

# **Inclusion of Blind Children In Primary Schools**

*A case study of teachers' opinions in Moroto district-Uganda*

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## **Abstract**

The study investigated the teachers' opinions about inclusion of children who are blind; the factors which may influence their opinions and what they think can be done to include children who are blind in primary schools. It was a qualitative study which purposely involved five teachers from two primary schools. Data was collected through interviews.

The centre of interest in the study was on the acceptance of children who are blind by the teachers; participation of children who are blind in classroom and outdoor activities, benefits of placing children who are blind in mainstream primary schools, the challenges of including children who are blind in the mainstream and what teachers think can be done to overcome such challenges.

The study findings revealed that the nature of attitudes the teachers had towards children who are blind, additional disability and class size determined the teachers' acceptance of children who are blind. The teachers also believed that children who are blind can be helped to participate in school activities through classroom and physical environmental modifications; curriculum modifications and provision of specialised equipment.

Teachers felt that placement of children who are blind in the mainstream can make them achieve social benefits; academic benefits and acquire special skills. The study findings also revealed that for successful inclusion of children who are blind, teachers needed support in the provision of special specialised equipment; collaboration with other professionals; construction and equipping the resource rooms where remedial support for children who are blind can be exercised.

The following challenges were expressed by the teachers: Lack of skills and competence, large class sizes and lack of specialised equipment. In order to overcome these challenges, teachers used various methods of teaching for example peer teaching, cooperative learning and team teaching. It is suggested that training and re-

training of teachers in the field of Special Needs Education, provision of specialised equipment, recruitment of more teachers and awareness seminars may help in the inclusion of children who are blind.

## **Dedication**

This research is dedicated to my late father, Serwano Orikodi; mama Debora Akol; my wives, Salome Janet Atyang and Lydia Betty Mugide; children Serwano, Esther, Mercy, Jonathan, Igune Junior, Job and the entire clan of Atekok Isengoria.

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## Acronyms

<b>CCTs:</b>	Centre Coordinating Tutors
<b>CWB:</b>	Children Who Are Blind
<b>EARS:</b>	Education Assessment and Resource Services
<b>EFA:</b>	Education For All
<b>MOES:</b>	Ministry of Education and Sports
<b>SFG:</b>	Schools Facility Grant
<b>SNE:</b>	Special Needs Education
<b>SNECOs:</b>	Special Needs Education Coordinators
<b>UNEB:</b>	Uganda National Examinations Board
<b>UNISE:</b>	Uganda National Institute for Special Education
<b>UPE:</b>	Universal Primary Education

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**Appendix 1:** Semi-structured interview guide for teachers

**Appendix 2:** Introductory letter from Moroto district education office

**Appendix 3:** Map of Uganda showing the study area

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Introduction

From time immemorial the attitudes of most Karimojong towards formal education is generally regarded as low. As a result, it is common to find children of school going age (6-12 years) including those who are blind out of school.

Moroto district, the area of study is situated in the north-eastern part of Uganda. It is one of the five districts that make up Karamoja sub region. The others are: Abim, Kotido, Kaabong and Nakapiripirit.

The study investigated teachers' opinions about the inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream primary schools in Moroto district. On assumption that teachers play a big role in the teaching and learning process of all learners irrespective of their abilities and disabilities, their opinions were also assumed as very vital for the successful implementation of the inclusion process. In this chapter, key terms are defined but details are presented in chapter two. The following are also presented: Brief background information about Moroto where the study was conducted, education of children with visual impairment the group children who are blind belong, statement of the research problem, and significance of the study and structure of the thesis.

## 1.2 Description of key terms

### **Visual Impairment**

Visual impairment is the umbrella concept encompassing all degrees of visual loss. It is used to mean persons whose vision loss constitutes a significant limitation to perform tasks that require sight. This can be as a result of disease, trauma or a

congenital degeneration that cannot be corrected by any conventional means, including refractive error correction, medication, or surgery (Arditi and Rosenthal, 1998). Persons with visual impairment can be categorized into two groups namely blind and low vision.

### **Blind**

The concept blind refers to a high degree of vision loss such that any residual vision is not useable in performing visual tasks. The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB, 1990). In this study the term “children who are blind” is used to refer those children who have limitations in performing visual tasks with or without vision devices. Such children may require Braille or non-visual materials for their learning.

### **Blindness**

Blindness is loss of useful vision. It can be temporal or permanent. It is caused by damage to any part of the eye, optic nerve or the area of the brain. (Webster New World College Dictionary, 2005)

### **Low Vision**

Low vision is a term that generally refers to a severe visual impairment whereby the affected person is necessarily limited to distance vision but also unable to read a newspaper at a normal viewing position or other reading material even with correction (Nielsen, 1997, Barraga, 1964). Children with low vision can be helped to learn by providing them with optical devices like magnifying glasses, large size print materials and good lighting environment (Corn and Ryser, 1989)

### **Inclusion**

Inclusion is viewed as a strategy for learners with special educational needs to attend, participate, and contribute to the learning process in any ordinary school. Hence adjusting and changing the practice in the home, schools and the society at large in

order to meet the needs of all children/individuals regardless of their differences. (Skjørten, 2001)

## **Opinion**

Opinion is a belief not based on absolute certainty or positive knowledge but what seems true, valid or probable to ones own mind and judgment. (Webster's New World College Dictionary, 2005) In this Study, the term opinion is used to mean what ideas, thoughts and the judgment primary school teachers have about the inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream school activities in Moroto district.

## **1.3 Background information**

The Karimojong are pastoralists living in a semi-arid plain of Moroto district in Karamoja sub region with low and unreliable rainfall. (The Government White Paper on Education, 1992) Their livelihood is hinged on the cow economy. The cow is the major livelihood, an asset for Marriage and prestige which must be acquired, protected and multiplied by any means.

In Moroto district and Karamoja sub region in general, the Karimojong resent formal education for cultural reasons that the children play in the house hold economy. Boys irrespective of the ability or disability have to learn and acquire herding and protection skills at an early age to develop into strong and brave men who can protect both the animals and the society and to acquire more animals. Boys who have gone to school are considered cowardly and non persons "from the social point of view, this is why boys are withdrawn in primary classes before they are "indoctrinated" against the Karimojong life style by schooling.

Girls on the other hand have to do all domestic chores, prepare for marriage in order to fetch a high bride price of 30 to 60 head of cattle. So they are considered a source of wealth. Girls who go to school are considered spoiled, promiscuous and wouldn't fetch good bride price, so they better not go to school and if they do must be

withdrawn at an early age. The Karimojong also believe that education is a too long term investment in comparison to their traditional education which brings them income very fast (Abul, 2006).

This has led to drastic drop of enrolment in the district as early as primary two and critically reaches low levels in primary six and primary seven. For instance, in 2008, the total school enrolment in the district was 26,384 (29%) of the school going age (6-12 years) leaving 71% at home. The total number of children with special needs was 1,108 (4.2%). Children with visual impairment were 320 (28.8%). Those who are blind were 84 (26.25%). Blind children who completed the year were 58 (69%). Daily school attendance in boarding schools is higher than in day schools because day scholars' attendance is interrupted by home chores such as searching for grass and water for the cattle, scaring birds from the sorghum fields during dry seasons and cultivation seasons respectively. (Abul, 2006)

Bearing in mind the above scenario the Karimojong seem to consider formal education not relevant and priority to their life style. The statistical figures above seem to indicate that many children including those who are blind do not access formal education in the district. This could be a violation of children's rights to basic education. It therefore becomes compelling to study the teachers' opinions about inclusion of children who are blind into the mainstream primary schools in Moroto district.

## 1.4 Current education practice in Uganda

In Uganda education is considered as a fundamental basic human right for all its citizens. Article 30, of the Uganda Constitution, (1995) states that:

*“All persons have a right to education”*

Education of children with special needs in Uganda is provided for in three models: the units for the deaf & the blind; deaf-blind; special schools and mainstream schools.

Special Needs Education (SNE) in Uganda started in the 1950s with the creation of programme for children with visual impairment under the efforts of the then British colonial governor, Sir Andrew Cohen and has continued to date (Okech, 1993; Matovu, 1994). In 1954, a school for the blind was set up in Madera in Soroti district. In Moroto district education of the blind started in 1969

Formal education in Uganda was introduced by the White Missionaries mainly for the children of Chiefs and to provide functionaries needed by the British Colonial Government. So right from the onset, this school system was not for all and it therefore grew to become highly competitive with fewer and fewer students continuing to the next level of education. As a result, many Ugandans the Karimojong inclusive remained illiterate. (Aguti, 2002).

It is against this background that in December 1996, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni launched a policy of UPE in accordance to the Government White Paper on Education 1992. The UPE Policy was then implemented in 1997. Under this Policy, the Government was to provide “free” education to a maximum of four children from each family. The child with disability was a priority. However, the trend has now changed. All children of school going age are to receive basic education no matter the cultural social or economic ability or disability background (MOES, 2002). This is in an attempt to achieve Education for All (EFA) by 2015. This has led to an increase of children with special needs enrolled in primary schools by 800% from 26,429 in 1997 to 218,286 in 2002 (MOES, 2004). As a result, the Government took a number of steps to ensure that the needs of disabled children were given a priority in line with the National Legislations. As a result, training of teachers in the field of Special Needs Education in conjunction with Kyambogo University was started. The Department of Special Needs Education and Career Guidance was also created within the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES). Currently, each district in the country has at least one staff responsible for the admission of children with special needs in the mainstream primary schools and ensures that they do not drop out prematurely. The National School Mapping Census 1999 reports a total of 150,559 children with

disabilities attending school. 28,668 (19.04%) were with visual impairment a group where blind children belong.

In Moroto district 296 (9.03%) were of visual impairment whereby 96 (32.4%) were blind.

With the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE), teachers are now expected to teach all children including those with special needs in the same classes or environment. However, on the investigator's personal experience as a teacher, the concept of inclusion has been introduced when a huge number of teachers are not trained in special needs education, inadequate specialized learning and teaching materials and high teacher-pupil ratio of one teacher per class of about 80 pupils. For instance, in Moroto district, 20.7% of regular teachers are trained. Some schools in the rural are handled by one teacher against two or three classes. 15 (3.5%) teachers are trained in special needs education. It is difficult to attract teachers from other districts due to hardening conditions in the rural schools such as lack of teachers' accommodation. Teachers have to daily walk at least 10 kilometers to and from school. Insecurity is another hardship in the district. (Abul, 2006) With such conditions coupled with the feelings of the indigenous towards formal education, it is not known what opinions primary school teachers have about the inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream schools in Moroto district.

Despite these provisions, special schools in Uganda do not meet the minimum educational standards set by the Education Standard Agencies (MOES, 2001). The ministry further argues that many learners enrolled in special schools could instead have benefited more effectively from inclusive setting. Ordinary teachers in Moroto district seem to perceive education of children with special needs as additional burden on their teaching responsibilities. For instance, it is always common to hear some of them say that:

*“These children must be taken to their unit where their teachers get something little. After all some of them do not cope with standards in ordinary schools. It is a real bother...”*

Such perception among teachers working in inclusive setting is dependent on the differing background and perceived roles of a teacher (Guralnick, 2000).

It is not known whether teachers in Moroto as one of the key actors in inclusive education have favorable opinion towards the programme. For instance, children who are blind are either left out or forced out of the school system due to various reasons. These reasons include: The traditional methods teachers use for teaching and learning; poor attitudes towards the learners with Special Needs by the peers, school administrators and other stakeholders (MOES, 2003). Besides this, education is not considered a priority by the indigenous of the area.

## 1.5 Statement of the Research Problem

Given the background of the Karimojong perception towards formal education offered in schools and their life style, it is important to ask *“What are the teachers opinions about the inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream primary schools, what factors may influence their opinions and what are the teachers opinions of what could be done to promote the inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream primary schools in Moroto district?”*

Internationally, education is considered as a fundamental basic human right (Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948). Article (26) states that:

*‘Every child is entitled to quality basic education offered in a natural environment nearest to his or her home’.*

The Government of Uganda ratified all these declarations. As a result, laws, legislations and policies have been instituted to support education for all children including those with special needs.

Although all children have a right to education, many children, with or without disabilities in Moroto district seem not to have this right. Many of them either drop out of school prematurely or do not go to school at all. (Refer to 1.3 above)

## 1.6 Significance of the study

Taking into consideration the emphasis given to inclusive education and Education for All (EFA) by 2015 at all levels (UNESCO, 2008 Global Monitoring Report). There is a need to address issues relating to the inclusion of all children in all the educational institutions in the country. It is a hope that the study may highlight the following: what the teachers' opinions are; the factors which may influence their opinions and what they think can be done to promote the inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream primary schools in Moroto district. It may also provide information for teachers and school administrators on the importance of accepting children who are blind to study alongside their sighted peers in the same school environment. Finally, it may provide a basis for policy makers in special needs education to plan for the improvement in the provision of education for children who are blind in mainstream schools.

## 1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into five main chapters. Chapter one contains the general introduction and the background to the study, statement of the research problem, research question and the significance of the study.

Chapter two concerns with the clarification of the main concepts and discussion on what is meant by these concepts, previous studies in relation to the study are highlighted.

Chapter three presents the research methodology. The following are described, research design, methods used for data collection, instruments, schools where the study was conducted, teachers that participated in the study, procedure of data collection, organization and analysis of data, consideration for validity and reliability, ethical considerations and challenges encountered during the data collection process.

Chapter four covers presentation and analysis of data.

Chapter five contains discussion of the findings, concluding remarks and possible suggestions / recommendations.



## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the relevant literature on inclusion is examined. Clarification of major concepts is also done.

### 2.2 Inclusion

The concept of inclusion came into existence after the Salamanca Conference and it states that:

*“Every child has a fundamental right to education and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain acceptable level of learning” (UNESCO, 1990 p.viii)*

(Skjørten, 2001) refers inclusion as a practice of educating all or most of the children in the same classroom which is a learning friendly environment where diversity is experienced, embraced and recognized as enrichment for all involved. Curricula, teaching approaches and methods should emphasize dialogue, sensitivity to children’s needs, good social climate where learners share rather than competing, creative and flexible teachers and classroom management. This implies enabling all learners to participate fully in the life and work of mainstream settings regardless of their needs.

Skjørten (1999) & Skjørten ( 2000) further states that ‘inclusion’ focuses on adjusting the home, school and society at large so that all children have the opportunity to interact, play, learn, experience the feeling of belonging and develop according to their potentials and difficulties and there by obtaining quality of life within their natural environment. She continues to explain that in inclusion, adaptations have to be made in the home, play ground, classroom and work place in order to be able to

meet the needs in such a way that they can participate and feel competent rather than increase the feeling of incompetence. Inclusion calls upon the teachers and peers not to discriminate children who are blind but develop a respectful attitude towards them.

In Uganda, inclusion is viewed as a process of addressing the learner's needs within the mainstream schools using all the available resources (UNISE, 2002). In this process emphasis are vested on quality, accessibility and change of attitudes, behavior, teaching methods, and curriculum in order to meet specific needs of children with special needs.

Inclusive Education is based on the belief that everyone should learn, grow and work with others of similar and diverse background in a regular school (Skjørten, 2001; Skjørten, 1999 & 2000). This is in line with the Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action on Special Needs Education (1994) that states that:

*“While inclusive schools provide a favorable setting for achieving equal opportunity and full participation, their success required a concerted effort, not only by teachers and school staff but also by peers, parents families and volunteers .p.11”.*

From the descriptions above, the main essence of inclusion is to bring all children into an inclusive school where they should have the same right and obligations, equal opportunity to fully participate in all school activities regardless of their strengths and weaknesses but with adequate support they may require.

The principle of inclusion is that ‘schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other needs’ (Salamanca Statement, 1994:6). The ‘school for all’ ideology advocates for children with disabilities as far as possible attending the neighborhood school that would be attended if the child did not have a disability. Hence inclusion can be seen as a further step towards normalization of children with disabilities in the education system. In this case learners with special needs feel as members of the group or class in their

regular school. The learners participate naturally as a regular member of the class. No special class should exist but as a place for enrichment in activities for all students.

Materials and general curriculum are adapted to facilitate the participation and learning. Learners with special needs move with fellow peers to subsequent grades in school. From the descriptions above, Inclusion requires collective efforts in the school, society and entire community. This is because realizing the goal of successful education of children cannot be achieved by an individual or organization. It requires the co-operation of all the teachers, peers, families and the mobilization of the community and the voluntary organizations as well as the support of the public at large (UNESCO, 1994)

Reynolds, Wang and Walberg (1992) emphasizes that regular (mainstream) education system should take responsibility for all children including those with special educational needs so that the available resources would be shared within an inclusive setting.

Holbrook (1996) argued that placing children with visual impairment in the regular classroom provides them the opportunity to interact, know one another and share concerns and experiences with sighted children. He further noted that provision of adapted materials like Braille books and skillfully knowing how to use these adapted equipment, children who are blind can promote competition with their classmates. He also pointed out that mainstreaming promotes the acquisition of special skills like orientation and mobility, Braille reading and writing, activities for daily living, listening skills adaptive physical education and recreational skills.

In addition to this, Ainscow (1995) pointed out that for inclusive education to succeed, the education system must be structured in such a way that it can accommodate a diversity of learners. He emphasized that when education fails to provide for and accommodate such diversity, that learners are excluded or drop out. Support services should be provided because it will ensure the recognition and

appropriate responses to the needs of all learners and there by promotes effective learning.

Kristensen, (2000) states that it is crucial that the support system can provide continuous and competent advice to both teachers and learners in order to ensure that quality education takes place. She therefore emphasized that teachers must have training because it gives them the tools to teach all learners in the same class and understand the diversity of children's needs.

With all the above statements, inclusion came to be viewed not as a reform of special education but restructuring of the general education system. In context of education, the restructuring of schools along inclusive lines is a reflection of social model in action (Mittler, 2000). This approach favored the evolution from integrated education (where a child is adapted to fit the mainstream environment. Contrary to integration, inclusion means that all the teachers are responsible for the education of all learners and the curriculum and the physical environment must be adapted to cope with the diversity.

## 2.3 Challenges of inclusion

Although inclusion provides enrichment for all involved, it is important not to overlook the challenges one is facing.

A study carried out by the Ministry of Education and Sports (2005) on the educational inclusion of children with visual impairment indicated that there were many challenges that hindered the inclusion of children who are blind. They included the following: Children with visual impairment did not have access to text books in Braille; huge class sizes; lack of assistive devices; children with additional disabilities were less attended to by the teachers and they had least attendance rates. This is similar to the assessment carried out in Karamoja by the Moroto and Kotido districts EARS/SNE staff in (1998) where it was identified that there was inadequate

specialized staff to work with learners with special needs already placed in mainstream schools.

## 2.4 Opinion

According to Webster's New World College Dictionary, (2005), 'opinion' is a belief not based on absolute certainty or positive knowledge but what seems true, valid or probable to ones own mind and judgment. Opinions may also be described as an expression of attitude in words.

From the descriptions above, Glynn (1999) says that "*Opinion expresses attitudes, but not all attitudes are expressed. Attitudes are only predisposition to respond; and opinions are responses. And that opinion consists of aspects like: Knowledge, acceptance, expectation, temperament and judgment*".

In this study, an opinion concerns the following:

How the teachers understand children who are blind, the experiences that the teachers had in coping with these children, their acceptance to implement inclusion and the relationship between the teachers and blind children in the mainstream schools. I looked at these aspects as very important because they are inter related and support each other in the formation of either positive or negative opinions

## 2.5 Laws, Legislations and policies that support inclusive education

### National Policies

In Uganda, education is perceived as a basic human right.

Influenced by the growing number of international declaration on education e.g. UNESCO, 1994, national laws, legislations and policies have been formulated in

Uganda. The concept of inclusive education is gaining popularity in a Ugandan context. It has consequently been used in various government documents and programmes that provide for education. It includes the following among others:

*The Government White Paper on Education (1992)* clearly spells the Government's commitment to provide basic education to all learners irrespective of their ability, ethnic origin, and social group, place of birth or gender. It emphasizes the integration of persons with disabilities and Special Needs into ordinary schools nearest to their homes

*The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995)*

Several articles demonstrate policy direction favorable for inclusion and education for all. For instance Article 30 explains that:

*"All persons have a right to education"*

*The Children's Statute (1996)* outlines the roles of Government and other stakeholders in supporting children with disabilities and states that:

*"A child has a right to be educated, guided, immunized, given food, clothing and medical care"*

The statute also consolidates the constitutional provisions relating to children and it provides for Local Government's support for the protection of children. For instance, the Local Government Act (1997) currently has an executive officer in-charge of children's affairs at all local councils. It emphasizes the need to provide opportunities for children with special needs to education and special support to enable them reach their full potentials.

*The Universal Primary Education (1997)*

Universal Primary Education (UPE) is the provision of basic Education (primary Education) to all Ugandan children of school going age. The ideal behind UPE Policy

was that the disadvantaged families benefited first and it states “Children- with disabilities (Special Needs) have a priority over normal children (MOES, 1998). In providing this education, the following must be guaranteed, access, equity, quality and reliance of this education which should be affordable by the Government of Uganda and the majority of our people. The relevance of this education is to meet the needs of all children as well as meeting the national goals

#### International Policies

Under the influence of disability movements in various countries and the advocacy of persons with disabilities themselves, the United Nations (UN) passed a series of conventions and declarations like Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), The Convention on the Rights of the child (1989), Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), The World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, -1990), and The UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1992) stated that the general education authorities are responsible for the education of persons with disabilities in integrative settings. Education of persons with disabilities should form an integral part of national educational planning, curriculum development and school organization (Savolainen & Alasuutari, 2000). This gave an impetus of human rights and social justice approach on disability issues and education of persons with disabilities. This has led to the emergence of a view point that education of persons with disabilities is an entitlement in the mainstream schools and a denial of it is a denial of equal opportunity.

In support of inclusive education, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Article 26 establishes that:

*“Every person has a right to education. Basic education should be free and compulsory”*

The Convention on the Rights of the child (1989).Article 28 establishes the rights of every child to get education and suggests that primary school be compulsory for all children.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action on Special Needs (Salamanca, 1994). The Salamanca Statement emphasizes among other things the right of all children, including those with temporary and permanent needs for educational adjustments to attend school in their home communities in inclusive classes.

Together, these policies recognize the human right of all children to education which is inclusive (Rustermier, 2002)

## 2.6 Previous studies about teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with disabilities into ordinary schools

Globally, many studies have been carried out on teacher's attitude towards inclusion of learners with special needs into ordinary schools. Terms such as integration or mainstreaming have been used. Others have used the term inclusion. Although different terms have been used to mean the same thing, Mitller (2000) maintains that there are differences in values and practice among them. 'Integration' involves placing a child with special needs in ordinary mainstream school where a child is to adapt to the school. 'Inclusion' is based on the value that recognizes and celebrates diversity arising from gender, nationality, race etc. This implies that all the pupils have the right to attend studies in the neighborhood school.

All of them seem to target the provision of education of children with special needs. In this study, the term inclusion is used. It investigated on teachers opinions about the inclusion of children who are blind into the mainstream primary schools in Moroto district. The underlying assumption has been that teachers' attitudes can be the fulcrum determining the ultimate success or failure of an inclusion programme (Layser and Tappendorf, 2001). Gall, Borg & Gall (2003) have defined an "attitude" as an individual's viewpoint or disposition toward a particular 'object' (a person, a thing, an idea etc.). Attitudes are considered to have three components: (1) an affective component, which consists of the individual's feelings about the attitude

object; (2) a cognitive component, which is the individual's belief or knowledge about the attitude object; and (3) a behavioral component, which is the individual's predisposition to act toward the attitude of the object in a particular way. Teachers' attitudes referred from the studies below were those related to their opinions, feelings, beliefs and perceptions towards inclusion of children with special needs generally and those who were blind in particular into the mainstream. Factors that may have influenced the teachers' opinions are also highlighted.

A study carried out by Mushoriwa (1998) on the attitudes of primary school teachers in Harare towards the inclusion of blind children in regular classes showed that although regular teachers understood the problem associated with blindness, 58.25% did not make appropriate educational provisions for blind children in the regular classrooms because of heavy workload and lack of resources. The majority of teachers 94% indicated that they were not prepared to teach them. These children were seen as a burden and as interfering with the normal flow and routines of regular class activities.

Van Reusen, Shoho and Barker, (2000) state that teachers who feel less positive towards the idea of inclusion will not implement effective instructional strategies as often as teachers with positive attitudes

A study carried out by Opdal, Wormnæs, and Habayeb in (2001) in Palestine on the teachers opinions indicated that 60% of the teachers who participated in the study were positive about the inclusion of learners with special needs into regular schools with those with physical disabilities, visual impairment and hearing impairment more includable than those behavioral problems and learning difficulties in specific areas such as reading and writing. Factors such as: nature and severity of disability, teachers' experience and their beliefs about the power of teaching, professional training of teachers, number of subjects taught, gender of the teachers and characteristics of the schools influenced the teacher's perspectives towards inclusion of children with disabilities.

Wilezenski (1992, cited in Booth & Ainscow, 1998) conducted a study in Australia on teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education. He found out that the teachers were more positive about students whose programmes focused on social inclusion than those requiring physical changes in their school or classroom. The teachers were also more accepting to students with physical disabilities than to those who necessitated academic modifications. He then concluded that such research findings indicate that the type of disability, and the demands it eventually makes on a teacher, will influence teacher attitude towards including a child with such a disability in a regular class.

Another study carried out in America on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion indicated that teachers who were not participating in inclusion programmes had strong negative feelings about inclusion and they felt the decision makers were out of touch with classroom realities.

Class size, inadequate resources, teacher's attitudes towards Persons with disabilities, severity of the disability and lack of adequate preparation would affect the success of inclusion (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slushar and Saumell, 1996).

A study carried in Uganda indicated that school administrators were positive in including children with visual impairment into the regular classrooms although most parents seemed to have preferred having their children in the boarding sections where the conditions were favorable than the regular school where they commute from their homes (Alenyo, 2001)

## 2.7 Curriculum Concerns in inclusive education.

Drawing from the schools' general curriculum, inclusion provides adaptations to enable all learners to benefit from the common curriculum. Modifications are required in methods of teaching, instructional materials, content, pupil activities etc. This is very important because learners with special needs are a varied group whose abilities and needs are quite different. (UNEB, 2005)

In line to this, Alenyo (2007) pointed out that although all learners can benefit from a broad curriculum some areas of it need greater focus to meet the diverse needs of children with special educational needs. He argued that like all learners, those with special needs need to follow a programme that caters for the acquisition and use of sensory-motor skills, cognitive skills and processes, play and social skills, self help skills, communication and motor skills. He posed a question that “Are teachers ready to cope with this new trend?”

It took the United Kingdom-a well developed nation at least 15 years to grapple with the pragmatic challenges of inclusion since its inception (Robertson, 1999)

Segregated education provisions of children with special needs was partly justified on the grounds that different categories of impairment were best handled through the use of different special curricular and methodology (Fish, 1989).

In Uganda, classes from primary one to primary three use thematic curriculum. In this curriculum the local language is used as a media of instruction, while from primary four to primary seven follow general curriculum (MOES, 2005).

This means that the children including those who are blind are to follow this curriculum in the mainstream classrooms.

However, as the curricular are in place, it’s upon the individual teacher to modify the teaching and learning resources to meet the needs of all learners including those who are blind. Teachers need to be innovative and creative to provide activities to appropriately differentiate their programmes (Mitchell, 1999) For example a child who is blind has to read Braille books while the other non disabled read from ordinary books (Mitchell 1999).

In support of this, Moltzen (2005) and Smith Polloway, Polton and Dowdy (2005) argue that it is important that Individual Education Plan should be based on the learners’ area of need. Teachers should work towards that target.

## 2.8 Teachers' role in inclusion:

Teachers play a significant role in planning and implementing teaching and learning strategies for all learners in a mainstream classroom, regardless of their status. They play an important role in the success of inclusion in the mainstream classroom. It is the teacher who makes sure that learners with special needs have the same rights to a quality education as those without special needs [Mitchell, 1999]. If the teachers have positive attitudes in providing the best education for all learners, then inclusion will be more likely to succeed. That means valuing and interacting with children with varying learning needs (Gillies, 2002; Whyte, 2005).

Mentis; Quinn, Smith and Ryba (2005) emphasized that in order to meet the academic needs of the learners, teachers have to provide learning/teaching materials, strategies and modified curriculum which are accommodative to all learners in an inclusive classroom.

Mentis et al, 2005 & Smith et al 2004 say that it is important for a class teacher to develop effective measures which would motivate children to become actively involved in class activities. Such measures could be classroom organization, creating good relationships for learning, designing and implementing teaching methods that allow the learner's participation. In short, the teachers should be equipped with knowledge and skills to manage diverse classes where children have different needs which need to be addressed differently in the same classroom.

## 2.9 Resources and facilities

Teaching resources and materials as well as school facilities are part of the contributing factors in supporting inclusive practices. When a school is well equipped with the basic teaching and learning materials, the teacher's job is made easier and the learning outcomes of all learners will improve for example, learners with reading difficulties should be given reading books of varied levels (Gross, 1996). He further

emphasizes that proper positioning, sitting and movement opportunities are made easy.

The environment should be modified to provide children with special needs access to offices, classrooms, toilets, library play grounds etc. with access to all environmental areas children with special needs will be able to interact with others academically and socially (Mitchell, 1999). Concrete teaching and learning materials should be used by the teachers. Teaching and learning materials help the teachers and learners who are blind to discuss something that is concrete. Concrete materials also provides the learners who are blind with tactile experiences that help them to explore and describe whatever is being learnt and give meaning to the new knowledge (Thompson, 2002; Stein & Bovalino, 2001). Other important devices necessary for children who are blind are mobility appliances such as white canes. They are important for improved security and independence of a person who is blind (Pogrund & Rosen, 1989)

## 2.10 Strategies in inclusive education

UNESCO (1993) provides for some ways by which classroom teachers could be equipped with skills needed to implement an inclusive approach to education. These strategies include among others the following:

### 2.10.1 Co-operative learning

Co-operative learning is a term that explains how learners are involved working together in small groups to accomplish the given task. This can have a positive effect on academic achievement, self esteem, social relationships and personal development (Gillies, 2000; Suhmidt and Harriman, 1998). This is very important because as the learners work in groups, they share ideas and learn from each other. Some groups may have mixed abilities as such they can help others and share ideas together (Ainscow, 1999; Gillies, 2000). Gillies, (2000) further reported that use of co-operative learning is vital in comprehension reading, problem solving in mathematics etc.

Therefore, if teachers are to promote inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream classroom, they have to involve every child in the group and assign each of them a task to be accomplished. The teacher should also supervise them and make sure that each learner is participating.

The importance of classroom management and establishment of rules and routines is very vital. An aspect of effective planning can lay out and organization of classroom resources, rules for homework and pupils participation etc.

### **2.10.2 Peer support**

Peer support system is one of the approaches for helping children with special needs in an inclusive classroom.

Undvari-Solner and Thousand (1995), said that peer teaching provides many benefits to all learners in the regular classroom. For instance, it provides room to building up social relationship among children with special needs and their peers. It provides academic learning Children will be able to share knowledge together.

### **2.10.3 Peer tutoring**

Peer tutoring is when children in pairs are involved in a learning activity in the classroom. This method can be used to help learners who have a difficulty in reading (UNISE 1997). Peer tutoring also provides assistance to ease the teachers' workload and pressure. It is done by assigning tasks to capable learners as peer assistants to help learners with special needs (Clark, Dyson and Millward, 1997). However, peer teaching has been associated with negative results. It is seen as an interaction between children with special needs and their non-disabled peers. It equates to assisting and instructing them rather than allowing them to contribute to the discussion (Hall and McGregor, 2002).

#### **2.10.4 Team teaching**

The aim of this is to foster teacher collaboration to help individual teachers develop various aspects of their classroom practice. It involves teachers observing each other, or support each other through coaching (UNISE 2002). On the other hand [Smith et al, 2005 argue that for inclusion practice to be effectively implemented in the mainstream school or class, there must be collaboration among regular teachers, special education teachers and peers. Collaboration will help children with special needs to gain confidence to learn and develop good social relationships within the learning environment.

#### **2.10.5 Training in Orientation and Mobility**

Mobility training must have a more central and comprehensive role in a total educational plan, which must be adjusted to functional goals of an individual. It becomes effective as a means of coping with the problems of persons who are blind. Mobility skills facilitate language and communication development. (Tellevik & Martinsen, 1991)

Similarly, Hill & Ponder (1976) said that the ultimate goal of orientation and mobility is to enable the blind person to move purposefully in any environment, familiar or unfamiliar and to function safely, efficiently, gracefully and independently. Training in mobility enhances self-esteem & self-confidence; development gross and fine motor skills. Possession of mobility skills creates more social interaction of an individual.



## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The study investigated the teachers opinions about the inclusion of children who are blind (CWB) in the mainstream primary schools in Moroto district. It also investigated the factors which may influence the teacher's opinions and what the teachers think can be done to promote the inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream primary schools.

### **3.2 Research Design**

'Research Design' is a plan that guides one in carrying out the study from the beginning to the end (Yin, 2003).

In this study, a qualitative approach taking an explorative-descriptive case study design was used. The qualitative approach was chosen for this study because it provides room for extensive narrative data which the participants can give verbally (Yin, 2003). The 'Cases' were the five teachers who participated in the study. According to Gall, Gall & Borg (2003) 'qualitative study' is an inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretation in a situational manner. Similarly, Merriam (2002) stated that in qualitative approach the focus is more on understanding the meaning the participants have constructed about their world and their experiences in a particular context and point in time. Creswell (2002) defined 'qualitative research approach' as an inquiry useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. This approach was used to investigate the teachers' opinions about inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream primary schools.

Gall, et al (2003) and Yin, (2003) described 'Case Study' as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. A phenomenon in this context can be a process, event, experience, person or any other thing of interest to the study. In this study the phenomenon is teachers' opinions about inclusion of children who are blind and factors which may influence the teachers' opinions. Then the teacher's experiences on the challenges encountered in the inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream schools and how in their opinions such challenges can be overcome.

The Case Study design was found appropriate for the study because it was possible to use the instruments that enhance interaction with the informants and probing them to express their personal experiences and feelings (Gall et al, 1996). However, Gall and Borg (1989) observe that data obtained from a single case cannot be used to draw a conclusion because it may not be possible to tell how typical the case really is. This means that the results of the study cannot be applied to one context to another of similar context. To explore the phenomenon, individual interviews were conducted. The participants were asked broad and specific questions. This enabled the participants to freely express their thoughts; perceptions and experiences in a more detail manner in relation to the study topic (Best & Kahn, 1998)

### 3.3 Methods of data collection

The data was collected using Interview method. Additional information which was not covered during interviews concerning the schools staffing of regular and specialist teachers; enrolment of children with special needs from 2006-2008; number of children who are blind in each class; facilities available and the teachers professional training and their experience in teaching children who are blind was obtained by consulting school documents.

Using interview enabled to probe the informants more in order to get detailed information (Gall et al 1996). To capture the information from the informants, tape recording and note taking were done during the interviews.

Through document consultation method, Sarantakos, (1998) & Gall, et al, (1996) acknowledged that information can be obtained without directly relying on the participation of the informants. This method was used because there was a possibility of getting high rich information concerning the topic under study which was not possible to get during the interview (Sarantakos, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

However, document method also has some disadvantages (Sarantakos, *ibid*; Gall, *ibid*); the data obtained may not be reliable. Some documents may not be easily accessible. Some documents may not be complete and up to date.

Through use of these two methods in this study, it was possible to eliminate bias that would have resulted if one method was used. Therefore it helped to enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings (Gall et al, 1996).

### 3.4 Interviews

Interview was the main method for data collection.

Robson (1993) and Befring (2004) described an ‘interview’ as a conversation between a person who poses questions and a person who responds. In this case it was face to face conversation with the participants. In qualitative research, interviews are used to enable the researcher see the topic of study in the perspective of the interviewee. This enables him/her to elicit descriptive and in-depth data from the participants in their own words (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2000 and Kumar, 1996; Gall, Gall and Borg 1996).

The interviews were necessary for this study because it provided an appropriate opportunity to get in-depth information from the participants by asking a series of

structured questions and then probing more deeply using open-ended form of question to get additional information (Gall, et al, 2003). These were semi-structured interviews. Each interview session was conducted in a quiet classroom that was free from any interruption from non-participants. Two individual interviews were conducted per participant in each school.

Borg and Gall, (1989) and Kakooza (1996) argue that interview method is flexible in that it can be used anywhere, it is adaptable and interactive, provides greater in depth responses which may not be possible to obtain from other means and answers can be spontaneously recorded. However Kumar (1999) Gall et al (1996) pointed out its disadvantages for instance; it is prone to bias that may arise on the side of the interviewer as a result of poorly designed and presentation of the questions; it may be time consuming for example in terms of waiting for the interviewees by the interviewer; it is expensive when the potential informants are scattered in the geographical area; some respondents may not respond willingly, frankly and accurately. To avoid the occurrence of such scenario, the participants were allowed to express themselves without any form of interference. Interviews were conducted during morning break when the selected teachers were free from conducting lessons in classes. Interviews were tape recorded. Tape recording provided an opportunity to retrieve the factual data by listening to them during the transcription session. Each interview session lasted approximately 40 minutes. It focused on what the teachers' opinions were; the factors which may influence their opinions and what they thought can be done to include children who are blind in the mainstream primary schools. Flexibility was necessary on time because these teachers had to attend to their individual classes. This is because the schools staff ceiling provided for one teacher per class. This then meant that each teacher had to be interviewed twice.

### 3.5 Procedure for interview

The interview guide was constructed in English because it was the language understood and spoken by all the participants. Besides, it is an official language for any official transactions in the country. Time and date were made in consultation with school authorities. The interviews were then conducted in the schools during morning break in quiet places to avoid distraction by non-participants. On each day of interview, I made sure that I was in the interview room earlier than the interviewee. This was seen very important because it gave room to arrange the seats in a friendlier manner and go through the interview guide. On arrival, each interviewee was welcomed and traditionally greeted. This was to make him/her feel relaxed and confident during the interview session. Each interviewee was assured of the confidentiality in whatever was given. Then permission was sought from the interviewees to tape record the interview. All the interview sessions were covered with the help of a tape recorder. This was deemed necessary because it could be referred to during the transcription of the data. This is in line with what was noted by Robson, (2000) when he said tape recording helps to provide permanent record and allows the interviewer time to concentrate during the interview session.

### 3.6 Instrument

Semi-structured interview guide was used during the data collection. The interview guide contained open-ended questions. The intension was to give the participants opportunity to express their ideas in their own words in relation to the topic under study. The questions were constructed in English because this is an official language in the country and the participants understand and speak it. However, during the interview the local language of the area was used where the participants seemed to have not understood the questions asked. The local language was also where the participants seemed unable to express their views in English. For instance “*ngulu paran sek*” and “*ani eroko ikes iminimnete ngikec bore borei*” (means ....traditional

*methods, such that when children are still engaged...*) additional questions were used to probe more the participants. These probing questions differed from one informant to the other. As such it served as a major checklist during the interview and it helped to ensure that the same information was from a number of participants who were teachers. The same interview guide was used for all the participants. Selection of schools

The study was conducted in Moroto District in North –East part of Uganda. The district was chosen because it is the investigator’s workplace and I am conversant with the local language spoken in the area (ngakarimojong). This then made it easy for me to freely interact with the participants during and after the interviews. There are 53 schools in the district of study. The schools for study were purposively selected with assistance from the EARS/SNE staff from the district education office. Two schools were selected as school X and Y. One had a unit for the blind. The other had no unit but had enrolled children who are blind. Both schools had teachers with background knowledge of teaching children who are blind. The schools selected were accessible by public transport and relatively safer from highway ambushes.

### 3.7 Selection of teachers

A total of six teachers from two mainstream primary schools were purposively selected for the study. Purposive selection was necessary because the aim was to get the cases that could generate rich information on the topic of study (Gall et al 2003). Three teachers were drawn from the school that had an attached unit of the blind who were also teaching some lessons in the mainstream classes. Three others were got from the mainstream school without the unit for the blind but which had enrolled children who are blind. These teachers were selected on the background that they had some experience in teaching children who are blind. They were also teachers who had attained some training in special needs education. This included one teacher from Infant classes (P.1-P.3) Middle (P.3-P.4) and Upper Primary (P.5-P.7) where children

who are blind were enrolled. Originally six teachers were to be interviewed. However, only five were interviewed. One could not be interviewed because the investigator got involved in a motor cycle accident during the data collection. Purposive sampling can be used when the researcher's focus is on a typical case (Robson 2002).

Gall, Borg and Gall (2003) observed that purposive sampling aims at selecting cases that are likely to be rich in information.

### 3.8 Getting entry to the field

The instrument was designed and submitted to the Department of Special Needs Education-University of Oslo for approval. Thereafter, a letter of Introduction was issued by the Department to facilitate in the collection of data in Uganda. On arrival in Uganda, I reported to the District Inspector of Schools in Moroto District Local Government for permission to collect the data in the selected schools. (Appendix 2)

### 3.9 The Pilot Study

Pilot study was done in one school with two teachers who were not going to participate during the actual study. The purpose was to try out the interview guide whether it would provide the information it was intended for. That was validating the instrument so that any necessary adjustments could be made. It was also to test the efficiency of the tape recorder. The pilot study enabled me to add an introductory question "Do you have children who are blind in your school?" This question was omitted and yet it was very important as regards the study was concerned. Taking considerations on one teacher per class, the interviews were then scheduled for two days per participant. This was to enable them go and attend to their classes.

### 3.10 Pre-Visits

Pre-visits to the selected schools were made. The purpose was to introduce myself to the school administrators and explain to them the intentions of the study. It was also to make appointments with the teachers who were going to participate in the study on convenient dates and time.

The process of data collection spread from September to December 2008. However, July and August were used for permission seeking with the concerned schools

### 3.11 Organization and Analysis of Data

Data analysis means interpreting the information given by the informant and relating it to the main objective of the study.

Data analysis process was continuously done right from the field. I informally started after each interview. The analysis was based on the research question and the interview guide which were developed.

Interpretational analysis was used to organize and present the raw data collected from the files. Gall, Gall and Borg, (2007); Yin, (1994) explained that interpretational analysis is a process of examining case study data to find out concepts, themes and patterns that can be used to describe and explain the phenomena under study. The data which was collected from all the participants during the interview was organized as per the headings on the interview guide. The purpose of this was to point out particular aspects of the data that were of greater interest for easy interpretation.

To retrieve the information on interview sessions, the tape recorder was played back to help me get all the responses given by individual participants. There after transcriptions of both, interviewers' questions and interviewee's responses. Relevant information obtained from the documents was included in the whole data analysis process. Finally the conclusion was made.

### 3.12 Considerations for validity and reliability

According to Gall et al (1996) validity means the certainty of measuring what it is wanted to measure. They further explain that to achieve a high degree of validity, the researcher has to carefully before hand classify and define entities he wants to examine.

Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that validity provides an “audit trail” to check the trust worthiness of the research. To ensure and increase the validity and reliability, pilot study was carried out using Interview method. English as an official language was used during the interviews. However, the participants were allowed to express themselves in the local language of the area (Ngakarimojong) whenever it deemed necessary. The participants consent was sought to record their responses before the interviews were started. To validate the research findings, I played back the tape recorder to each participant at the end of each interview session. This was done so that the teachers who participated in the study could confirm whether the responses given reflected the essential meaning they wanted to convey and delete anything they felt infringed on confidentiality.

As noted by Maxwell (1992), qualitative research comprises of the following types of validity. Interpretive, descriptive, theoretical and generalized and evaluation.

For the purpose of this study, the interview guides were designed and approved by the advisor. English was used to make the instrument.

In qualitative research, Maxwell (1999) points out the following types of validity. Theoretical validity, descriptive validity, interpretive validity, generalized and evaluative validity. In this study, only interpretive and descriptive validity are discussed.

### 3.13 Interpretive validity

Interpretive validity is concerned with how the informant understands the phenomenon in his/her own words. (Bohman, 1991; Headland, Pike and Harris 1990) in Maxwell (1992).

### 3.14 Descriptive validity

In descriptive validity, the concern is to ensure that the information given is not from the researcher but from the participants (Maxwell, 1992).

To minimize the errors that could occur in the data collection the participants' responses during the interviews were tape recorded using a tape recorder. Later on the interviews were transcribed by attentively listening to the tape recorder and writing down responses word by word.

These two types of validity were chosen because in qualitative study like this one, no claim on the findings can be generalized to a bigger population. This was a case study of a few teachers from the mainstream schools in a particular district of Uganda. It points out valid perspectives which need to be taken into account rather than claiming to summarize a general view.

### 3.15 Ethical considerations

Ethics issues refer to the researcher's respect of the participant's rights, privacy, dignity and other sensitive aspects (Gall et al, 2003). In this study, the following were done. A research proposal was written and submitted to the Department of Special Needs at this University of Oslo for approval before the data was collected in Uganda; the participants were met to seek their consents to participate in the study, then explain to them the purpose of study; the participants were also assured of

confidentiality on the information given by them. Finally, during the interview, their responses were tape recorded.

### 3.16 Challenges encountered during data collection

Movement to selected schools was hampered due to shortage of fuel in the Country. Fuel became so expensive. The interviews could not be done in one day because the teachers' staff ceiling forced the class allocation to one teacher to teach all subjects in that class. So the morning break time could not be enough. One of the participants seemed not to be willing to participate in the study despite willingness earlier on agreed. So could now speak out at a very low tone which later became very difficult to clearly get the responses during the transcription process.

The participants could not easily be met to make appointments because they were giving examinations scheduled for the end of term.

I got involved in motor cycle accident where I sustained a fracture on the anterior right hand ribs, so one selected participant was not interviewed as I got hospitalized.



## **4. Data Presentation and Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the teachers` opinions, factors which may influence their opinions and what the teachers in their opinions think can be done to include children who are blind in the mainstream primary schools. Background information about schools and the cases is presented. This background information provides the basis of understanding on the similarities and differences of the schools of study and that of the cases involved. Also presented are the teachers opinions are about their acceptance on the involvement and participation of children who are blind in the school activities; factors which may influence their opinions; what support in teachers` opinions could be necessary for the inclusion of children who are blind, what areas of the mainstream curriculum teachers` think are necessary to modify or adapt if their opinions were to include children who are blind, management of the school and classroom learning environment.

Data is presented according to the headings that were indicated on the interview guide. This was done by reading through the responses and making sense of it. The data obtained from each case is presented according to the following areas: Opinions about acceptance of children who are blind; opinions about how children who blind can helped to participate in classroom activities; opinions about how children who are blind can be helped to participate in out door activities; opinions about support services necessary for the teachers to be able to support children who are blind; opinions about the benefits of placing children who are blind into the mainstream and challenges experienced by teachers in implementing inclusion for children who are blind and possible suggestions.

## 4.2 Background information about the schools used for the study

As indicated in chapter three, the study was carried out in Moroto district in North-Eastern part of Uganda. Two schools where children who are blind were enrolled were purposively selected for this study. They are represented with alphabetical letters X and Y.

School X is located in the rural area and was founded in 1963 by an Italian catholic nun in conjunction with the parents and the local administration of the area. At the moment it is under the government of Uganda. Funding of this school is mainly from the central government and a bit of it from the parents' contributions. It has 19 teachers. 3 are trained in special needs education, 4 are untrained and 12 are regular trained teachers. It has a unit/annex for the blind with 17 children who are blind. There are 11 classrooms each accommodating at least 80 learners (sighted and blind) There are three classrooms in the unit whereby P.1-P.3 share one; P.4 and P.5 are in another and P.6 and P.7 in the other. Currently P.1 and P.2 learn all the subjects in the unit taught by one teacher, while P.3-P.7 children who are blind learn all the lessons in the mainstream but go to the unit for technical subjects like Mathematics, English Braille and typing. Blind children who are boys sleep in a separate dormitory while blind girls sleep with the rest of the sighted girls. Blind boys eat their meals in a separate dining hall. Toilet facilities for blind children are separate from the rest of the school children. Other facilities available in this school include: Braille kits; specialized games and sports materials such as balls with bells; showdown table (donated by Tambertun Resource Centre and Ministry of Education and Sports). The school has a school band that children who are blind play on special occasions such as Independence Day celebrations and the school's saint's day.

School Y is located in an urban area and was founded by the government. It is mainly funded by the central government, local government and the parents. There are 21 teachers. Only two are trained in special needs education, two others have had a three months course in special needs education. The school has enrolled 1,053 pupils. 126

are children with special needs 11 of whom are blind. All children in this school including those who are blind attend all lessons in the mainstream classes. There are 9 classrooms each accommodating at least 80 pupils. 4 classes study under trees with at least 80 pupils. Most pupils including those who are blind sit on the floor. Other facilities available in this school include play ground, play materials like ropes, Braille materials.

### 4.3 Background information about the teachers

#### **Philip**

Philip is a blind male teacher. He is a trained grade V teacher with a diploma in special needs education. Philip has been in the teaching profession for 24 years teaching both the sighted and learners special needs. Currently, he teaches P.5 and partly in P.6 where he shares some subjects with another teacher. Particularly, he teaches mathematics Braille, English Braille writing and typing to children who are blind. These are taught separately in the unit. While in the mainstream classes, he teaches science, social studies and religious education to both the sighted and children who are blind.

#### **Esther**

Esther is a blind female teacher. She is a trained grade V teacher with a diploma in special needs education. She has a teaching experience of 17 years. From 1991-2004 she used to teach Religious Education (R.E) in the mainstream where children who are blind were enrolled. Currently she is teaching all subjects to these children only in the unit for the blind which is attached to the mainstream school. She is teaching P.1- and P.2 that have each one child who is blind

**Jimmy**

Jimmy is a male teacher. He is a trained grade V teacher with a diploma in special needs education. He has a teaching experience of 14 years. He teaches P.6 and P.7 that has two children who are blind.

**Isaac**

Isaac is a male teacher. He is a trained teacher with a diploma in education. He has been in the teaching profession for 8 years. He teaches all curriculum subjects in P.4. He has one child who is blind in his class.

**Jonathan**

Jonathan is a male teacher. He is a qualified grade III; grade V teacher in special needs education and also a graduate teacher with degree in primary education. He has 14 years teaching experience. Jonathan teaches English in P.6 and P.7 respectively. In these classes there are children with low vision and deaf

## 4.4 Philip

**Acceptance of children who are blind**

I wanted to find out what teachers opinions were about their acceptance of children who are blind in the classes they were enrolled in. Philip noted that children who are blind can easily be accepted if they do not have an additional disability. Having another disability also means an additional load to the teacher because when it comes to making learning teaching aids, it will require the teacher to make several of them to meet all these special needs. He then said that:

*“These children are well-come in my class and I have been teaching children of this nature for the last 24 years. Above all they are only blind ones. And*

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*currently, I have two children who are blind in the classes I teach. One in P.5 and the other in P.6”*

### **Participation of children who are blind in classroom activities**

Philip indicated that children who are blind can be helped to participate in classroom activities by providing them with brailled materials which they can read tactually. He also noted that during reading lessons, teachers should provide some simple Braille story books. Then the child who is blind should be given the opportunity to take part in reading a portion of the story book. This activity can be done individually or in a group. He also pointed out that the curriculum should be modified. In this, he emphasized use of participatory methods like group work, discussion. Extra time should also be given for children who are blind to complete the given exercises. Besides this, the desks and chairs should be arranged in rows with the seat of the child who is blind next to the teacher so that the teacher’s attention can be sought when need arises.

### **Participation of children who are blind in out door activities**

Philip indicated that children who are blind can be helped to participate in out door activities by making simple adaptations, environmental modifications and direct involvement of these children in any designed activities. The purpose is to make these children access the environment with ease and get engaged in these activities independently. The typical example that related to an adaptation was the improvisation of a ball with a bell in it. He said sound made by this bell can enable the child who is blind locating the ball whenever they are playing. For young blind children they can be helped in playing foot ball by designing a small play ground where he/she can practice with the sighted person. When the skill and confidence have been established, this child can then join the game with other children in the class. According to Philip, environmental modification entails the construction of

simple and strong ramps and land marks and removal of all hazardous elements like unprotected sharp objects and unnecessary tree stamps. Then he said:

*“When children who are blind play together with their sighted peers, they can develop a sense of tolerance, forgiveness and make friends”*

### **Support services necessary for the teachers to support children who are blind**

The support that Philip noted was crucial to support children who are blind included the provision of specialized learning instructional materials that were lacking in the school like Braille machines; Braille kits that contain: drawing equipment, abacus, tape measures and slates; Braille text books and other brailed reading materials. Accessibility of instructional materials can help the learners to acquire knowledge and skills and more appropriately than if words alone are used. Besides, he mentioned of construction of and equipping the resource room where children who are blind can go for remedial teaching and learning in specialist areas like braille. He also identified that collaboration among specialist and regular teachers was very vital where the concerned professionals can share their expertise, for example in the production of instructional materials to meet the needs of children who are blind. He stated that:

*“If teachers are to make inclusion of children who are blind practical, these children must be provided with tactile materials with which they can learn and interact with each other and the teacher”*

### **Benefits of placing children who are blind in the mainstream.**

Philip said that when children who are blind sit and work together with the sighted pupils, they can learn to share ideas; difficulties; knowledge; skills; enjoyment and get deeper understanding of what is taught by the teacher. In addition, children learn to tolerate one another. And negative attitude towards children who are blind can be reduced.

### **Experiences and opinions on challenges towards inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream**

During the discussion, Philip noted that teachers face a problem of having high numbers of pupils in classes. He expressed that this has made teaching and preparation of learning materials very difficult. According to him, the teacher-pupil ratio is one to seventy (1:70). As a result, it has sometimes made it very hard to make any necessary modifications on the instructional materials to suit the needs of children who are blind. Because of this, children who are blind end up learning some of the lessons theoretically. He said:

*“I am required to prepare and teach all lessons in my class, make learning materials and mark the pupils work. With all this, I get over stretched and stressed”*

He also noted that there were not enough teachers trained in special needs education. As such the few available specialist teachers are over-stretched. For example they are required to support regular teachers to braille monthly tests and make modifications on the learning materials. He further reported that many classes were facing shortage of specialized equipment like Perkins brailers, braille kits with its contents in many classes. He further noted that Braille text books; reference books and supplementary readers were lacking or inadequate in some classes

#### **4.4.1 Esther**

##### **Acceptance of children who are blind**

Esther indicated that inclusion of children who are blind is possible when there are few children in the class and when a teacher has positive feelings towards them. She also emphasized that teachers with positive attitudes easily accepted children who are blind than those with negative attitudes. Teachers with positive attitudes easily join in the conversation with blind children. She said:

*“...having an open mind and positive attitude are necessary for the teacher’s acceptance of a child who is blind in his/her class”*

**Participation of children who are blind in classroom activities**

Esther indicated that children who are blind can be facilitated to participate in classroom activities by making some modification on the curriculum. She particularly emphasized that the methods to be used should be the ones that require direct involvement of children. Such methods mentioned were discussion; demonstration; group work; child-centred approach and debate. And where possible, teachers should use concrete or real objects when teaching because it is sometimes difficult to explain certain concepts using words. She also stated that teachers should ensure that they modify the educational materials to meet the needs of children who are blind. In addition, she expressed that all charts and diagrams displayed in the classrooms must be in Braille.

**Participation of children who are blind in out door activities**

When asked how in her opinion children who are blind can be helped to participate in out door activities, Esther mentioned that children who are blind should be provided with the materials required for executing the activity. In music, the teacher can give drums and shakers; and white canes to facilitate them in orientation and mobility. She also pointed out that in sports, the teacher should allow joint participation among children who are blind and the sighted.

*“Children who are blind can do these activities to some extent if they are provided with the learning materials and if the teachers are patient enough. Otherwise we may not expect anything from them”*

**Support services necessary for teachers to support children who are blind**

Esther pointed out that teachers require training in guidance and counseling; sensitization of other teachers and pupils to raise awareness on the need to have

children who are blind study alongside their fellow sighted peers. She also mentioned that the government and district administration could support in the construction of more classrooms to reduce overcrowding in the classrooms. The government should improve teacher-pupil ratio for children with special needs to at least 1: 3.

She said:

*“Including children who are blind with other additional disabilities in any lesson needs the teacher to first and foremost have a feeling that these children can also learn like any other child. And with a positive feeling the teacher can adequately prepare his lessons”*

### **Benefits of placing children who are blind in the mainstream**

Esther cited that as children who are blind do activities together with the sighted peers, they will not have difficulty in making friends. As a result, they will cooperate and learn to help one another. She said:

*“Children will respect one another and therefore build confidence with each other’s abilities and skills”*

### **Experiences about challenges faced in the inclusion of children who are blind**

Esther indicated that they had a shortage of brailled educational materials for children and teachers who are blind. She said that:

*“We already have educational materials in print but we have a shortage of brailled materials for children who are blind. These were provided by Caritas organization in Italy. They are mainly for leisure reading and catechism. They are not curriculum based. This is a problem because when it comes to doing exercises, sighted pupils can access the work and children who are blind cannot. And when children who are blind try to copy from the sighted peers, they also copy the errors that the sighted could have written down”*

To address this challenge, she reported that they (teachers of the blind) get a copy of print text books, reference books and teacher's guides and transcribe them into Braille for those children who are blind and blind teachers. Besides, they have assigned some sighted pupils to dictate any notes given by any teacher to those children who are blind.

She also reported that some teachers seem not to respect policies like UPE that support inclusive education. As a result children who are blind from her class have been denied the opportunity to attend lessons from the mainstream classes. She further noted that it was difficult to attend to children who are blind in the mainstream classes due to high number of pupils in the classroom.

#### **4.4.2 Jimmy**

##### **Acceptance of children who are blind**

Jimmy expressed his opinions that children who are blind can be much accepted when a teacher is patient, committed and with a positive attitude. He further noted that teachers who have stayed for a long period of time in the school have no problem having these children in their classes than those who were recently posted to the school. Teachers with positive attitude easily accept these children and freely interact and join them in conversations. He said:

*“I like them since I have been teaching such children for the last fourteen years, so they are part of me. And teaching them is easy as long as special teaching and learning materials are available”*

##### **Participation of children who are blind in classroom activities**

Jimmy pointed out that children who are blind can be helped to participate in classroom by providing them with special equipment. For instance in mathematics, special equipment like cubes and cube frames could be provided and made available

to these children. To adequately support and promote the learning of children who are blind the teacher should clearly make labels on all the charts; diagrams and concrete objects displayed in classroom in Braille. He emphasized that:

*“Mathematics teachers who do not have knowledge in the use of these special equipment need induction to enable them attend to children who are blind. This is a job for all teachers to ensure that they teach mathematical concepts to all pupils in their classes. It is not the job of the teacher for the blind alone. Children who are blind should not be exempted from doing mathematical concepts because they are blind. He also mentioned that when I am teaching the concept of perimeter, I give the sighted learners ordinary rulers then those who are blind, I give them Braille rulers. Then I give them (both sighted and blind) to measure lengths of various lengths of objects in the class like: desks, benches, and teacher’s table.*

Where children who are blind face difficulties, the teacher can set individual educational programmes, allow children to do the given work in groups The teacher should train the child who is blind in braille skills in reading and writing to enable them to do things independently. Teachers should use concrete objects in the teaching. This is because some concepts may be very hard to explain or describe. He said:

*“Some words are abstract. When I show a concrete object, children who are blind can explore it using the hand. With this the child can build the picture of the abstract word in the brain”*

### **Participation of children who are blind in out door activities**

Jimmy pointed out that children who are blind can do physical education activities like: line tag of war, playing local dances, hopping on one leg, frog jump and skipping with the ropes. The teacher should provide them with materials like ropes in order to do these activities. In athletics, the sighted children can be assigned to run alongside with those who are blind. In other physical activities, these activities can be done

together with the sighted peers by taking turns. Where possible allow the child who is blind to demonstrate the activity. The teacher needs to help the child who is blind to explore the defined play area. He also emphasized that:

*“To improve the participation of children who are blind in these activities the teacher is required to be creative and treat these children the same as the so called ‘normal’ and make the play ground as free from any sharp and harmful objects as possible”*

### **Support services necessary for the teachers to support children who are blind**

Jimmy revealed teachers needed collaboration with other professionals like SNECOs, SNE/EARS staff and teachers already trained in special needs. This collaboration may promote the sharing their expertise in many areas such as production of instructional materials, teaching methods. He said this can be done through Continuous Professional Development (CPDs) and staff meetings.

### **Benefits of placing children who blind in the mainstream**

Jimmy described that as children who are blind work together with the sighted peers, tolerance will be developed; they gain confidence in what they will be learning; they will make friendship; and they will believe that they are one. He said:

*“I think children will enjoy more as they do activities together. Boredom can be broken down if the blind children were working alone”*

### **Experiences on the challenges towards inclusion of children who are blind**

Jimmy indicated many challenges faced by the teachers. Such challenges included the following: Teachers trained in general education lacked skills and competence in handling children who are blind in the mainstream classes. As such they show reluctance in having children who are blind in their classes. There are a small number of teachers trained in special needs education as such there is heavy workload imposed on the few trained specialist teachers. They are to help in transcribing work

done by the blind children for those teachers who have no background on braille work. Another challenge was the brailled instructional materials are lacking in most classes. So he has to prepare brailled work for children who are blind before the lesson starts. He also reported that the classes have big number of learners, about 80 pupils. He admitted that this has created more work for the teacher to plan and develop individual educational programmes for children who are blind. To help children who are blind, he encouraged group work strategy and provides extra time for individual teaching to clear areas of difficulty.

### **4.4.3 Isaac**

#### **Acceptance of children who are blind**

Isaac said that it was easy to allow children who are blind in the class are in place: if the number of children who are blind and the sighted is small because it reduces the teacher's task in making learning materials and marking their exercises than when they were very many; they are intellectually sound; special equipment like slates, brailers are readily available and when there are no other disabilities.

#### **Participation of children who are blind in classroom activities**

Isaac said children who are blind can copy notes written on the chalkboard using braille machine and braille paper. The teacher can facilitate these children by mentioning the words as he/she writes on the on chalkboard. For children who may not be competent in Braille, it is important for the teacher to train them in Braille reading and writing in order not to rely on the sighted peers all the time. And for written work, the teacher should put the books on the table next to the child who is blind so that the child can get them easily when he/she needs to use them. The work

materials should always be put in the place that the blind child is used to. Changing the location of these materials can make it difficult for the blind child to locate them.

### **Participation of children who are blind in out door activities**

Isaac indicated that the environment must be modified by putting some ramps. He also pointed out that all dangerous things must be removed from the areas of work. In sports, a child who is blind can be helped by: adapting double lanes instead of normal single one so that sighted guide can run alongside the child who is blind; make the sighted pupils go to the finishing point where they will shout the name of the child who is blind. He said the purpose of this arrangement is to make the blind child have direction to go. In addition, children who are blind should be provided with the work materials

### **Support services necessary for the teachers to support children who are blind**

Isaac said that teachers need some basic training in special areas like Sports for Persons with Visual Impairment and Mobility and Rehabilitation. The teachers should also be provided with mobility and sports equipment. This is to build the capacity of teachers in imparting necessary skills for children who are blind. Skills in these areas can: promote social interaction with others as they participate in activities, have independent travel and easy identification of obstacles on their ways and relaxation. He also highlighted the need of support on in-service training of ordinary teachers to boost the limited number of teachers trained in special needs in their school. He said the in-service training could be on methodology, development of instructional materials and use of special equipment.

### **Benefits of placing children who are blind in the mainstream**

Isaac indicated that some children who are blind are talented. If they get involved in activities together with seeing children, their potentials can be identified early and developed. For example, in games and sports; music and academics. Then he emphasized that:

*“Doing curriculum activities together can make them grow up so happy. They will interact and get confident in doing various activities while at school and even when they go to their homes.”*

He further indicated that mainstream curriculum can benefit children who are blind academically. Information from informal conversations shows that cooperation will benefit all children. Besides children who are blind, the teachers will get to recognize that all pupils have strengths. He said:

*“Children can become aware of their differences and as a result, there will be improved learning relationships among the learners”*

### **Experiences on the challenges towards inclusion of children who are blind**

Isaac reported that there was lack of classrooms and furniture especially in lower primary classes. Children learn under trees, sit on wet floor especially when it has rained and write on their laps. As a result, children who are blind face difficulties in writing (brailing) on their laps and access to education in the mainstream schools. Teachers then encourage children who are blind to bring chairs or stools from their homes. For children who are unable to bring any furniture from their homes, big stones and logs of trees have been improvised. This is a practice for many sighted pupils in this school. He further reported that the national curriculum is very rigid and examination oriented. For example, from P.4-P.7 a teacher is required to teach one lesson in 40 minutes. This forces the teacher to rush in order to cover the whole syllabus at the end of the year. As such, children who blind are excluded from the same class from participating in some areas because the teacher may not have time to attend to them. He also indicated that there was shortage of funds to purchase some instructional materials and other items necessary for children who are blind. He

further indicated that there were very many children in the class. In order to help children who are blind by seating them next to the seeing.

#### **4.4.4 Jonathan**

##### **Acceptance of children who are blind**

Jonathan mentioned that it would be easy to have children who are blind in the class if they are bright because they can easily follow the teacher's lesson than the dull ones. Again if there are specially made instructional materials. He noted that some head teachers were reluctant to accept children who are blind in their schools if there were no teachers with background qualification in the area of visual impairment

##### **Participation of children who are blind in classroom activities**

He indicated that children who are blind can be helped to participate in classroom activities by training them in Braille reading and writing skills in order for them to get all the necessary information tactually. He also added that the teachers should use varying participatory methods of teaching such as discussion; demonstration; group work; and adoption of individual educational programmes to help blind children who are slow learners so that they can enable the child learn at ones own pace and according to the ability.

Children who are blind can also be helped in classroom participation by providing them with the educational text books and other reading materials in Braille. And where there are no brailed materials, the teacher should individually transcribe any available material.. The instructional materials should be made according to the needs of children who are blind for example: embossed diagrams and maps; brailed labels on all diagrams in social studies, science etc. He said:

*“Some children who are blind are slow learners. If the teacher is very fast while teaching, these children cannot follow properly”*

##### **Participation of children who are blind in out door activities**

He pointed out that children who are blind can be helped to participate in out door activities by making some modifications on the school compound. Such modifications include making some ramps; shorelines; landmarks; adapting some activities for example sports for the blind; training of children who are blind in mobility and provision of mobility materials. He said:

*“I think children who are blind can be helped to do those activities if they are given the necessary materials. The teacher should give them time to practice together with fellow sighted peer”*

### **Support services necessary for the teachers to support children who are blind**

Jonathan noted that there should be cooperation among specialist teachers; ordinary teachers and other professionals like SNECOs and CCTs. Teachers require training in specialist areas like orientation and mobility so that they can in turn train children who are blind.. Mobility training is very important because it promotes self independent movement for children who are blind when they are doing any school activity. The collaboration among teachers with other professionals can provide support the teachers in designing the methods to be used when teaching children who are blind and development of teaching materials. He said:

*“We cannot think of implementing inclusion of children who are blind when there are fewer teachers specially trained in special needs education. If teachers are trained in this field, they will be able to make adaptations and modifications to the methods, instructional materials, learning environment which can promote the inclusion process.”*

### **Benefits of placing children who are blind in the mainstream**

Jonathan noted that when children who are blind study in the mainstream, they can have a chance to be educated with the children of the same age; they can also master the skills of doing various activities as they play and work together with the sighted children. Through training in mobility children who are blind can develop basic skills in independent travel. He said:

*“As these children do activities together, they learn to understand and accept each other and by so doing they build up their confidence”*

Children who are blind can also get social benefits. For instance they can get friends as they play together with the sighted peers. They can also share experience. There will be cooperation which will promote team work among the learners and the teachers and spirit of belonging is developed.

### **Experiences on the challenges towards inclusion of children who are blind**

Jonathan indicated that there was high teacher-pupil ratio of about 1:70. Classes are very crowded. This has resulted in difficulties in class control, identification of specific individual needs of children who are blind and eventually poor performance in academic field. In an attempt to curb this challenge, he said: For me, I established the sighted child whom the child who is blind cooperates. So I pair them so that they help one another as they sit and attend lessons in the class. I have also formulated groups where children who are blind are placed for learning purposes. This practice helped in the identification of his difficulties because the group members could report. He lamented that:

*“.....if you have very many children in the class, it can be very difficult for you to help this one child who is blind within the same class because you have to mark the given exercise, you are teaching at the same time, you have to go to another class...and yet this one child who is blind also needs special attention. How can all these be done by a single teacher?”*

He also indicated that although he was a trained teacher in special needs education, he had insufficient skills in some specific areas in making improvised instructional materials, the use of some mathematical equipment for the blind and sports for the blind. As such, he could not adequately support learners who are blind. However, he said that he had to rely on the specialist teachers in the area of visual impairment and some art ordinary teachers. He also said that the curriculum is very rigid and examination oriented. Such curriculum can cause problems to the learners because it may make it difficult to meet the needs of the learners. So the teacher needs to use methods that allow the involvement of learners who are blind various activities according to their abilities.

## 4.5 Cross-case Analysis

After presenting information about individual teachers, it is necessary to present the overview about the findings across all the teachers. All the participants showed that the teacher's acceptance was determined by the following factors: Teachers attitudes; class sizes; additional disability a blind child could be having; intellectual abilities.

This is done as an attempt to set a platform for cross case discussion in chapter five.

### 4.5.1 Acceptance

The data revealed that factors such as teachers attitudes towards children who are blind; class size; having an additional disability and the intellectual abilities were reported to influence the teachers' opinions towards accepting children who are blind.

### 4.5.2 Attitudes

The findings showed that teachers with positive attitudes were more accepting and allowed children who are blind to participate in any school activity compared to those with negative attitudes. Teachers with negative attitudes were fond of using abusive

language and are not willing to listen to the complaints children who are blind raised in the classroom or outside the classroom.

### **4.5.3 Class size**

Class size was one of the factors that were seen as a determinant of the teachers' acceptance of children who are blind in participation in classroom and outdoor activities. The size of class in this study refers to the number of pupils in a single class. The teachers indicated that the size of classes ranged from 70 or more, with at least two children who are blind on top of children with other types of special needs being taught by a single teacher.

Class sizes posed difficulties in teaching; class control; making teaching/learning materials; marking people's exercise books and the teachers' inability to attend to individual children in the class. Teachers noted that having a large class of learners contributed to stress for them to accommodate the specific needs of children who are blind.

### **4.5.4 Additional disability**

Having a child with additional disability means an added workload to the teachers. For instance, it will require a lot time and effort to make several learning/learning materials. The teachers viewed it as not only additional workload but also a possibility for developing negative attitudes towards the whole inclusion process of children with special needs in the school activities.

### **4.5.5 Intellectual abilities**

Intellectual abilities were one of the factors that influenced the teachers' opinions about the inclusion of children who are blind in school activities. The teachers assumed that it would be easy to teach and include children who are blind in school activities because the instructions could be explained once and they follow it easily

compared to those with low intellectual abilities. For instance, when an exercise is given they would complete it almost at the same time with the sighted pupils. Thus, it saves time and simplifies the teacher's job.

However, Esther noticed that teachers who are patient easily accept children who are blind. For example, they could take time giving instructions on how the exercise is done, listen to the questions asked by children who are blind and give extra time for these children to accomplish the given tasks.

Jimmy on the other hand indicated that acceptance of children who are blind was possible among teachers who are committed to their teaching job. They feel that children who are blind have a right to be in the same class with the sighted and get all the knowledge imparted to these children in the class.

#### **4.5.6 Participation in classroom and outside activities**

The findings showed that children who are blind can be helped to participate in classroom activities by making curriculum and environment modifications or adaptations and provision of specialized equipment.

- **Curriculum modification/adaptation**

The findings indicated that the teachers needed to use method that teachers use in their teaching should cater for the individual needs of children who are blind. It was emphasized that participatory methods like discussions, group work (Philip, Isaac, Esther, Jonathan and Jimmy).

Another area for modification was learning-teaching materials. The findings indicate that these should be made in braille form so that children who are blind can explore them through tactile method whenever they are doing any classroom activities (Esther, Jonathan, Jimmy, Philip).

The content should be simplified or broken down into simpler levels that can be easily done by children who are blind. The teachers have also noticed that children who are

blind can complete the given tasks when extra time is given to them by the teacher (Jonathan, Jimmy, Esther). They noted that children who are blind are generally slow. So they may require extra time. She also indicated that the teachers should use concrete objects when teaching. This is because some concepts are difficult to describe.

- **Environmental modification/adaptation**

The teachers indicated that in the classroom, the desks; chairs; and tables should be properly arranged in rows in order to create space for doing classroom activities like English conversation lessons. Furthermore, the chair of a child who is blind should be placed next to the teacher's table. This enables the teacher to easily attend to this child who is blind than when he/she was seated behind the classroom (Isaac, Philip, Jonathan).

The teachers also indicated that simple and strong ramps, handrails, shorelines and landmarks should be constructed at the entrance and paths leading to the play ground. This is in order for the children who are blind to find their ways safely and independently (Philip, Jonathan, Jimmy).

Furthermore, the teachers noted that in any activities, children who are blind must be physically involved. Children who are blind are given the opportunity to demonstrate how an activity. Teachers give guidance in carrying out the demonstration. Another common practice that teachers adopted was the involvement of sighted peers in helping children who are blind. Sighted children helped children who are blind to locate their play materials and dictating notes.

In particular, Esther noted that children who are blind should be trained in orientation and mobility skills in order for them to have an independent travel to reach the goals of interest e.g. fetching water for personal use, visiting the pit latrines and locating personal belongings in case it drops down.

Jonathan also indicated that teachers should use Individual Education Plans (IEP). He claimed that this strategy is best for slow learners because they can learn at their own pace, interest and ability.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that in order for children who are blind to actively participate in either classroom or outdoor activities, the environment must be made free from any danger by removing all hazardous elements like unprotected sharp objects like broken pots, chairs, bottles and fill up all the holes. Safety in these learning environments can build confidence among the children who are blind. As such, they will be motivated to take part in any of the school activities.

#### **4.5.7 Provision of specialized equipment**

The findings revealed that children who are blind can be facilitated to participate in mainstream activities through the provision of specialized equipment like perkins brailers, cubes; cube frames; types; tailor frames; abacus. They said using this equipment in teaching mathematics gives children who are blind a chance to touch and feel whatever they have written down (Philip, Jimmy, Jonathan, Esther). Isaac in particular said using such equipment makes learning mathematics real and the lesson objectives can be successfully achieved.

### **4.6 Benefits of placing children who are blind in the Mainstream**

The findings revealed that placing children who are blind in the mainstream helps them in the acquisition and development of social, academic and special skills.

#### **4.6.1 Social skills**

The findings indicate that children who are blind can interact with the sighted colleagues and they come to know one another (Jonathan, Philip, Esther and Jimmy). They come to help each other; there is a possibility in the reduction of negative

attitude toward children who are blind; tolerance in the mis-happenings as they play together is promoted; it will be easier for them to make friends when they are operating in separate institutions; they will learn to help each other.

Isaac individually noticed that it can make the teacher recognize that all children in the classroom regardless of the abilities and disabilities have strengths and weaknesses. He also noted that identification of the talents of children who are blind can be realized and developed at an earlier time. Esther alone indicated that if children who are blind are not motivated and involved in these activities, they will get withdrawn and isolated within the same class.

#### **4.6.2 Academic skills**

All the teachers conceded that when children who are blind and provided with specialized equipment like braille machines, hand frames, cubes, types and tailor frames, they can be able to do mathematics like any sighted learner in the class. For example they can do sums in addition, subtraction, division and multiplication.

When children who are blind access the braille reading materials, they can read simple stories, individual lesson notes. Philip alone indicated that with the availability of educational materials children who are blind can academically with the sighted children in the class.

Isaac revealed that when new concepts are clearly explained with relevant examples, children who are blind can be enabled to solve academic problems. For example they can carry out activities that involve buying and selling and measurement.

#### **4.6.3 Acquisition of specialized skills**

The findings indicate that children who are blind can acquire self-help skills like grooming, toileting etc. The teachers believed that these skills taught during health education lessons. So teachers should teach these skills in a real situation. For instance, by physically taking children who blind to practice the use of pit latrines.

Children who are blind can also these skills by giving them hair combs, tooth brushes, razor blades etc.

All the teachers also indicated that in order to develop proficiencies in reading and writing, children who are blind need to be trained in braille. Skills in braille can enable them access any information they may require so long as they access braille materials.

Philip, Esther and Jimmy expressed that children who are blind can acquire mobility skills and techniques of using mobility devices such as white canes. Skills in Mobility can be helpful for children who are blind for protection, independent travel and achieve their goals.

## 4.7 Challenges

The major challenges pointed out were as follows: Lack of skills and competence; class sizes; shortage of resources and shortage of teachers trained in special needs.

### **4.7.1 Lack of skills and competence**

The teachers indicated that lack of skills and competence among many regular school teachers made it very difficult to help children who are blind to participate in the classroom and outdoor activities (Isaac, Esther, Philip and Jimmy). They also indicated that teachers already trained in Special Needs Education (SNE) still lack skills and competence in some specific areas like braille, orientation and mobility and sports for persons with visual impairment. The teachers also lacked skills and competence in the use of specialized equipment like perkins brailers, hand frames and taylor frames. This made it difficult for the teachers to involve children who are blind in mathematics lessons,

### **4.7.2 Class size**

The teachers indicated that there were high numbers of pupils in the classes. As a result it had made it difficult for them to teach in the mainstream classes. The enrollment of each class ranged from 70 and above. They indicated that besides having huge classes, they were also required to prepare lesson plans, make learning-teaching materials, teach all lessons in the curriculum, mark the pupils' exercise books and simultaneously attend to the children who are blind. Teachers expressed that such a scenario stretched them.

### **4.7.3 Shortage of teachers trained in special needs education**

All the participants noted that specialist teachers were not enough in the schools. As such, it had posed a big challenge of heavy workload among teachers. In addition, a few specialist teachers get over burdened. They were required to braille monthly tests from the classes of non-specialist teachers. The participants revealed that it hindered the inclusion of children who are blind in classroom and outdoor activities and eventually the provision of quality education. And besides teaching, teachers have other functions to carry out. This scenario becomes a challenge because a small number of specialist teachers that are available in the schools cannot run all the subjects in all the classes. As such children who are blind remain unattended to in subjects like braille reading and writing that require specialist training

### **4.7.4 Shortage of resources**

The participants pointed out that lower primary classes (Primary 1-3) were lacking classrooms. Many pupils are learning under trees. Some classes have inadequate furniture. As a result, a single desk is at the ratio of 1:4. (Four pupils seated on one desk). However the results also indicated that the furniture was totally lacking in lower primary classes (P.1-P.3). With this condition the pupils are compelled to sit on the ground, stones and logs.

The findings further showed that specialized equipment like braille paper; brailing machines; cubes; cube frames were lacking in most classes. The participants revealed that since children who are blind learn through touch, it was very difficult for them to learn subjects like mathematics, braille and many others.

## 5. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As indicated in the previous chapters, the purpose of this was to investigate the teachers' opinions and factors which may influence their opinions and what the teachers thought could be done to promote the inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream. In this chapter, discussion; conclusion and recommendations based on the data are presented.

### 5.1 Discussion

The discussion is based on the following guiding questions:

*What are the teachers' opinions about the inclusion of children who are blind in mainstream schools? What factors may influence their opinions? What are the teachers opinions of what can be done to promote the inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream schools?*

In order to answer these questions, the headings on the interview guide formed the basis of data analysis.

### 5.2 Acceptance

Although inclusive education in Uganda is taken as a fundamental strategy for providing basic education to all children of school going age, the study explored what the teachers' opinions are to include children who are blind in the primary schools. When asked what they felt about having children who are blind learning together with other children in the same class, the participants revealed that the teachers' acceptance was determined by the following factors: teacher's attitudes; class size;

having an additional disability and the intellectual ability of the children who are blind.

### **5.2.1 Attitudes**

Teachers' attitudes are critical in determining the teachers' acceptance of children who are blind in mainstream activities. The findings in this study show that teachers who have positive attitudes readily accepted children who are blind to participate in any school activities. Such teachers can talk, smile, listen to their questions, give words of encouragement, and give remedial work. Teachers with negative attitudes reluctantly allowed children who are blind to participate in the activities. They easily lose temper towards children who are blind do the given tasks. They use abusive language, utter discouraging statements. They also label children as 'drop outs'; 'slow learners'; 'un-teachable' and so on. This has a negative influence of self-esteem. Learners with low self-esteem seldom participate in the school activities.

The findings agree with Mitchel (1999) where he noted that if teachers have positive attitudes in providing the best education, the inclusion will be more likely to succeed. This finding is further reinforced by Van Reusen, Shoho and Barker (2000) where they pointed out that teachers who are less positive towards inclusion will not implement effective instructional strategies as those who have positive attitudes.

This is true by the statement made by one of the participants as:

*"...having an open mind and positive attitude are necessary for the teacher's acceptance of a child who is blind in his/her class"*

From the investigator's own teaching experience, such negative and harmful attitudes seem to come from fear and lack of knowledge about how to deal with the learner's particular needs. If there are more of such influential teachers in the staff with negative attitudes, there is a possibility that those with positive attitudes can easily be lured to pay no attention towards children who are blind and vice-versa. And if

children who are blind are not accepted, the end result may either be that they will keep to themselves or drop out of school.

### **5.2.2 Class size**

The size of class in this study refers to the number of pupils in a single class. The teachers indicated that the sizes of classes ranged from 70 or more learners with at least two children who are blind. It also included children with other types of special needs. In Ugandan context all these categories of learners are being taught by a single teacher. Having this huge numbers of learners under a single teacher was perceived to have posed difficulties in teaching; class control; making teaching/learning materials; marking learners' exercise books. It also posed difficulties for the teachers to attend to individual children in the class. This finding is no different from the study carried by Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slushar and Saumell (1996). In their study, having large classes, inadequate resources and teachers negative attitudes towards children with disabilities were seen as hindering the inclusion process.

Although teachers seemed to have tried their level best to manage these sizes of classes with diversity, to the investigator's view, It may be possible that the teachers also face difficulties in preparing lessons that could meet the individual needs of all the learners.

### **5.2.3 Additional disability**

Having a child with additional disability means an added workload to the teachers. For instance, it will require a lot time and effort to make several learning/learning materials. In the teachers opinions, having a child who is blind with an additional disability was viewed as not only giving a teacher additional workload but also a possibility for developing negative attitudes towards the whole inclusion process of children with special needs in the school activities.

This is quite the same as to the results on the study carried out by the MOES (2005): In this study, besides having huge classes, lack of assistive devices, children with additional disabilities were least attended to by the teachers and they had least attendance rates.

#### **5.2.4 Intellectual abilities**

. The teachers' opinions were that having blind children who are mentally sound would be easy to teach and include them in school activities because the instructions could be explained once and they follow it easily compared to those with low intellectual abilities. For instance, when an exercise is given they would complete it almost at the same time with the sighted pupils. Thus, it saves time and simplifies the teacher's job.

However, Esther noticed that teachers who are patient easily accepted children who are blind. For example, such teachers take time giving instructions on how the exercise is to be done. They also listen to the questions asked by children who are blind and give extra time for these children to accomplish the given tasks.

Jimmy on the other hand indicated that acceptance of children who are blind was possible among teachers who are committed to their teaching job. His opinion was that children who are blind have a right to be in the same class with the sighted and get all the knowledge and skills like any other child in the same class.

Jimmy's opinion is supported by: The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); The Salamanca Statement of Action (1994); The Government White Paper on Education (1992); The Children's Statute (1996) and The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995). All these policies and documents state that:

*'All children regardless of any affiliation have a right to education'*

## 5.3 Participation in classroom and outdoor activities

The classroom and the general school compound arrangements are key environmental areas for successful teaching and learning. The kind of setting and interaction that the teachers and learners have in these two learning environments determine the amount and quality of learning that is produced. The teachers were asked:

*In your opinions, what strategies do you think could be done to support the participation of children who are blind in classroom and out door activities?*

*In your opinion, how do you think children who are blind can be supported to participate in classroom and outdoor activities?*

The findings revealed that the teachers' opinions were on: curriculum and environmental modification/adaptation; provision of specialized equipment; use of sighted peers were very vital in the inclusion of children who are blind

### 5.3.1 Modification and adaptation

The findings indicated that children who are blind can be helped to participate in classroom and outdoor activities by making some modifications and adaptations on the curriculum and learning environments.

- **Curriculum and environmental modification/adaptation**

The curriculum areas that were pointed out for modification and adaptation included: methods of teaching, learning/teaching materials, content and time. In methods, the teachers indicated that participatory methods such as: group work, discussion must be used when teaching. They argued that group work encourages full participation, sharing of ideas and knowledge. This agrees with Gilles (2002); Suhmidt and Harriman (1998) where they said that when children work together in groups, the given tasks can easily be accomplished in time and it has a appositive effect on academic achievement, self esteem, social relationships and personal

developments. Similarly, Ainiscow (1999) and Gilles (2002) argued that working in groups may have an advantage of having learners with mixed abilities. As such, learners can help each other and share ideas together.

Jonathan in particular argued that teachers should adopt the use of Individual Education Plans when teaching children who are blind. He claimed that this strategy is very important for children who are slow learners because they can learn at their pace, interest and ability.

This finding is in line with Molten (2005) and Smith Polloway; Polton and Dowdy (2005) where they argued that whenever an Individual Education Plan is planned, it must be based on the needs of the learners and teachers should work towards this target.

Furthermore, the teachers said that all the teaching-learning materials like diagrams and any charts must be modified into braille form in order for children who are blind to follow the lesson in progress.

Esther in person said that teachers should use concrete/real objects in the teaching because some concepts are difficult to explain. She claimed that use of concrete objects can help children who are blind develop a mental understanding the concept than when only the words are used. The finding agrees with Alenyo (1998) where he pointed out that for effective teaching and learning to take place, the use of educational materials is a must. And that embossed materials are essential for learners with visual impairment. He stated that educational materials facilitate in the retention of the newly leant subject matter.

The findings further reveal that environmental modification can be done by building some simple and strong ramps, handrails, shorelines and landmarks. These enable children who are blind to find their way out safely and independently where activities are to be carried out. In addition, it is indicated that all hazardous elements like unprotected sharp objects, unfilled up holes, and unnecessary stumps of trees should be removed from the compound.

This finding is in line with Skjørten (2001) where she referred inclusion as a practice of educating all learners in the classroom or environment which is learning-friendly. Again, Esther indicated that extra time should be given to children who are blind to accomplish any given tasks. She claims that children who are blind are ever slow and they take much time to explore things tactually in order to build up a mental picture which the sighted can do just at a glance using sight.

In addition, teachers also indicated that children who are blind should physically be involved in designed school activity. For example give them the opportunity to demonstrate an activity where their abilities allow. When they do this, they become confident and with high self esteem. This finding concurs with Mitchel (1999) where he said that environmental modification permits accessibility of children with special needs to offices, classrooms, play areas play grounds and thus promotes their interaction with others academically and socially.

### **5.3.2 Provision of specialized equipment**

The teachers indicated that specialized equipment like perkins brailers, slates, cubes, hand frames should be provided in order to facilitate the participation of children who are blind in their academic work. They pointed out that children who are blind should be allowed to use this equipment during the teaching and learning process in order to solve their own academic problems. Where children who are blind are not competent in their use, the teacher must take initiative to train them.

Furthermore, the teachers noted that brailed text books, reference books and other supplementary readers should be provided to children who are blind and allow them to use. The teachers believed that when children who are blind access these equipment and materials, they can be able to learn along side their sighted colleagues even in the absence of the teacher.

This finding concurs with Gross (1999) when he argued that availability of teaching and learning materials makes the job of the teacher easier and the learning outcomes

of the learners will improve. For example a child with reading difficulties should be provided with the braille reading books of varied levels.

Esther in particular indicated that it is very important for the teachers to use concrete objects when teaching children who are blind. T who said that use of white canes provides the person who is blind an improved security and independence in reaching the desired goals.

Mentis; Quinn, Smith and Ryba (2005) emphasized that in order to meet the academic needs of the learners, teachers have to provide learning/teaching materials, strategies and modified curriculum which are accommodative to all learners in an inclusive classroom.

### **5.3.3 Use of sighted peers**

A significant resource for helping all children to learn successfully is the use of what has been called 'peers power'. In other words, children can be encouraged to help one another. This approach can be particularly important in helping children experiencing difficulties, or those who have special needs.

Like the teachers, the sighted peers helped their peers who are blind to read the notes teachers write on the chalkboard; lead them to areas where activities are carried out; doing the given activities together and so on. Undvari-Sollner and Thousand (1995) emphasises that as peers work together, there can be an opportunity for them to build up social relationship and academic learning. This is further supported by UNISE (1997) that peer tutoring can be of great help for who have difficulties in reading and any other curricular subjects.

The initiative taken by the sighted children shows that they are willing to work together with their colleagues who are blind in a variety of school activities. It is important that children be rewarded for all the assistance they give one another in order to promote the inclusion process.

## 5.4 Benefits of placing children who are blind in mainstream

### 5.4.1 Social Benefits

The teachers indicated that as children who are blind sit together with the sighted pupils, they will interact and come to know one another; make friends; share feelings and experiences; they develop tolerance with one another's wrong doings or mistakes.

The results also indicated that the negative attitude that children have towards one another can be reduced. For example, they can learn to ask and discuss their challenges. Sighted children can learn to help those who are blind to find their way out while in the class or moving around the school compound. They can talk to one another to solve their personal problems and whenever they need some help during the lesson. This is supported by Holbrook (1996) where he outlined some benefits as indicated in 2...

However, it may be argued that the ability of sighted and children who are blind engagement in talking to one another may depend on the nature of activity they are confronted with and the kind of help they may be requiring from each other. And if either of them is willing to give that help.

However, Isaac in particular indicated that having children who are blind in the mainstream will make the teacher recognize that all the pupils in the class have both strengths and weaknesses. For example when a question is asked in the class, both sighted and children who are blind can either give a correct answer or wrong answer. He also noted that talents as sighted and children who are blind participated together in the activities there is a possibility to identify and develop the talents of the children who are blind as early as possible.

### 5.4.2 Academic Benefits

The number one purpose in schools is to teach academics to learners. All the five teachers interviewed believed that children who are blind can benefit academically like any child in the class. They argued that children who are blind can acquire these academic skills and knowledge if the teacher provides them with all the necessary learning materials. When these children access this equipment they can do basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. And when they are provided with brailled books, they can read simple story books tactually. Besides this, the participants agreed that children who are blind can academically benefit in the mainstream placement because sighted peers can assist them in areas of difficulty.

However, Philip said that absence of these materials leads to isolation of children who are blind within the same classroom. They will become redundant and begin misbehaving in the class. Esther felt that many children who are blind can do better in the academic work if the teacher puts more effort in helping them by giving individual educational plans. This is in line with Holbrook (1996); Reynold, Wang & Walberg (1987) where he stated that when children who are blind access adapted and specialized equipment like braille books, braille machines there is academic achievement. He emphasized that children who are blind should be taught how to use these equipment.

Although these benefits are worth maintaining, it may be arguable on how children who are blind can benefit from them. First and foremost, the mentioned equipment is scarce in the country because of their costs. In addition not many teachers are trained Jonathan indicated that both children who are blind and sighted can gain academic benefits and he said that

*“Yes, these children will benefit academically because there are some learners whether blind or sighted who are very clever. So those clever ones can help the dull ones”*

Although these benefits are worth mentioning, it may be arguable on how children who are blind can benefit from them. First and foremost, the mentioned equipment is scarce in the country because of their costs. In addition not many teachers are trained how use these materials. How can children who are blind be trained on their use?

### **5.4.3 Acquisition of special skills**

The participants indicated that blind children cannot acquire skills by imitation in a manner sighted ones can do. So they need to be guided by those persons close to them usually the parents, siblings. In schools children who are blind can learn special skills with the help from the teachers, peers etc.

The participants revealed that children who are blind are supported to acquire special skills like: self-help skill like toileting during health education lessons. Teachers take them to the pit latrines and teach them how to use the pit latrine. Teachers noted that these skills need to be taught to children who are blind as early as possible to avoid embarrassment as they grow up.

## **5.5 Challenges**

With regard to the teachers' opinions on challenges towards inclusion of children who are blind, the findings indicated that some teachers lacked skills and competence of working with children who are blind. Then class sizes, shortage of trained teachers in the field of special needs education and lack of specialized equipment.

### **5.5.1 Lack of skills and competence**

The participants indicated that most of the regular teachers lacked skills and competence to include children who are blind in classroom and outdoor activities. The challenge here was on how to prepare lessons and make modifications on the instructional/learning materials that suit the specific needs of individual children who

are blind. This is therefore an area in which teachers' support was very crucial. The findings further indicated that some teachers trained in special needs education, had limited skills in some specialist areas like sports for persons with visual impairment, orientation and mobility. Having limited skills in these areas interfered with the inclusion of children who are blind in out door activities. The findings also revealed that although the participants we were trained in special needs, those who specialized in other areas other than visual impairment had limited knowledge in braille reading and writing and use of specialized equipment.

As a result, they were unable to adequately help children who are blind to participate in both classroom and outdoor activities. Lack of skill and competence has been mentioned in several studies on inclusion of children who are blind.

### **5.5.2 Class size**

The teachers' explanation on having high number of pupils in the classroom was that it made it difficult for them to adequately teach in inclusive classrooms. The enrolment in the classes ranged from 70 or more pupils. They expressed that despite this huge numbers of pupils in the classes, they were required to cover all the work in the syllabus within the given period of time. They were also required to mark the pupils' exercise books, prepare the teaching learning materials and at the same time give attention to all the pupils with special needs. Having many children in the class made it difficult for the teachers to give individual attention to children who are blind. With this kind of work load, the teachers expressed that they felt overstretched

### **5.5.3 Shortage of teachers trained in Special Needs Education**

All the participants noted that specialist teachers were not enough in the schools. As a result it has posed a big challenge of heavy workload among teachers. In addition, a few specialist teachers get over burdened. They are required to braille monthly tests from the classes of non-specialist teachers. The participants revealed that it hindered the inclusion of children who are blind in classroom and outdoor activities and

eventually the provision of quality education. And besides teaching, teachers have other functions to carry out. This scenario becomes a challenge because a small number of specialist teachers that are available in the schools cannot run all the subjects in all the classes. As such children who are blind remain unattended to in subjects like braille reading and writing that require specialist training

#### **5.5.4 Shortage of resources**

Shortage of resources has been broken into teaching learning materials and infrastructure. The participants indicated that specialized equipment were lacking or inadequate in some classes. It was reported that these equipment were mainly lacking in lower primary classes (Primary 1-3).

The participants further pointed out that lower primary classes (Primary 1-3) were lacking classrooms with children learning under trees. Furniture in class is lacking in lower primary classes. As such, children sit on the ground; stones and logs.

The findings in this study are similar with those obtained by the MOES (2005) and the assessment that was carried out by Moroto & Kotido districts EARS/SNE staffs in 1998. In those studies, the findings showed that children with visual impairments did not have access to brailed books; they also lacked assistive devices.

This then seems to imply that many children including those who are blind do not enjoy good learning environment. This is an issue that requires critical attention if inclusion is to be effective in the schools.

## 5.6 Support services

In light with the challenges faced by the teachers in inclusion of children who are blind in mainstream classroom and outdoor activities, the study explored the key areas that in the teachers' opinions were necessary for inclusion of children who are blind. The participants felt that they needed support in the following areas: training of regular teachers in the field of special needs education; provision of specialized equipment and collaboration.

### 5.6.1 Training of regular teachers

Teachers play a major role in supporting children who are blind to be involved in various school activities in collaboration with other stakeholders. Therefore, training of teachers who have limited knowledge in the section of blindness may be of good help to children who are blind. The training could be in form of workshops; in-service and pre-service programmes. This may equip the teachers with better understanding of children who are blind and to empower them with the basic skills that will enable them to meet the needs of children who are blind.

The findings further indicated that specialist teachers required some training in specific areas like braille reading and writing; mobility skills and sports for persons with visual impairment. Lack of knowledge in such areas hinders the teachers to allow children who are blind to participate in some classroom and out door activities.

This is in line with Kristensen (2000) who argued that teachers must be trained in special needs education so that they get tools necessary to teach all learners in the same class and understand the diversity of children's needs.

Lack of skills and knowledge in these areas may make teaching and learning stressful for the teachers and children who are blind, learning may become less likely to take place.

### **5.6.2 Provision of specialized equipment**

As indicated in chapter two (section 2.9) when a school is equipped with basic teaching and learning materials, the teacher's job is made easier and the learning outcomes of all learners will improve. The teachers indicated that provision of specialized equipment like Perkins braille, cubes; cube frames etc can make participation of children who are blind more lively and good retention of the knowledge. This concurs with the views of Thomson (2002) and Stein & Bovalino (2001) when they noted that use of concrete materials provides children who are blind tactile experiences that help them to explore and describe whatever is being taught.

### **5.6.3 Collaboration**

The collaboration of many different people in the school plays a significant role in developing teaching and learning strategies to all the learners. In this study, the results indicated that the teachers were in need of collaboration among regular teachers, specialist teachers and other stakeholders. The argument was that when collaboration is in place, expertise is shared in various areas, planning and evaluation in cooperation with the team members is enriching in comparison to doing the job alone. Some of the areas that the teachers believed collaboration was required were: preparation of learning/teaching materials; developing Individual Education Plans for children. As noted by UNISE, 2002 & Smith et al, 2005 team teaching can help the professionals to share their expertise and experiences and thus help children with special needs to gain confidence and develop good social relationships within the learning environment.

I think this is a good move that teachers need to promote. A teacher who works alone in his/her class will have a big responsibility. This is especially true when we consider the huge classes and the diversity that we have in the Ugandan inclusive classes. Similarly, UNESCO (1994) pointed out that the goal for successful inclusion of children requires co-operation of all the teachers, peers and communities.

## 5.7 Concluding Remarks

The study was carried out with the aim of establishing the teachers opinions about inclusion of children who are blind in the mainstream primary schools. The results indicated that the teacher's opinions were influenced by a variety of factors. They included: teacher's attitude; class size; additional disabilities and the intellectual abilities. Teachers also felt that children who are blind can be helped to participate in classroom and out door activities by making modification and adaptation to the curriculum and physical environment and provision of specialized equipment.

The teachers further noted that when children who are blind are placed in the mainstream, there's a possibility of gaining social benefits; academic benefits and the acquisition of special skills.

Factors such as: lack of skills and competence; class size; shortage of specialist teachers and shortage of specialist equipment were pointed out as major factors hindering the inclusion of children who are blind in mainstream activities.

In spite these challenges, the teachers still had some willingness to support children who are blind to participate in the school activities.

## 5.8 Recommendations

The government through the Ministry of Education and Sports should strengthen the component of special needs education in Primary Teachers Colleges by staffing all of them with specialist teachers. This may help to equip the student teachers with the basic skills and knowledge necessary to support in particular children who are blind and other children with special needs in the mainstream activities.

The government should also open up the schools' staff ceilings and recruit more teachers in order to reduce the teacher-pupil ratio. This may help to reduce the

teachers' workload. It may also boost the teachers' moral to adequately implement the inclusion strategies of children who are blind.

The Government through the District Local Government should provide adequate support to the inspectors of schools in order to closely monitor and assess the implementation of inclusive education in all the educational institutions. Regular follow up by the inspectors of schools in-charge of special needs education may have a plat form to identify specific challenges that individual teachers face in the inclusion of children who are blind. And thus lobby for support from relevant authorities.

The Ministry of Education and Sports under the Schools Facilities Grant (SFG) should build and furnish more classrooms and fund the modification of buildings that were built before SFG was introduced.

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# Appendix 1

## Semi-structured Interview Guide for Primary School Teacher

Topic: Inclusion of Blind Children in primary Schools: A case study of teachers' opinions in Moroto district-Uganda

### **Introduction**

- Greetings
- Introduction of the interviewer and the interviewee
- Explanation of the topic
- Assurance
- Obtaining permission from the participants to tape record the interview deliberations

### **Background information of the participants**

- Gender
- Qualifications
- Class taught
- Teaching experience

### **Teachers' opinions about acceptance of children who are blind**

- In your opinion, how do teachers feel having both children who are blind and sighted learning in the same class?
- In your opinion, what could be the main factors that allow teachers to accept children who are blind in their classes?

### **Participation in classroom and outdoor activities**

- In your opinion, do you think children who are blind can do activities together with the sighted children?
- How do you think children who are blind can be supported to participate in:
  - Classroom activities
  - Outdoor activities

**Support services**

- In your opinion, what support do you think is necessary for teachers who teach children who are blind and the sighted children in the same class?
- How do you think teachers can use such support to help children who are blind?

**Benefits**

- What do you think could be the benefits of placing children who are blind in the mainstream primary school?
- In your opinion, how do you think children who are blind can benefit in the mainstream primary schools?

**Challenges**

- What challenges do you think you may experience when working with children who are blind in:
  - Classroom activities
  - Outdoor activities
- How do you think teachers can overcome such challenges you have named above?

**Conclusion**

- Do you have anything to add to our interview?
- Is there anything you can think of that I can ask other teachers?
- Have you met any questions during the interview that you were not comfortable with?

## Appendix 2

### Introductory letter from the district education office, Moroto

Telephone/fax 0454-  
70060



Moroto District Local Government  
Education and sports Department  
P.O Box 4  
Moroto

In any correspondence  
Please quote.....

The Republic of Uganda

3<sup>rd</sup> September 2008

The Head teacher  
Moroto Municipal council P/S  
Moroto

#### RE; GEORGE WILLIAM IGUNE

The above officer mentioned is a student at the University of Oslo-Norway pursuing the degree of master of philosophy in special needs Education (M.Phil.SNE) He is on field work on data collection for his thesis.

The purpose of this communication is to kindly request you to allow him collect the said material to enable him accomplish the study. Any other support accorded to him will be highly appreciated.

Thank you

Yours



Nakoya Joyce P

**DISTRICT INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS – MOROTO**

## Appendix 3

Map of Uganda Showing the Study Area

