interview questions for parents of children with SEN**

*(All questions were translated into the local language)*

1. How did you learn that your child has a SEN?
2. What in your opinion is quality of education for your child in regard to the following:
  - ✓ What your child is taught (existing curriculum)
  - ✓ How your child is taught (curriculum delivery)

- ✓ Interaction between your child and his/her nondisabled peers in school (inclusive practices)
  - ✓ The number of teachers and support staff in your child's school (staffing)
  - ✓ Your cooperation with teachers e.g. meetings over IEPs, school-home diary
  - ✓ Physical facilities available in your child's school
  - ✓ The process of placing your child in a special unit
  - ✓ Progress monitoring of educational goals e.g. as stated in IEPs
  - ✓ Legislation/statutes and guidelines
3. Using the headlines in question 2 above, how is your child's school attempting to ensure quality education for your child?
4. What support is available to you from the government or school in educating and caring for your child?

#### **Interview questions for district SEN coordinators**

1. What in your opinion is quality of education for your child in regard to the following:
- ✓ What your child is taught (existing curriculum)
  - ✓ How your child is taught (curriculum delivery)
  - ✓ Interaction between your child and his/her nondisabled peers in school (inclusive practices)
  - ✓ The number of teachers and support staff in your child's school (staffing)
  - ✓ Your cooperation with teachers e.g. meetings over IEPs, school-home diary
  - ✓ Physical facilities available in your child's school
  - ✓ The process of placing your child in a special unit
  - ✓ Progress monitoring of educational goals e.g. as stated in IEPs
  - ✓ Legislation/statutes and guidelines
2. Using the headlines in question 1 above, how is your office assisting parents and teachers in the district in promoting the quality of education offered to children with SEN?

## Appendix 4: Observation protocol

Observer's name.....

Child/children being observed.....

Child's/children's ages.....

Child's/children's sex.....

Observation context.....

Date.....

Time begun.....

Time ended.....

Activities/events being observed.....

Brief description of physical and social characteristics of observation setting.....

Leading question	Researcher comments
What activities are children engaged in?	
What resources are used?	
How are available resources allocated?	
Are there children helping others? How are they doing it?	
How are activities organised, labelled and explained by the teacher?	
How are pupils participating in activities?	
What verbal and non-verbal languages are used for communication?	
How long do activities take/ How does length of time affect pupils' participation?	
What goals are articulated in the group? Are they a reflection of prior planning?	
How much are children staying on task/ How much fun do children appear to be having from participating in activities?	



## **Appendix 5: Interview questions for second round of data collection**

### **Interview questions for parents**

1. What benefits would you like your child to get from schooling?
2. Why are these benefits important?
3. To what extent do you feel the goals of education for your child are being met in the current education system?
4. To what extent do you feel the home based programme is suitable for the education of your child?
5. What do you feel about how the progress of your child is communicated to you?
6. Why are you not regularly attending meetings to discuss the education of your child?

### **Interview questions for teachers (including head teachers, mainstream teachers and SEN teachers)**

1. What do you think are the goals of education for children with SEN?
2. How do you think these goals can be achieved in the school?
3. What programmes and structures has your school put in place to ensure these goals are achieved?
4. How in your opinion is the home based programme contributing to good education for children with SEN?
5. What is your opinion about how the progress of children with SEN is monitored and communicated among the various stakeholders?
6. What is your opinion about how children are identified and placed in special education?
7. What type of curriculum do you feel can appropriately meet the needs of children with SEN?
8. What do you feel is your role in ensuring that the available curriculum meets the needs of children with SEN?
9. What role do you think children with SEN can play in the society as a result of receiving good education?

### **Interview questions for SEN coordinators**

1. What do you think are the goals of education for children with SEN?
2. How do you think these goals can be achieved in the school?
3. How in your opinion is the home based programme contributing to good education for children with SEN?

4. What is your opinion about how the progress of children with SEN is monitored and communicated among the various stakeholders?
5. What is your opinion about how children are identified and placed in special education?
6. What type of curriculum do you feel can appropriately meet the needs of children with SEN?
7. What do you feel is your role in ensuring that the available curriculum meets the needs of children with SEN?
8. What role do you think children with SEN can play in the society as a result of receiving good education?

**Appendix 6: Prompts for skills parents would like their children with SEN to learn  
(second round)**

SKILL/TARGET BAHAVIOUR	ASPECTS OF THE SKILL/BEHAVIOUR
Self-care skills	Washing oneself (e.g. bathing, drying, washing hands) Caring for body (brushing hair, brushing teeth) Dressing Toileting Feeding Looking after own health (nutrition, exercise)
Domestic living skills	Cooking (e.g. prepare snacks, simple meals) Household chores (e.g. wash dishes, make bed) Outside chores (e.g. sweep, gardening) Shopping (e.g. groceries, clothing)
Community living skills	Use community businesses (e.g. restaurants,) Use public transport (e.g. bus) Pedestrian safety skills Personal safety (Appropriately cautious of strangers)
Job skills	Having a job skill that could lead to employment Work ethic e.g. getting to work in time Social skills at work
Recreational skills	Plays with toys Plays with peers Plays sports
Motor skills	Sitting upright/sitting in a chair Lifting and carrying objects Fine motor skills(e.g. picking up, grasping objects) Walking
Social skills	Shows affection to caregivers Seeks out interaction with others Interacts appropriately with familiar people Interacts appropriately with unfamiliar people Makes friends
Communication skills	Expresses needs and wants Names objects Asks information when needed Can describe events/feelings Initiates conversations Responds appropriately to questions Follows instructions
Academic skills	Drawing/colouring Listens to teacher Reading Writing Arithmetic
Behavioural	Eating disturbance

problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sleeping disturbance</li><li>Tantrums</li><li>Physically aggressive</li><li>Self-injury</li><li>Hyperactivity</li><li>Lack of activity</li><li>Overeating</li><li>Noncompliant</li><li>Resists change/insists on sameness</li></ul>
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## **Appendix 7: Child profile for children in home-based programme**

Parent Identity/Child identity.....

Relationship to child.....

Age of child.....

Gender of child.....

School Grade.....

Child living with (E.g. parents).....

Child's siblings.....

When did child start programme.....

Parents' knowledge of child's disability.....

Parents' level of education.....

Parents' occupation.....

Types and severity of disability:

1. Primary diagnosis.....
2. Additional Impairments.....
3. Level of intellectual ability.....
4. Level of speech/communication development.....