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**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIORAL STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS AND EDUCATION**

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICES IN SELECTED PRIMARY
SCHOOLS OF ADDIS ABABA AT LAFTO SUB-CITY**

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The scholarly quality and originality requirements of the university are met by Belay Getnet's thesis, "The Practice of Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities in Four Government Primary Schools in Addis Ababa at Lafto SubCity," according to this document. It was turned in to complete the requirements for the Master of Arts in Special Needs and Inclusive Education

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------|--|
| CRC: | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| EASNIE: | European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education |
| EFA: | Education for All |
| EMIS: | Education Management Information System |
| ETP: | Education and Training Policy |
| HEI: | Higher Education Institution |
| IDEA: | Individuals with Disabilities Education Act |
| LRE: | Least Restrictive Environment |
| LSEN: | Learners with Special Educational Needs |
| MOE: | Ministry of Education |
| NPA: | National Plan of Action |
| SEN: | Special Education Needs |
| TVET: | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| UN: | United Nations |
| UNCRPD: | United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |
| UNESCO: | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF: | United Nations International Children Emergency Fund |
| UPE: | Universal Primary Education |

ABSTRACT

This study was investigated the practice of inclusive education in four primary schools located in the Lafto sub-city of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The selected schools were Mekanissa, Hawaria, Gofa, and Netsanetchora Primary Schools. In order to know the meaningful implementation of inclusive education, case study design was used by the researcher .The purpose of the case study was to explore the experiences of students with disabilities and to understand how inclusive education is implemented at each selected primary schools. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of four school principals, twenty regular teachers, and twenty-four students with disabilities. Data were collected through document reviews, classroom observations, and interviews with both regular teachers and students with disabilities to ensure data validity. The findings were presented narratively, analyzed, and discussed based on the emerging themes from the study questions. Despite a strong commitment to inclusive education, both regular teachers and school principals faced challenges due to limited experience and knowledge in this field. The study revealed a conflict between the general objective of educating all students with disabilities and the attitude school principals and teachers that inclusive education could only be partially achieved. Several barriers to effective implementation were identified, and recommendations were made for key school *stakeholders*. *Further research was suggested to improve the implementation of inclusive education.*

Key words: Inclusive education, special/diverse needs, inclusive practice

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

According to Ethiopia's commitment to Universal Primary Education and the Education for All goals, education is a fundamental human right. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by Ethiopia in 2006, confirms the right of people with disabilities to inclusive education at all educational levels (United Nations, 2006). By enhancing their quality of life, this commitment aims to enable individuals with disabilities to become self-sufficient, contributing members of society who possess dignity and self-worth. To help all children realize their full potential, social fairness must be promoted, and prejudice against people with disabilities must be eradicated through the establishment of inclusive learning environments. Additionally, inclusive education is considered more affordable than establishing special schools, particularly in rural areas (UNESCO, 2005).

The World Conference on Special Educational Needs in 1994 adopted the Salamanca Statement, which is where the idea of inclusive education first emerged. Unless there are strong arguments to the contrary, this declaration called on governments to adopt inclusive education principles and enroll all children in normal schools. Human rights advocates, non-profits, governments, and international organizations who support inclusive education as the best model for people of all abilities have helped to spread the belief that basic education is a human right throughout the world (Jha, 2012).

Practically speaking, inclusive education entails spending the most of the school day educating students with disabilities and other disadvantages alongside their peers in regular classrooms. It highlights that all students have the right to share the same educational environment and rejects segregation in special units or classrooms (Cobley et al., 2018). All pupils, regardless of aptitude, benefit from inclusive education, which emphasizes its importance. Strong evidence that inclusive education improves social and academic opportunities for all students is presented by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE, 2018). This

increases the likelihood that students with disabilities will enrol in higher education and achieve better employment and life outcomes.

Ethiopia has established laws and policies to promote inclusive education, but significant obstacles still hinder their implementation. Sociocultural attitudes, financial constraints, and practical barriers, such as inadequate teacher preparation and a lack of accessible infrastructure, are key challenges highlighted by Tirussew (2005) in his study. Tefera et al. (2018) analyzed various legal documents and publications, including the Constitution, the Education and Training Policy, and Ministry of Education reports, to investigate the gap between the "Education for All" rhetoric and the reality in Ethiopia. Their research revealed a troubling statistic: 97% of school-age children with disabilities do not attend school, and those who do often receive substandard education. This stark contrast suggests that the principle of "education for all" remains largely rhetorical, with minimal enrollment of children with disabilities and significant difficulties in providing quality education.

The study is justified on both theoretical and practical grounds. Theoretically, it enhances the existing literature on inclusive education by investigating practices in primary schools specifically within Addis Ababa. Its goal is to address gaps in understanding how inclusive education policies are enacted in practice and how different stakeholders taken account these implementations. Given the pressing need for effective inclusion strategies, this study will offer essential recommendations to guide future efforts, ensuring that the principles of inclusive education are effectively realized and that all students, regardless of their disabilities, have access to quality education.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Inclusive education has become a fundamental aspect of educational reform in Ethiopia, as part of the country's commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and the Education for All (EFA) initiative. Despite the legal framework and policies established to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream education, the practical implementation of these policies in Addis Ababa's primary schools has faced significant challenges. Teachers, particularly in general education classrooms, are crucial in ensuring that students with disabilities are fully included and engaged in learning. However, there is a lack of

comprehensive studies that explore the specific roles of teachers in enhancing the participation of students with disabilities in regular classrooms. While some teachers make efforts to include students with disabilities, systemic issues such as insufficient training and resources often hinder their effectiveness (Tirussew, 2005; Tefera et al., 2018). This gap in understanding highlights the need for further investigation into the ways teachers can improve the participation of students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

A major challenge to inclusive education in Ethiopia is the lack of adequate training for general education teachers to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. While Ethiopia has made strides in integrating inclusive education into its educational policy, there remains a significant gap between policy and practice, particularly in terms of teacher preparedness. Research by Tirussew (2005) and Bekele and Ressa (2016) found that many general education teachers lack the specialized skills required to support students with disabilities effectively. Inadequate teacher training has been identified as one of the primary barriers to successful inclusion, as teachers often feel ill-equipped to address the complex needs of students with disabilities, especially in larger classrooms with diverse learning requirements. Understanding how teachers work to fulfill these needs in inclusive classrooms is essential for improving the quality of education for all students.

In addition to teacher preparedness, the strategies employed by general education teachers to promote inclusion in classrooms are not well documented. Strategies such as differentiated instruction, collaborative teaching, and individualized learning plans are considered effective in supporting students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. However, research by Jha (2012) and Copley et al. (2018) suggests that these strategies are not consistently applied in Ethiopian schools due to a variety of factors, including a lack of resources, time constraints, and the diverse nature of disabilities. Therefore, it is critical to identify the most successful strategies that can be implemented by teachers in primary schools in Addis Ababa to promote inclusive education effectively.

Moreover, several factors hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education in Addis Ababa's primary schools. The lack of accessible infrastructure, such as ramps, specialized equipment, and assistive technologies, poses significant challenges to the inclusion of students with disabilities (Tefera et al., 2018). Additionally, sociocultural attitudes and the stigma

associated with disability often discourage families from enrolling their children in school. As noted by Tirussew (2005) and Bekele and Ressa (2016), these cultural biases contribute to the marginalization of students with disabilities in the education system. Despite efforts by civil society organizations to promote inclusive education, such as the Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development, the scale of these efforts remains limited, and many students with disabilities continue to face significant barriers to accessing quality education (EMIS, 2007). Addressing these challenges is crucial to the success of inclusive education initiatives in the country.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by examining the roles of teachers, the strategies they use, and the factors that hinder or facilitate the implementation of inclusive education in four primary schools in Addis Ababa's Lafto sub-city. By focusing on the specific execution of general education teachers, students with disabilities, and school principals, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the practical realities of inclusive education in these schools.

1.3. Research questions

1. What are the teachers' roles in improving the participation of student with disabilities in the general education classroom in the selected four primary schools?
2. How do general education teachers work to fulfil the specific needs of every student in inclusive classroom?
3. What are the most successful strategies that promote inclusive education in the general education classroom the selected four primary schools?
4. What are factors that hinder implementation of inclusive education in those Primary school

1.4. Objective of the Study

1.4.1. General objective of the study

The major objective of this study was to investigate the practices of inclusive education at Gofa, Hawaria, Netsanetchora, and Mekanissa primary schools in Addis Ababa.

1.4.2. Specific Objective of the Study

- ✓ To identify strategies of inclusive education in inclusive classroom.
- ✓ To assess the teachers' role in improving the participation of students with disabilities in the selected primary schools.
- ✓ To identify how general education teachers work to fulfil the specific needs of every students in inclusive classroom.
- ✓ To identify factors that hinder implementation of inclusive education in those four Primary schools

1.5 Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform and improve the practice of inclusive education in Addis Ababa's primary schools. By exploring the roles of teachers, the strategies they employ, and the challenges they face in promoting the participation of students with disabilities in general education classrooms, the study provides valuable insights that can enhance teaching practices and student outcomes. The findings will be beneficial for teachers by offering practical strategies and addressing the need for training and resources, thus improving their ability to meet the diverse needs of students. For students with disabilities, the study aims to identify ways to improve their educational experiences and ensure their full participation in regular classrooms. Additionally, the research will offer principals and policymakers evidence-based recommendations that can guide decision-making and policy development to foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. Overall, the study will contribute to the ongoing efforts to ensure equitable access to quality education for all students, regardless of their abilities, thus advancing the broader goals of inclusive education in Ethiopia

1.6. Scope of the study

Inclusive education is a comprehensive concept that encompasses many interactions; however, this study focused specifically on its practical implementation. The geographical scope was confined to four government primary schools in Addis Ababa, particularly within the purposively selected Lafto sub-city. This sub-city was chosen due to time and financial

limitations. As a result, the findings of this study may not be applicable to primary schools in other sub-cities.

1.7. Limitation of the study

The study on inclusive education practices in selected four primary schools of Addis Ababa encountered several methodological weaknesses that was impacted its findings. One significant limitation was the potentially small and non-representative sample size, which restricts the generalizability of the results to the broader educational context. The reliance on qualitative interviews introduced subjectivity, potentially oversimplifying the complexities of inclusive practices and failing to capture diverse experiences. Furthermore, cultural attitudes towards inclusion and variations in resource availability among schools likely influenced the implementation of inclusive education, while time constraints limited the depth of insights gathered. Additionally, the study overlooked the perspectives of key stakeholders, such as parents and community members, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and successes of inclusive education in the selected schools. These weaknesses underscore the need for caution in interpreting the findings and highlight areas for improvement in future research.

1.8. Operational definition of terms

Inclusive Education: A teaching approach where students with disabilities learn alongside their peers without disabilities in the general education classroom, with necessary accommodations and support to meet their diverse learning needs (UNESCO, 1994).

Students with Disabilities: Individuals enrolled in primary school who have physical, intellectual, sensory, or emotional disabilities that require specific educational support and services to ensure they can fully participate in the learning process (World Health Organization, 2011).

General Education Classroom: A regular classroom setting where students with and without disabilities are taught together, with a curriculum designed for the general student population, typically led by a general education teacher (Cobley et al., 2018).

Teachers' Roles in Inclusive Education: The responsibilities and actions of teachers in ensuring that students with disabilities are actively included in classroom activities. This includes modifying lessons, providing individualized support, and promoting an inclusive classroom environment (Ferguson, 2008).

Participation of Students with Disabilities: The extent to which students with disabilities are involved in classroom activities, including academic tasks, social interactions, and extracurricular activities, within the general education setting (Fletcher, 2006).

Strategies for Inclusive Education: Specific teaching methods, instructional accommodations, and classroom modifications that are employed by teachers to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education classrooms. These strategies can include differentiated instruction, peer tutoring, and use of assistive technology (EASNIE, 2018).

Barriers to Inclusive Education: Factors that prevent the full implementation of inclusive education practices, including negative attitudes, lack of teacher training, inadequate resources, and societal stigma (Tirussew, 2005)

1.9. Organization of the study

There are five chapters that make up this research. An overview of the research's background, issue statement, goals, constraints, and importance is provided in the first chapter. A review of pertinent literature is provided in Chapter 2, and the methodological approaches—including research design, participant selection, data collection instruments, primary procedures, ethical issues, and data analysis techniques—are covered in Chapter 3. The results analysis and important findings are presented in the fourth chapter, which also incorporates the researcher's observations and pertinent literature within theme frameworks. The investigation is finally summarized in the fifth chapter, which also offers conclusions and suggestions.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

The theoretical literature on a number of subjects, such as the definition and theoretical underpinnings of inclusive education, its historical evolution, and the international policy framework pertaining to it, is reviewed in this chapter. The practice of inclusive education, its advantages, and methods for encouraging inclusion in general education classes, and the opportunities and difficulties related to inclusive education are also covered. The chapter also looks at empirical data on the topic and the perspectives of regular teachers and school principals regarding the implementation of inclusive education. A summary of the literature review and an identification of research gaps round out the chapter.

2.2. Theoretical Framework and definition of inclusive education

2.2.1. Theoretical Framework

Inclusive education is grounded in various educational, social, and psychological theories that promote equal access to education for all students, regardless of their disabilities. These theories emphasize the value of diversity, equity, and the importance of adapting education systems to meet the needs of every learner.

2.2.1.1. Social Model of Disability

The social model of disability, developed by Oliver (1996), asserts that disability is not an inherent trait of an individual but rather a result of the interaction between individuals and societal barriers. This model highlights that society's physical, attitudinal, and educational structures often exclude individuals with disabilities. The social model advocates for removing these barriers, fostering an inclusive society that enables all individuals to participate fully. In the context of education, this theory underlines the need for inclusive schools that adjust their practices to accommodate all learners.

2.2.1.2. Vygotsky's Social Constructivism

Lev Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism emphasizes the role of social interaction in the development of cognitive skills. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal

Development (ZPD) suggests that learners can achieve higher levels of understanding and skills when supported by more knowledgeable others (teachers, peers, or caregivers). This theory is vital in inclusive education, where collaborative learning between students with and without disabilities promotes cognitive development and social integration. Teachers in inclusive classrooms can scaffold learning, helping students with disabilities reach their full potential by utilizing the support of peers and differentiated instruction.

2.2.1.3. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

UDL, introduced by CAST (2018), is a framework that advocates for designing learning environments that accommodate the needs of all students. It proposes that instructional practices should offer multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression to address the diverse ways in which students learn. In the context of inclusive education, UDL supports the idea that curriculum and teaching strategies should be flexible to support learners with different abilities, ensuring that all students can access, participate in, and succeed in the learning process.

2.2.1.4. Human Rights Theory:

Inclusive education is strongly linked to human rights theory, which argues that all children, regardless of their disabilities, have an inherent right to education (UNESCO, 2009). The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ratified by Ethiopia in 2006, asserts the right of people with disabilities to be educated in an inclusive environment. This theory provides the legal and ethical foundation for inclusive education, supporting the notion that education systems must be reformed to be inclusive, promoting the dignity, equality, and autonomy of individuals with disabilities.

2.2.1.5. Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory focuses on the interconnected systems that influence a child's development, such as family, school, and community. In the context of inclusive education, this theory emphasizes the importance of a supportive environment that includes not only the educational system but also family, peers, and the broader community. Inclusive education practices, according to this theory, must consider the various systems that influence the student's life, including the role of parents, communities, and the school in fostering inclusive educational environments.

2.2.1.6. Critical Pedagogy:

Paulo Freire's (2000) critical pedagogy emphasizes the need to challenge traditional power structures in education, advocating for an education system that empowers marginalized groups. Critical pedagogy in inclusive education stresses the importance of challenging the status quo, questioning educational practices that perpetuate inequality, and working to create equitable learning environments. It promotes dialogue, active participation, and the development of critical thinking skills, with the goal of fostering social justice within the classroom.

It is imperative that educational systems actively defend student's rights by offering high-quality instruction, in addition to committing to these rights. Policymakers are therefore under a lot of pressure to create inclusive education programs. Many nations have created or implemented laws that encourage the inclusion of students with special or diverse needs in mainstream schools as a result of this necessity (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007). Florian and Linklater (2010) pointed out that over the past ten years, teaching strategies for students with disabilities have greatly improved, putting a great deal of pressure on educators to successfully instruct students with a range of abilities. This necessitates a strong dedication to bringing inclusive education to fruition.

Johansson (2014) noted that although many governments have created policies pertaining to inclusive education, they frequently encounter difficulties when it comes to putting these policies into practice in schools. Ferguson (2008) emphasized that the challenge is not so much with the real policy-making process as it is with the actual implementation of inclusive education. Enough resources and support must be given to teachers, who are crucial to the implementation of inclusive education, if it is to succeed.

Furthermore, supportive and cogent policies are necessary for inclusive education to succeed. According to researchers, the process of creating inclusive practices in schools needs to be dynamic and ever-changing, just like other successful educational programs (Winter & O'Raw, 2010). According to Pijl, Meljer, and Hegarty (2010), a dual system comprising ordinary and special schools for individuals believed to have learning challenges resulted from the long-held idea that children with impairments could not be educated in mainstream settings.

But a paradigm shift is taking place, highlighting how crucial it is to educate all students together, regardless of their skills or limitations. According to Johansson (2014), in order to successfully implement inclusive education, policies should abandon strict tracking methods and switch to context-sensitive tactics. Selvaraj (2015) underlined the necessity of a thorough examination of the integration of inclusive education practices and policy. Enforcing laws that promote inclusion and making sure schools have the tools they need to handle diversity are both essential to successful implementation.

Ethiopia's efforts to promote inclusive education are greatly influenced by the push offered by the Salamanca Statement and the Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. Because it provides literature that links education to human rights, this conceptual framework is crucial to the study.

2.3. Definition of Inclusive Education

The significant Salamanca Conference in 1994 served as the basis for UNESCO's definitions of inclusion, which frame it as a movement intimately linked to more extensive improvements in the educational system. By encouraging involvement in learning, cultures, and communities and reducing educational exclusion, inclusion is a method that addresses the various requirements of all students. This process calls for adjustments to the content, methods, frameworks, and tactics, all of which center on a shared goal that incorporates all children of the proper age and emphasizes the normal education system's duty to educate everyone.

Although the primary focus of these definitions is on child education, the underlying ideas are applicable to students of all ages. Although the concepts can be applied to a wider educational setting, certain definitions, like those in the Index for Inclusion, make special reference to schools. Changes in beliefs, attitudes, policies, and practices are all part of the transformative process that is inclusive education, according to Polat (2011).

As a result, inclusive education goes beyond just putting all students in the same classroom; it also entails providing high-quality, student-centered instruction that attends to each student's unique needs and eventually encourages social change. In reality, there isn't a one inclusive education approach that works well in every nation; implementations and practices might vary

greatly. One-track, two-track, and multi-track systems are available for kids with disabilities (Göransson, Claes, & Karlsson 2011; Ochiai & Shimada 2016).

The one-track system refers to an approach in which all students, including those with disabilities, learn in regular classrooms without any form of separation, embodying the concept of complete inclusion. This model aligns with the principles outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), which advocate for inclusive education where students with disabilities are integrated into general education settings to the greatest extent possible.

In contrast, the **two-track system** includes both regular schools and special schools operating in parallel, with students with disabilities either integrated into general classrooms or segregated in special settings depending on their needs (UNESCO, 2009). This approach allows for differentiated education, although it may not fully align with the ideals of inclusion, as it separates students based on their disabilities.

Additionally, the **multi-track system** is an intermediary model that incorporates a combination of the one-track and two-track systems, offering various levels of support based on student needs. This model is used in many countries, including some developed nations, where students with disabilities might receive services within general education classrooms but also have access to special education resources when necessary (Jha, 2012). A critical point of debate, however, is whether multi-track systems are more akin to one-track or two-track systems, as they represent a hybrid model that balances inclusion with specialized support

2.4. History of inclusive education

The history of inclusive education can be traced back to various social and political movements that gained momentum throughout the 20th century. The 1950s and 1960s Civil Rights movement in the United States played a pivotal role in raising awareness about the exclusion of marginalized groups, including people with disabilities, from social institutions, particularly schools (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). This movement highlighted the systemic barriers faced by individuals based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. The 1960s and 1970s saw a growing recognition of the need for equality in education, with second-wave feminism, the

homosexual rights movement, and the disability rights movement challenging the status quo and advocating for the rights of all individuals to access public education.

A significant legislative shift occurred in the United States during the 1970s, influenced by these social movements. One landmark event was the passage of the Education for Handicapped Children Act (EHA) in 1975, which was the first federal law to ensure the right to a free and appropriate public education for children with disabilities. Prior to the EHA, many children with disabilities were either excluded from formal schooling or segregated into special education classes, where they received limited opportunities. According to legal historian Martha Minow, many children with disabilities were not admitted to public schools at all, and those who were often found themselves in separate, inferior educational settings (Minow, 1990). The EHA, later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, marked a turning point by requiring public schools to provide children with disabilities the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers, promoting greater inclusion (Zigmond, 2001).

In the decades following the EHA, there was a steady increase in the enrollment of students with disabilities in mainstream schools, and many educational institutions started developing special education programs. However, while special education programs played an essential role, the segregation of students with disabilities in separate classrooms and schools remained a barrier to full inclusion. The next major step toward inclusive education came from international and non-governmental organizations. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 2000) were pivotal in globalizing the idea of inclusive education. These documents stressed the importance of providing access to education for all children, including those with disabilities, and underscored the need to combat discriminatory attitudes while promoting tolerance and acceptance of diversity in the classroom.

International treaties, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006), further solidified the legal foundation for inclusive education. The Convention emphasized the right of people with disabilities to access the general education system without discrimination, obliging member countries to adopt policies that promote inclusive education in mainstream schools. In many countries, this framework inspired national reforms and led to the creation of inclusive education policies that aim to integrate students with

disabilities into regular classrooms, thus breaking down long-standing barriers and promoting equality in education.

Throughout the 21st century, inclusive education has continued to evolve, with increasing recognition of the diverse needs of students with disabilities and the importance of providing individualized support within inclusive environments. While challenges remain—such as the need for trained teachers, accessible infrastructure, and societal attitudes toward disability—the continued development of inclusive education practices around the world has demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach in promoting social inclusion and equality (Ainscow, 2005; Horn, 2006). Moreover, the adoption of inclusive education strategies has expanded beyond the developed world, with many low- and middle-income countries beginning to embrace inclusion as a key component of their educational policies.

2.5. International and national Policy Framework on Inclusive Education

2.5.1. International Policy Framework on Inclusive Education

Globally, inclusive education is reinforced by frameworks like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted in 2006. This convention highlights the right of individuals with disabilities to receive quality education in inclusive environments. It calls on nations to ensure that their educational systems are designed to accommodate all learners, thereby fostering participation and minimizing barriers.

Additionally, the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994) promotes inclusive education as a crucial pathway to achieving quality education for everyone. This document advocates for schools to be inclusive of all children, irrespective of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions, emphasizing the need to create environments that honor diversity and promote equity. Another notable international effort is the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which seeks to provide inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030. This goal highlights the importance of addressing educational disparities and fostering lifelong learning opportunities. Various global organizations, such as UNESCO and UNICEF, assist countries in developing policies that align with these frameworks, offering guidance, resources, and technical support to establish inclusive educational systems that meet the diverse needs of all learners, especially those with disabilities.

2.5.2. National Policy Framework on Inclusive Education

At the national level, numerous countries have established policies to advance inclusive education, often reflecting their commitment to international frameworks and conventions. For example, Ethiopia's National Policy on Special Needs Education emphasizes the government's commitment to ensuring inclusive and equitable access to education for children with disabilities (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2006). This policy outlines key strategies, including the modification of curricula, teacher training programs, and the provision of adequate resources to support inclusive practices in schools. The goal is to create an educational environment where all children, regardless of ability, can learn together, promoting social inclusion and enhancing the overall quality of education.

Additionally, national frameworks often include specific legislative measures that further reinforce the commitment to inclusive education. In Ethiopia, the Education and Training Policy serves as a foundational document that integrates inclusive education as a core principle within the country's broader educational reform initiatives (Ministry of Education, 2002). This policy advocates for the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms, and it outlines practical measures, such as specialized teacher training and the development of accessible learning materials, to facilitate the implementation of inclusive education. By aligning national policies with international frameworks, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006) and the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), Ethiopia aims to translate global commitments into tangible educational reforms, ensuring that inclusive education becomes a reality within the country's schools.

2.6. Practices of inclusive education

Inclusive education is a transformative approach to education that seeks to address the diverse needs of all learners, ensuring access, participation, and achievement in mainstream educational settings. This approach recognizes that education is not only a fundamental human right but also a crucial pathway for fostering equity and social cohesion (UNESCO, 1994). Inclusive education moves beyond the mere placement of students with disabilities in regular classrooms by actively addressing the barriers to learning and participation faced by marginalized groups, including those with disabilities, linguistic minorities, and economically disadvantaged students. Effective

implementation requires structural adjustments in curricula, teaching methodologies, and educational policies to create environments where every child has the opportunity to succeed.

The practice of inclusive education varies across contexts but generally involves adopting teaching strategies that accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities. Research highlights the importance of differentiated instruction, where teachers modify content, processes, and assessment methods to meet the unique needs of students (Tomlinson, 2017). Teacher preparedness is another critical component of successful inclusive education. Studies show that educators who receive specialized training in inclusive teaching practices are better equipped to create supportive environments that foster collaboration and mutual respect among all students, regardless of their abilities (Ainscow, 2020). This underscores the need for continuous professional development and the integration of inclusive education principles into teacher training programs.

One of the key challenges in implementing inclusive education is ensuring the availability of resources and infrastructure to support diverse learners. This includes not only physical accessibility, such as ramps and assistive technologies, but also the provision of sufficient funding for additional teaching aids and support staff. According to the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2018), schools that have invested in resource rooms, collaborative teaching models, and peer-assisted learning frameworks have reported better outcomes in inclusive education practices. Furthermore, community involvement plays a pivotal role in sustaining inclusive education. Parents, local organizations, and policymakers must work collaboratively to challenge societal stigmas and advocate for policies that uphold the principles of equity and inclusion

2.7. Benefits of Inclusive Education

The benefits of inclusive education extend to both students with and without disabilities, supporting the larger goal of creating an inclusive society, even though there is no research showing negative effects from properly implemented inclusion—given the supports and services required for students to participate actively and meet their Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals.

All students should be included in the general curriculum and school activities in order to foster an environment of equity that they can take into their communities, claims Peters (2009). In the battle against ignorance, apathy, and social irresponsibility, inclusive education—which is based on equity principles opposes exclusionary and marginalizing practices. Research continuously affirms the efficacy of inclusive education, emphasizing its benefits for learning outcomes, community belonging, and social justice. Every child and young person, regardless of disability, benefits from it in terms of their social, behavioural, and physical development.

2.7.1. Benefits for All Students

Better communication and linguistic abilities; greater independence; greater social development and opportunity to make friends they might not have otherwise met; a more positive self-image and increased sense of self-worth.

2.7.2. Benefits for Teachers and Educators

- Possibilities for professional development;
- improved student relationships
- greater job satisfaction;
- increased self-assurance in their teaching skills

2.7.3. Benefits for Families and the Community

- Improved psychological and financial well-being for parents.
- Greater support and confidence for parents, enabling them to re-enter the workforce.
- A more inclusive school environment.
- Enhanced community cohesion and the reduction of discriminatory beliefs and ableist practices.

2.8. Strategies to Promote Inclusive Education in General Education Classrooms

Strategies to Promote Inclusive Education in General Education Classrooms (Based on Local Studies)

1. Teacher Training and Professional Development

In Ethiopia, teacher preparation for inclusive education has been identified as a significant challenge. According to Tirussew (2005), most teachers in general education lack adequate training in handling students with disabilities, resulting in a limited capacity to address diverse learning needs. The study highlights the need for both pre-service and in-service training that focuses on inclusive practices, including differentiated instruction and classroom management techniques. Additionally, Woldesenbet (2013) emphasizes the importance of professional development programs that integrate practical experiences and exposure to inclusive classrooms, helping teachers build confidence and competence in supporting students with special educational needs.

Incorporating ongoing professional development is crucial to equip teachers with contemporary strategies for inclusive education. Ayalew (2019) found that teachers who participated in workshops and peer learning programs showed improved attitudes and skills in managing inclusive classrooms. These programs were most effective when they included collaboration with special educators and opportunities for teachers to share their experiences. This underscores the importance of continuous learning opportunities to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive practices in Ethiopian schools.

2. Curriculum Adaptation

The lack of an adaptable curriculum poses a significant barrier to inclusive education in Ethiopia. A study by Tefera et al. (2018) revealed that the rigid curriculum used in Ethiopian schools often fails to accommodate the diverse needs of students with disabilities. For instance, students with visual impairments or hearing difficulties struggle to access materials and assessments designed for general education students. The study recommends incorporating assistive technologies and flexible teaching approaches to create a more inclusive curriculum framework.

Additionally, Tirussew (2005) highlights the necessity of multisensory teaching methods, such as integrating visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities, to ensure effective learning for all students. Teachers who employed these strategies in pilot programs reported increased engagement and understanding among students with disabilities. Despite these promising results,

limited resources and insufficient training remain obstacles to widespread curriculum adaptation in Ethiopian schools.

3. Classroom Management and Organization

Managing an inclusive classroom requires intentional strategies to create a supportive and welcoming environment. Bekele and Ressa (2016) found that Ethiopian teachers often face challenges in organizing classrooms to accommodate students with physical disabilities due to a lack of appropriate furniture and infrastructure. Despite these challenges, some schools have successfully implemented seating arrangements and peer support systems that promote collaboration and inclusion.

Furthermore, Wondimu (2018) emphasizes the role of classroom management strategies in fostering inclusivity. Teachers who applied positive behavior reinforcement techniques and created structured routines reported improved student interactions and reduced behavioral issues. These findings suggest that with proper guidance and resources, Ethiopian teachers can effectively manage inclusive classrooms to benefit all learners.

4. Parental and Community Involvement

Parental involvement is a critical factor in promoting inclusive education. Ayalew (2019) found that parents of children with disabilities in Ethiopia often face social stigma and economic hardships, making it difficult for them to actively participate in their children's education. However, schools that implemented parent-teacher partnerships reported better educational outcomes for students with disabilities. These partnerships involved regular communication, workshops for parents, and collaborative decision-making regarding students' needs.

Community involvement is equally important in overcoming attitudinal barriers and fostering acceptance. Tirussew (2005) highlights successful awareness campaigns conducted in some Ethiopian communities, which improved public perceptions of disability and encouraged greater support for inclusive education. Expanding such initiatives could further enhance community participation and reduce the stigma surrounding disability.

5. Policy Support and Resource Allocation

Although Ethiopia has introduced policies supporting inclusive education, such as the National Special Needs Education Strategy, implementation gaps persist. Tefera et al. (2018) note that insufficient funding and inadequate resource allocation hinder schools from fully adopting inclusive practices. For example, the lack of trained special education teachers and accessible learning materials significantly limits the effectiveness of inclusive education policies.

However, some pilot programs have demonstrated the potential for resource optimization. Woldesenbet (2013) describes an initiative where schools shared resources, such as assistive devices and specialized staff, to support multiple institutions. This collaborative approach reduced costs and expanded access to essential resources, highlighting the importance of strategic resource allocation to support inclusive education.

2.9. Opportunities and Challenges of Inclusive Education

2.9.1. Opportunities of Inclusive Education

Implementing inclusive education is a multifaceted process that requires a clear vision and a commitment to overcoming various obstacles, particularly those related to attitudes and socio-cultural issues. The effective execution of inclusive education depends on a range of functional factors that contribute to a well-organized educational system (Johnson et al., 2014). This necessitates significant changes in policy, structure, and educational delivery for all students (Sharma et al., 2013).

Research on inclusive education consistently indicates that successful implementation demands comprehensive reforms within the educational framework. For instance, to put inclusive education principles into action, Oliver (2006) recommends creating an educational framework that values diversity, integrates all children into a cohesive educational system, encourages schools to engage with every student, and supports a flexible curriculum. Thus, it is crucial to establish an educational system that embraces and respects diversity to effectively implement inclusive education.

Developing such a system requires a reassessment of existing educational strategies. In addition to systemic reforms, successful inclusion calls for a significant cultural shift within schools,

which includes a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. Challenges in implementing inclusive education may arise in schools with complex cultural and organizational frameworks (Clark et al., 1999). To overcome this, schools should welcome a broader spectrum of students.

Mittler (2000) posits that schools need to shift from a “deficit model,” which attributes difficulties to individuals, to a “social model,” which acknowledges that disability is influenced by societal institutions that perpetuate discriminatory and oppressive practices. This change is essential for schools to enhance their ability to meet the needs of all learners, not just those with special educational needs (Biklen, 2000).

To improve the effectiveness of inclusion, schools must recognize and address the diverse needs of their students by accommodating different instructional styles and providing quality education through suitable curricula, organizational structures, teaching strategies, resource use, and community partnerships (UNESCO, 2005). Most importantly, the successful implementation of inclusive education relies heavily on effective teachers, who play a key role in cultivating an inclusive school culture. A teacher's attitude, skills, and willingness significantly affect the success of inclusive education. Effective practices in inclusion require a sufficient number of trained teachers and ongoing professional development (Sharma et al., 2013).

When teachers receive proper training, have access to necessary resources, and maintain a positive attitude towards including students with disabilities, the likelihood of successful inclusive practices in their classrooms increases. These educators, known as "high-impact teachers," positively influence students by relating their home and community experiences to the classroom curriculum (Boyle et al., 2011).

Furthermore, to promote a favorable attitude among teachers towards diversity and disability, it is crucial for them to learn and adopt new teaching methods and interaction techniques as part of a broader cultural transformation within their schools (Ainscow, 2007). Providing teachers and educators with a strong understanding of inclusive education, along with its policies and strategies, is essential for effectively managing diversity and disabilities in the classroom.

This knowledge broadens their perspectives and helps cultivate a positive attitude (Schadock et al., 2007). Successful inclusion also necessitates that teachers possess the technical skills and capacity to address diversity in the classroom, which can be achieved through targeted teacher training programs.

Hutchinson (2010) identified two key strategies for effective inclusive education: a) reforming the curriculum and teaching methods to benefit all learners, and b) offering continuous support and services for both students and educators. In a similar vein, Winter and O’Raw (2010) emphasized critical factors for successful inclusive education, including strong leadership, committed teachers, positive attitudes, comprehensive training for educators, adequate resources, knowledgeable teaching assistants, family involvement, and a flexible curriculum.

Brakenreed (2011) identified essential elements for advancing inclusive education, such as information-sharing workshops, effective time management for planning, sufficient resources, smaller class sizes, and training for school administrators. He also stressed the importance of a shift in educational values and philosophy to build an inclusive education system. According to Slavica (2010), a strong commitment and a clear vision are vital for successfully implementing inclusive education. The core of inclusive education is transforming the educational system to unite individuals, improve the system, and cultivate an inclusive society. Achieving this requires high-quality services, well-trained educators, supportive staff, and adequate resources. Inclusive schools play a central role in this initiative by fostering collaborative relationships within the school and with the wider community.

Inclusive schools focus on actively promoting an inclusive educational culture, with teachers playing a crucial role in this endeavor. By developing inclusive pedagogies, teachers can connect individual learners and their unique learning styles to the curriculum and the broader school community (Corbett, 2001). Thus, the school community is essential for effectively implementing inclusive education by nurturing an inclusive culture.

UNESCO (2001) advocates for full participation and equality for children with disabilities, emphasizing that learning takes place not only in schools but also through family interactions, friendships, and community involvement. The success of inclusive practices also depends on governments’ commitment and ability to adopt pro-poor policies, ensure equity in public education funding, promote intersectoral connections, and view inclusive education as a critical component of lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2000). Equality of opportunity means that everyone has the same chance to develop their abilities and is recognized for their accomplishments, regardless of factors such as gender, religion, political beliefs, race, or social background—elements that should not affect one’s performance (Hradil, 2001).

Inclusive education ensures that students with disabilities have access to the same curricula and textbooks as their peers without disabilities (Tirussew Teferra, 2005). While challenges exist in implementing inclusive education, there are also considerable opportunities. Educating children with disabilities in diverse school settings benefits all students (Lewis, 2009).

Inclusive education not only grants students with disabilities the right to attend mainstream schools but also creates various opportunities, such as encouraging governments to develop more facilities that serve both disabled and non-disabled students, benefiting teachers, parents, and society as a whole. The Nevada Partnership for Inclusive Education (2016) describes inclusion as an educational approach and philosophy that provides all students with a sense of community membership and enhanced opportunities for academic and social participation and success.

2.9.1.1. Building and Providing Facilities

For the government to effectively implement inclusive education, it is crucial to build more schools and provide additional facilities that benefit not only children with disabilities but the entire community. Enhanced facilities can motivate more children to enroll in school, as inadequate resources often deter many from attending (Singal, 2010). The lack of sufficient facilities has contributed to higher dropout rates among students who feel unsupported (Miles and Nidhi, 2010).

As additional facilities become available, they can lead to higher retention rates among students and promote a positive attitude among teachers toward children with disabilities. Creating more facilities can also reduce class sizes, allowing teachers to focus more attention on each student. This increased attention fosters collaborative learning, where students can support one another. Furthermore, investing in inclusive facilities proves to be more cost-effective than establishing separate spaces for children with disabilities (Bines and Philippa, 2011).

By minimizing expenses through shared facilities, the government can reallocate funds to train more teachers who can effectively meet the needs of diverse learners. Well-trained educators can utilize innovative teaching methods and strategies, thereby enhancing their ability to support students with disabilities (Macartney, 2010).

The provision of more facilities and teacher training promotes the effective implementation of inclusive education, resulting in the availability of appropriate teaching aids and resources that

cater to the needs and interests of all children. This flexibility in teaching methods creates a positive environment for both teachers and students (Tsegaye, 2014). Ultimately, inclusive education encourages the government to improve facilities and resources to ensure its successful implementation.

2.9.1.2. Developing Positive Attitudes

Inclusive education integrates students with and without disabilities in the same classroom, utilizing teaching methods that cater to all learners. This setting fosters a sense of safety and acceptance, encouraging positive attitudes toward students with disabilities. When teachers receive training and support in inclusive practices, they develop positive attitudes and behaviors toward these students (Macartney, 2010), which they then convey to their students.

Gadagbui (2010) highlights that when students learn to respect each other, they engage in collaborative activities, helping one another during challenging moments. This collaborative atmosphere promotes acceptance among peers, empowering students to resist discrimination. In this environment, mutual respect flourishes. Additionally, when families and the community understand the principles of inclusive education, they also cultivate positive attitudes. This comprehension fosters collaboration between schools and parents, inspiring teachers and families to unite in supporting students with disabilities. Such partnerships can encourage parents who are thinking about withdrawing their children from school to rethink their choices (Macartney, 2010).

2.9.1.3. Students with Disabilities Developing Themselves and Society

Promoting positive behaviours toward students with disabilities encourages their active participation in school, enabling them to receive quality education that supports personal growth. Inclusive education enhances the educational and social development of disabled students (Lei and Juliette, 2011). As they progress, these students become more engaged in community activities, contributing to societal advancement. Their integration into society fosters greater acceptance, appreciation, and respect, which in turn propels national development.

Students with disabilities can also learn practical life skills, such as basket weaving for trade, which provides income for themselves and the government. This revenue can be reinvested into

national development. Their participation in the labor market positively influences societal progress, generating additional income and promoting overall development.

2.9.2. Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education

2.9.2.1. Lack of Finance

A major barrier to the effective implementation of inclusive education is the lack of financial resources. Although inclusive education has been introduced in many countries, numerous developing nations face challenges due to insufficient funding to support its implementation. This financial deficit leads to a shortage of materials, inadequate equipment, insufficient teacher training programs, and a lack of support staff (Dagneu, 2013).

Additionally, various systemic issues within the educational framework also impede the implementation of inclusive education. These issues include the physical conditions of schools, the curriculum, language and communication barriers, the socioeconomic status of parents, educational policies, and organizational structures. Key challenges involve inadequate education and professional development for teachers and support staff, limited funding, and insufficient support from educational authorities (UNESCO, 2010).

Research conducted by Simui and Waliuya (2008) indicated that many students with disabilities encounter obstacles to education due to factors such as inaccessible facilities, negative attitudes from regular teachers toward students with disabilities, and a lack of proficiency in sign language and Braille among educators, which hinders effective communication. Furthermore, learning materials are often not suitable for students with disabilities (Peters, 2009).

2.9.2.2. Lack of Facilities and Infrastructures

For teachers to develop a positive attitude toward inclusive education, they need to receive adequate education, training, and support. The government must supply schools with the necessary resources and materials to enable the implementation of inclusive practices. Sufficient facilities and infrastructure are vital for encouraging teachers to engage with children with disabilities (Teklemariam and Temesgen, 2011). Agbenyega (2007) highlighted the importance of providing resources and facilities that create opportunities for students with disabilities. This organization is essential for integrating these students into mainstream schools and ensuring that the necessary resources for enhancing their learning are accessible (Peters, 2009). The Ministry

of Education (2006) stated that the government would provide the required facilities to support inclusive practices in Ghana. Kuyini (2010) also supports the need for essential facilities to ensure the effective execution of inclusive education (Teklemariam and Temesgen, 2011).

2.9.2.3. Lack of Resources

The successful implementation of inclusive education requires resources, which, although not as extensive as those needed for separate special education systems, are still essential. Many developing countries, facing socioeconomic difficulties, encounter significant challenges due to a lack of resources for inclusive education. This general scarcity of support and resources greatly hampers the effective implementation of inclusive education in numerous Sub-Saharan African countries (Dagneu, 2013). Often, this situation arises from competition for limited educational resources among various reforms, such as basic adult education and early childhood development (ECD).

2.9.2.4. Structural Barriers

Many mainstream schools constructed prior to the Persons with Disability Act (1992, revised 2001) lack crucial features, such as ramps and wide doors for wheelchair users, handrails for visually impaired students, and soundproof classrooms for those with hearing impairments. Some schools even have multiple stories, making them inaccessible for wheelchair users. Furthermore, the lack of sanitary and ablution facilities poses a significant obstacle to inclusive education, especially in rural areas (Bines and Philippa, 2011). Facilities like libraries are often not readily accessible to many students with disabilities. These structural challenges hinder the implementation of inclusive education, and the situation is further aggravated by existing cultural barriers and negative attitudes toward disability within the educational context (Peters, 2009)

2.10. Teachers and School Administrators' towards Inclusive Education

Inclusive education seeks to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students, irrespective of their abilities or backgrounds. The implementation of inclusive education heavily depends on the actions of teachers and school administrators. A growing recognition of the importance of inclusive education in creating a fair learning environment. However, challenges such as limited resources, insufficient training, and large class sizes continue to hinder progress (Abate, 2001; Etenesh, 2000).

Teachers' preparation significantly influence the effectiveness of inclusive practices. Educators who receive adequate training in inclusive education are better equipped to address the diverse needs of students in their classrooms (Abate, 2001). Conversely, a lack of preparation and support can lead to hesitancy in adopting inclusive practices (Etenesh, 2000). As such, investing in professional development programs and ensuring access to the necessary tools are vital for fostering effective inclusive education.

School administrators hold a central role in driving the success of inclusive education initiatives. Their commitment and active involvement can inspire and empower teachers to embrace inclusive strategies. Research indicates that administrators who prioritize inclusive education and allocate appropriate resources contribute to a more supportive school environment (Etenesh, 2000). In contrast, limited engagement or understanding among school leaders can pose significant obstacles to the implementation of inclusive policies.

2.11. Previous Studies

2.11.1. Empirical Evidence on Inclusive Education

To determine effective and high-quality education for students with disabilities, research on inclusive education has largely focused on educators' methods and early interventions (Johnstone and David, 2009). This research typically assesses the impact of preschool education on social skills and academic achievement through the outcomes of children's learning, often overlooking progress made in primary education. However, studies emphasizing children's participation have highlighted the significance of acknowledging their voices and involvement in social contexts. Souza (2010) demonstrated how children can actively contribute to knowledge creation (Teklemariam and Temesgen, 2011). Lúcio and L'Anson (2015) explored children's participation and citizenship through their everyday experiences, illustrating their various roles within the community. Drawing from the sociology of childhood, researchers have emphasized children's active contributions to culture and their impact on the development of their peers (UNESCO, 2015).

Research has also examined the importance of creating environments and processes that encourage interactions among children (Müller & Carvalho, 2009; Rutanen, Amorim, Colus, & Piattoeva, 2014), as well as the role of unstructured play in helping children cultivate culture within supportive environments (Lucena, 2010; Kangwa and Grazyna, 2003). Recently, scholars

have studied how children's engagement relates to the evolution of school activities and infrastructure, stressing their self-awareness as confident learners and the necessity of integrating their viewpoints into institutional planning (Jansson, 2015; Nah & Lee, 2016; Sandseter & Seland, 2016).

Despite a substantial amount of research showcasing the capabilities and agency of students with disabilities in cultural development and learning participation, significant challenges persist in enhancing their engagement and success in inclusive settings. This highlights the need for further investigation. Previous studies have noted barriers faced by students with visual or intellectual disabilities but have not sufficiently explored the benefits of inclusive education for students with diverse disabilities, the advantages for their non-disabled peers, or the creation of inclusive environments and communities.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The researcher used case study design to investigate the practice of inclusive education in the selected school. Due to a case study design allows for an in-depth exploration of the nuances and complexities of inclusive education practices. By focusing on specific schools, it offers a detailed analysis of the real-world context, revealing how inclusive education is implemented at the grassroots level. According to Yin (2018), case study provides a comprehensive understanding of multifaceted issues, allowing researchers to gain insights into the interplay between various factors like school policies, teacher training, classroom practices, and student experiences.

As well as case study design focuses on actual practices within a specific setting, providing findings that are highly relevant to local educational contexts and practices. This makes it especially useful for generating practical, actionable recommendations.

3.2. Research Site

The study was conducted in four primary schools located in the Lafto sub-city of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Gofa Primary School, Hawaria Primary School, Netsanetchora Primary School, and Mekanissa Primary School.

Gofa Primary School, situated in the Gofa neighborhood, has an enrollment of 1,200 students in grades 1-8, comprising a diverse mix from surrounding low-to-middle-income areas. The school has made efforts to adopt inclusive education practices, integrating some students with physical and intellectual disabilities into general education classrooms.

Hawaria Primary School is located in the Hawaria district and caters to approximately 900 students from grades 1-8, mainly from the local lower-income community. This school features a special needs unit for students with more significant disabilities, although some inclusion into mainstream classes is also practiced.

Netsanetchora Primary School, found in the Netsanetchora area, enrolls around 1,000 students from grades 1-8, reflecting the mixed socioeconomic backgrounds of the local community.

While inclusive education practices are gradually being implemented, support and resources for students with disabilities remain limited.

Mekanissa Primary School, located in the Mekanissa neighborhood, has about 850 students from grades 1-8, primarily from the local lower-income population. This school has taken steps towards greater inclusivity, allowing some students with physical and sensory disabilities to participate in general education classrooms, though significant challenges still exist.

These four schools were chosen as research sites due to their differing approaches and experiences with inclusive education, allowing for a detailed exploration of this phenomenon within Lafto sub-city. The variation in student populations and available resources across these sites supports a more comprehensive understanding of inclusive education practices.

3.3. Population of the Study

The study population consists of all regular teachers, students with disabilities, and the four school principals from each selected primary school. Focusing on students with disabilities is crucial because they are key beneficiaries of inclusive education. Additionally, regular teachers from general education classrooms were included, as their insights are vital for understanding the implementation of inclusive education practices. The school principals were also part of the study population, as their roles are important for shaping and overseeing the inclusive education practices at the school level.

3.4. Participants of the Study

Participants in this study on inclusive education practices in Lafto sub-city primary schools comprised four school principals, 200 regular teachers, and 196 students with disabilities, based on the population described above. With the use of this participant structure, the study was able to look at inclusive education practices from the viewpoints of several stakeholders, which produced a deep and complex understanding of the issue. The selection of participants was based on their capacity to contribute to the formulation of the research questions and to advance knowledge about the subject of the study. With selection choices based on the research questions, theoretical frameworks, and supporting data, choosing suitable participants was therefore a crucial effort throughout the study design phase (Creswell, 2009).

3.6. Sample and Sampling Technique

This study on inclusive education practices in Lafto sub-city primary schools used the following sample and sampling technique, which were based on the research location and study population as indicated in the previous responses:

- ✓ 24 students with disabilities (6 students per school)
- ✓ 20 general education teachers (5 per school)
- ✓ 4 school principals (1 per school).

3.6.1. Sampling Technique

The researcher was taken purposive sampling to select 24 students with disabilities, 20 regular teachers, and 4 school principals for the study. By focusing on participants who are directly involved in inclusive education such as students with disabilities are first-hand, teachers who implement inclusive practices, and principals who oversee these initiatives the researcher can gather rich, detailed insights that enhance the understanding of the phenomenon under study. Purposive sampling is advantageous in this context because it ensures that the selected participants are information-rich cases that can provide depth and context to the research findings, aligning with the goals of qualitative inquiry to explore complex social phenomena (Creswell, 2014).

3.7. Data Collection Instruments

The researcher aimed to gather information about the respondents and their lived experiences by collecting descriptive data. To achieve this, various data collection tools were utilized, including observation, interviews, and document analysis. Employing multiple methods was essential to obtain relevant and credible data. Therefore, three data collection methods were implemented during the research process.

3.7.1 Interview

The researcher opted for a semi-structured interview method to investigate the implementation of inclusive education practices in four selected primary schools in these selected primary schools . This approach involved conducting interviews with four school principals, 24 students with

disabilities (six from each school), and 20 regular teachers (five from each school). These interviews provided the researcher with insights into the teachers' experiences, instructional methods, challenges, and support requirements regarding inclusive education.

The interview guide consisted of several key sections. The Background Information section focused on the participants' roles, experiences, and their involvement with the school. The section on Inclusive Education Practices explored specific strategies, accommodations, and support services available for students with disabilities, along with the challenges faced, successes achieved, and areas needing improvement within the inclusive education framework. The School Culture and Community Engagement section assessed the overall school environment, attitudes toward inclusion, and interactions with the wider community of students with disabilities.

Furthermore, the interviews validated the information collected and enabled the researcher to gather detailed and accurate data, leading to higher response rates and a deeper understanding of the prevailing issues.

3.7.2. Observation

The observation tool was structured as a detailed checklist and rating scale, allowing the researcher to objectively record observations of the physical classroom environment, teacher-student interactions, instructional strategies, student participation, and overall indicators of inclusion. This observation tool had 12 questions, all of which were rating scale items, and its main goal was to collect comprehensive, first-hand information on the adoption of inclusive education methods in the four primary schools in Addis Ababa that were chosen. The researcher used participant observation to gain an insider perspective; by being physically present in the setting, the researcher observed and understood the context-specific dynamics and practices that may have influenced the phenomenon studied. This approach provided an outsider perspective as well, offering a broader context, theoretical framing, and comparative analysis that enriched the interpretation of the findings and contributed to the overall knowledge in the field of inclusive education.

3.7.3. Document analysis

In order to obtain contextual information regarding the inclusive education practices and support services offered to students with disabilities at the four primary schools that were chosen for this phenomenological study, the documents were analysed. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and school rules and procedures pertaining to accessible and inclusive education were used by the researcher. Key criterion for evaluating the gathered documents were reports on the enrollment and demographics of students with disabilities at the schools, guaranteeing compliance with inclusive education practices.

3.8. Procedure of data collection

Semi-structured interviews with participants served as the study's main source of data. The current literature was reviewed in order to build the interview guide. Each in-person interview lasted 45 to 90 minutes, and with the participants' permission, it was audio recorded. To combine the main themes and create the overall story, selective coding was used after all audio recordings were expertly transcribed verbatim.

3.9. Methods of Data Analysis

The data gathered through observations, interviews, and document analysis were analysed qualitatively, focusing on the practices of inclusive education within the framework of a case study design, emphasizing the practices of inclusive education. The researcher employed a thematic approach to organize the interview responses, observation records, and supplementary materials, enabling a deeper understanding of the specific context and dynamics of the case under investigation.

The qualitative data analysis included coding and categorizing the collected information, which facilitated the management of large amounts of raw data and highlighted significant patterns. The researcher extracted meanings from the data and established a logical chain of evidence, utilizing direct quotes from participants, field notes, and documents to accurately present the findings. The findings were presented through descriptive text and narrative explanations, integrating the results with relevant literature and the researcher's insights. Finally, conclusions and

recommendations were articulated separately, based on the interpretation of the results and the investigator's professional assessment.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

After receiving ethical clearance from Addis Ababa University's College of Education and Behavioural Studies, Department of Special Needs Education, the researcher obtained approval and arranged appointments with the four primary schools involved in the study. Participants were informed that the study posed no risks to them, and the researcher assured them that the data would be used solely for research purposes. Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that research records would not be shared without the participants' consent. Anonymity was preserved, as the study did not require personal identification of the participants. The researcher also secured consent from the school principals to take photographs of classrooms and the school environment. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they decided not to continue. It was crucial for the researcher to maintain transparency in the procedures, avoid any potential harm to participants, and protect the data (Flick, 2011).

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The data analysis and conclusions from the study on inclusive education practices in four government primary schools in Addis Ababa's Lafto sub-city are presented in this chapter. Semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis were used to gather data from a variety of participants, including ordinary teachers, school principals, and students with disabilities. Throughout the entire data analysis process, a qualitative approach was used. 48 people engaged in the study, including 20 regular teachers, 4 school principals, and 24 students with disabilities who took part in interviews. Additionally, the researcher observed the physical surroundings of the schools, including the classrooms.

4.2. Data Results and Analysis

The data gathered from observations, interviews, and document analysis was presented in a coherent manner that supports the research objectives because this study took a qualitative method. A number of emergent themes emerged to highlight the information collected from various participant groups (20 regular teachers, 4 school principals, and 24 students with disabilities). The information provided below shows how Gofa Primary School, Hawaria Primary School, Netsanetchora Primary School, and Mekanissa Primary School implement inclusive education. In addition to document analysis and classroom observations, the results and analysis were based on interviews with regular teachers, school principals, and students with disabilities at the four government primary schools that were chosen.

4.3. Demographic Characteristics of the participants

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of students with disability

| Participant | Gender | | Total number |
|---|--------|----|--------------|
| | M | F | |
| Student with hearing impairment(hard of hearing) | M | 3 | 6 |
| | F | 3 | |
| Student with physical impairment | M | 2 | 4 |
| | F | 2 | |
| Student with visual impairment | M | 4 | 6 |
| | F | 2 | |
| Student with intellectual impairment | M | 1 | 2 |
| | F | 1 | |
| Student with learning difficulty | M | 1 | 2 |
| | F | 1 | |
| Student with multiple impairment | M | 1 | 2 |
| | F | 1 | |
| Other disability | M | 1 | 2 |
| | F | 1 | |
| Total number of student with disabilities | M | 12 | 24 |
| | F | 12 | |

Table 2 demographic characteristics of regular teachers at the selected primary schools

| School name | Teaching qualification: | <i>Number</i> | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|----------|----------|
| | | M | F | T |
| Gofa Primary Schoo | Certificate in Education | | | |
| | Diploma in Education | | 1 | 1 |
| | Degree in Education | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| | Total | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Hawaria Primary School | Diploma in Education | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | Degree in Education | 2 | - | 2 |
| | Total | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| Netsanetchora Primary School | Diploma in Education | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | Degree in Education | 2 | - | 2 |
| | Total | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| Mekanissa Primary School | Degree in Education | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| | Total | 2 | 3 | 5 |

4.4. The roles of teachers in improving the participation of student with disabilities

T1 shared their perspective on the need for flexibility in teaching, stating, "To improve the participation of students with disabilities, we must be flexible in our teaching approaches. Every student learns differently, and it's our duty to find ways to meet their unique needs." This highlights the importance of adapting teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning styles, such as modifying materials, integrating assistive technology, or using differentiated instruction. According to T1, this adaptability ensures that all students, including those with disabilities, can engage effectively with the curriculum and maximize their potential.

T6 and T19 emphasized the role of a supportive classroom environment in fostering inclusion. T6 explained, "Creating a supportive environment is essential. When we encourage collaboration and peer support, it not only helps students with disabilities feel included but also enriches the learning experience for everyone." T18 echoed this sentiment, adding, "Peer support fosters empathy and teamwork, making the classroom a place where every student feels they belong." These views underline the significance of promoting a culture of inclusion through group activities and cooperative learning, where students learn to value diversity and support one another

P1 highlighted the critical role of teachers, saying, "Teachers are the frontline advocates for inclusion. Their commitment to understanding each student's challenges and strengths is what makes a real difference in our schools." and professional development for teachers is vital. When educators are equipped with the right tools and knowledge, they can effectively foster an inclusive atmosphere that encourages all students to participate."

S1 expressed deep appreciation for teachers who demonstrate a supportive and inclusive approach in the classroom. They remarked, "My teacher always takes the time to explain things in a way I understand. It makes me feel like I can participate just like everyone else." This highlights the significant role that individualized attention plays in fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging among students with diverse needs. Teachers who make the effort to adapt their explanations and teaching strategies ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, can

actively engage in the learning process. Such efforts not only boost students' academic participation but also enhance their self-esteem and motivation to succeed.

Similarly, S2 shared a perspective that underscores the value of teacher-student collaboration, stating, "When teachers work with us and listen to our needs, it helps us feel more confident in joining discussions and activities. It shows that they care about our success." This sentiment was echoed by other respondents, such as S15, S24, and S10, who collectively emphasized the importance of teachers being attentive to individual needs and promoting active participation in classroom activities. For instance, S15 explained how their teacher encouraged them to share ideas during group discussions, which helped them feel included. S24 added that teachers who genuinely listen and respond to feedback create a more welcoming learning environment. Meanwhile, S10 highlighted the positive impact of receiving encouragement from their teacher, stating, "When my teacher acknowledges my efforts, it gives me the confidence to try harder."

"Any teacher managing diverse abilities in regular classrooms may find that including these students is a challenging and intricate task. In general, teachers believe that inclusion requires a high level of teaching competence and organizational adjustments to foster effective learning, which is crucial for schools."(p1, p2 and p4)

4.4.1. General education teachers strive to meet the specific needs of every student in an inclusive classroom.

"Our teachers are dedicated to adapting their teaching methods to ensure that all students feel supported. However, they often face challenges such as limited resources and insufficient training, which can hinder their ability to implement effective inclusive practices." While our teachers are committed, the reality is that they need more support and professional development. Addressing diverse needs requires on-going training and collaboration among staff to share effective strategies (P4)"

Regular teachers express a strong commitment to meeting the needs of all students but acknowledge the challenges they face. "I try my best to accommodate each student's unique learning style, but sometimes the demands are overwhelming. With large class sizes and varying levels of ability, it can be difficult to provide the individualized attention that some students require. And collaboration with special education staff is essential, but time constraints often

limit our ability to work together effectively. We need more structured support to ensure that all students can thrive in an inclusive environment. (T4)"

Students with disabilities often appreciate the efforts of their teachers but also express the challenges they face in inclusive classrooms. As S6 shared, "I like when my teacher tries to help me understand the lessons, but sometimes I feel lost when there are too many students and not enough time for individual help." Another student noted, "It's great that we are included in regular classes, but it can be hard when the teacher has to pay attention to everyone. I wish there were more resources or assistants to help us participate fully." They emphasize the importance of additional support to enhance their learning experiences and engagement in the classroom".

4.4.2. The roles of teachers in improving the participation of student with disabilities

"As T1 emphasized the importance of adaptability in the classroom, stating, "to improve the participation of students with disabilities, we must be flexible in our teaching approaches. Every student learns differently, and it's our duty to find ways to meet their unique needs. As well as creating a supportive environment is essential. When we encourage collaboration and peer support, it not only helps students with disabilities feel included but also enriches the learning experience for everyone."

P1 highlighted the critical role of teachers, saying, "Teachers are the frontline advocates for inclusion. Their commitment to understanding each student's challenges and strengths is what makes a real difference in our schools." and professional development for teachers is vital. When educators are equipped with the right tools and knowledge, they can effectively foster an inclusive atmosphere that encourages all students to participate."

S1 expressed appreciation for supportive teachers, stating, "My teacher always takes the time to explain things in a way I understand. It makes me feel like I can participate just like everyone else." S2 shared, "When teachers work with us and listen to our needs, it helps us feel more confident in joining discussions and activities. It shows that they care about our success."

(P3) also stated that, "Any teacher managing diverse abilities in regular classrooms may find that including these students is a challenging and intricate task. In general, teachers believe that inclusion requires a high level of teaching competence and organizational adjustments to foster effective learning, which is crucial for schools."

4.4.3. General education teachers strive to meet the specific needs of every student in an inclusive classroom.

"Our teachers are dedicated to adapting their teaching methods to ensure that all students feel supported. However, they often face challenges such as limited resources and insufficient training, which can hinder their ability to implement effective inclusive practices." While our teachers are committed, the reality is that they need more support and professional development. Addressing diverse needs requires on-going training and collaboration among staff to share effective strategies (P4)"

Regular teachers express a deep commitment to addressing the diverse needs of their students, but they also acknowledge the challenges they face in inclusive classrooms. T16 explained, "I try my best to accommodate each student's unique learning style, but sometimes the demands are overwhelming." This highlights the dedication teachers have to fostering an equitable learning environment despite obstacles such as large class sizes and the varying abilities of students. The sheer number of learners often limits teachers' ability to provide the individualized attention that some students, especially those with disabilities, require. Without adequate resources and manageable class sizes, these challenges can become a significant barrier to effective inclusion. Collaboration with special education staff is also seen as a vital component of inclusive education, yet it is not without its difficulties. T3 shared, "Collaboration with special education staff is essential, but time constraints often limit our ability to work together effectively." This concern was echoed by T4, who added, "We need more structured support to ensure that all students can thrive in an inclusive environment." Teachers recognize the value of teamwork and the specialized knowledge that special education staff can provide, but systemic issues, such as limited time for joint planning and insufficient institutional support, hinder meaningful collaboration. Addressing these barriers requires implementing structured systems that allow for dedicated time, professional development, and sufficient resources to support both teachers and students in an inclusive classroom setting

Students with disabilities often appreciate the efforts of their teachers but also express the challenges they face in inclusive classrooms. As S6 shared, "I like when my teacher tries to help me understand the lessons, but sometimes I feel lost when there are too many students and not enough time for individual help." Another student noted, "It's great that we are included in regular classes, but it can be hard when the teacher has to pay attention to everyone. I wish there were more resources or assistants to help us participate fully." They emphasize the importance of additional support to enhance their learning experiences and engagement in the classroom".

4.4.4. The most effective strategies that foster inclusive education within the general education classroom

School principals recognize the importance of implementing effective strategies to foster inclusive education within general education classrooms.

As P3 emphasized, "Creating a welcoming environment is essential. We encourage teachers to build strong relationships with their students, which helps in understanding their individual needs and promoting a sense of belonging. This approach not only supports students with disabilities but also benefits the overall classroom dynamic, fostering empathy and collaboration among all students."

P2 also explained the significance of professional development for teachers, stating, "Ongoing training is crucial for equipping our educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to implement inclusive practices effectively." They believe that workshops and collaborative planning sessions can help teachers learn new strategies for differentiation and classroom management, ultimately enhancing their ability to meet the diverse needs of their students.

The value of fostering collaboration between general education and special education staff cannot be overstated. T13 emphasized, "When teachers work together, they can share insights and strategies that benefit all students. This collaboration helps ensure that everyone is on the same page regarding accommodations and support services." By working as a team, teachers can pool their expertise to create a more cohesive and effective approach to supporting students with disabilities. T11 added that such partnerships allow for the development of tailored interventions and the consistent application of accommodations, ensuring that students'

individual needs are met across all aspects of their education. T7 further highlighted that this teamwork not only improves academic outcomes for students with disabilities but also fosters a broader culture of inclusivity, where all staff members are actively engaged in creating a supportive and unified learning environment. Through collaboration, educators can bridge gaps, enhance communication, and build a school community where diversity is embraced and celebrated.

“The importance of involving families and communities in the inclusive education process: “Engaging parents and community members fosters a supportive network for students with disabilities. When families are informed and involved, it strengthens the partnership between home and school, which is vital for the success of inclusive education.” This holistic approach ensures that students receive consistent support both in and out of the classroom, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes” (P2).

4.4.5. Factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive education

In our school, “many regular teachers feel unprepared to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. The lack of adequate training in inclusive practices can lead to uncertainty and frustration in the classroom.” This sentiment reflects a widespread concern among teachers who may not have received the necessary professional development to effectively support all learners. Without proper training, teachers can struggle to adapt their teaching methods, which can hinder the successful inclusion of students with disabilities (T19).

Additionally, P3 and P4 noted, “The pressure to meet standardized testing requirements often overshadows the need for inclusive education.” This focus on measurable outcomes can result in teachers prioritizing curriculum coverage over individual student needs. As a result, students with disabilities were not receiving the tailored instruction they require, further exacerbating educational inequalities. The emphasis on performance metrics can create an environment where inclusivity is viewed as secondary to achieving academic benchmarks.

“Classroom management becomes increasingly challenging when teachers lack support from administration.” When regular teachers do not receive adequate resources or assistance from school leadership, their ability to create an inclusive environment can be severely compromised.

This lack of support can lead to burnout and reluctance to fully embrace inclusive practices, ultimately impacting the quality of education for all students (T8)

“I often feel isolated in the classroom because my needs are not understood or addressed.” This highlights a critical barrier to effective inclusion: the perception and understanding of students’ unique challenges. When teachers are not equipped to recognize or accommodate these needs, students can feel marginalized, which can negatively affect their academic performance and social interactions (S9)

“Inconsistent support services can leave students with disabilities feeling lost.” When schools fail to provide reliable access to necessary accommodations, such as specialized equipment or tailored instructional methods, students struggle to keep up with their peers. This inconsistency can lead to frustration and disengagement from the learning process, making it even more difficult for them to thrive in an inclusive setting (P1).

“I personally disagree with the idea of including students with disabilities in regular classrooms. For example, I cannot identify any supportive infrastructure at my school for these students. There are no wheelchair ramps, no clearly marked paths for entering and exiting classrooms, the classrooms are too small, and the floors are riddled with potholes. Although special needs education teachers have been hired, the environment may not be suitable for the learning of children with special educational needs” (p3)

“At our school, we are experiencing a significant shortage of resources, including classrooms, desks, and textbooks. For instance, we lack talking books, Braille machines for students with visual impairments, sign language interpreters, and classrooms designed with ramps to assist students with mobility issues. There is also no assistive technology available for students with visual impairments, such as large print materials, compact discs, talking calculators, and other essential equipment. Overall, my colleagues highlight numerous challenges faced by schools” (P4).

The observations conducted indicated that these schools lack sufficient infrastructure to support students with special educational needs. For instance, there are no ramps for wheelchair users, and the restrooms are inadequate for students with disabilities, especially those who are visually impaired or have physical challenges. It is crucial to implement various initiatives to ensure that

students with disabilities can access an education tailored to their specific needs. Addressing these significant challenges is essential for the effective implementation of inclusive education in primary schools.

Furthermore, the researcher observed that the infrastructure in all four schools is not suitable for students with disabilities. Teachers do not use specialized teaching materials, the pathways in classrooms are unclear, and the arrangement of tables and chairs takes up much of the available space, leaving little room for students to play or use materials on the floor. For example, some classroom floors are uneven, which impedes the movement of learners with special educational needs.

All teachers recognized that the physical facilities were insufficient and poorly organized to offer the necessary accommodations for these students. The facilities in the selected primary schools were deemed unsuitable for supporting learners with special educational needs. Additionally, the lack of access to play materials and teaching resources presents another obstacle to implementing inclusive education for students with disabilities in the four government primary schools. School directors, regular teachers, and students with disabilities expressed their views on this issue.

“One of the requirements set by the Ministry of Education is for teachers at my school to plan and advocate for the needs of students with various disabilities to the administration. However, I have consistently observed that there is no response regarding the purchase of play items and teaching aids for these students. This lack of action leads to negativity, frustration, and discouragement. Ultimately, without access to play materials and teaching aids, inclusive education for children with different impairments cannot be effectively implemented” (P4).

“The physical environment is crucial for the successful implementation of inclusive education practices. The main goal of the Ministry of Education is to provide an accessible, safe, and friendly environment for learners with special educational needs. These learners require specific resources tailored to their individual disabilities. The inadequacy of specialized materials—such as Braille machines, tactile models for students with visual impairments, and sign language interpreters for those with hearing impairments—along with a physically accessible environment for students with physical disabilities, poses significant challenges” (P1).

“At our school, the classroom layout does not allow students to move freely. The desks and chairs are not arranged in a way that accommodates three or more children comfortably, making it difficult for them to learn and engage with age-appropriate educational practices” (T 13).

“It is evident from the head of the Ministry of Education that inclusive education is still not being prioritized. There is no budget allocated for purchasing necessary play and teaching materials, nor for meeting the needs of children with various disabilities in our school. Consequently, the expected outcomes have not been satisfactory for the school community as a whole” (P3).

In Ethiopia, it is evident that the policy on inclusive education has been largely overlooked by policymakers, which has hindered the effective implementation of inclusive education, particularly in primary schools (P1). There appears to be a lack of political will among policymakers, and many individuals in these communities do not fully grasp the concept of inclusive education (P2). As a result, children with disabilities often remain at home, as parents believe that their education is best suited for special schools or units. This situation is concerning and warrants attention (P3).

The four school principals expressed frustration, noting that the education policy for inclusive education had not been fully realized and lacked support from policymakers. One principal even admitted to being unaware of the policy regarding inclusive education. Despite Ethiopia’s efforts to establish policies aimed at implementing inclusive education across all public primary schools, the directors, teachers, and students with disabilities face numerous challenges in their attempts to comply with the government's inclusive education mandate, which often exceeds their capabilities.

4.5. Findings

The study indicated that while all four primary schools had policies in place to support inclusive education, the actual implementation varied widely. Some schools actively integrated students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms, demonstrating a commitment to inclusive practices, whereas others faced challenges in translating these policies into reality, often due to a lack of resources and training.

Teachers reported varying levels of readiness to address the needs of students with disabilities. Although some teachers participated in professional development workshops related to inclusive education, many did not receive targeted training on diverse learning needs and effective teaching strategies. This gap in training led to inconsistent application of inclusive practices within the classroom. Furthermore, the classroom environment often impeded inclusive education; many classrooms lacked essential resources, such as adaptive learning materials and assistive technologies, making it difficult for students with disabilities to fully participate in lessons. Additionally, the absence of accessible infrastructure, like ramps and modified restrooms, limited the mobility of students with physical disabilities.

The findings also revealed a lack of collaboration among key stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community organizations. While some schools made efforts to partner with NGOs to improve inclusive education, these initiatives were frequently inconsistent. Moreover, effective communication and collaboration between teachers and parents were lacking, which hindered the creation of individualized support plans for students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities reported varied experiences in inclusive classrooms. Some felt a sense of belonging and support from their peers and teachers, while others faced marginalization and struggled to keep up with the curriculum. Overall, academic performance for students with disabilities was generally lower than that of their peers, primarily due to insufficient support and adaptations within the classroom.

Another notable finding was the lack of training and resources available to teachers. Many teachers expressed feeling unprepared to meet the diverse needs of their students, particularly those with disabilities. The absence of professional development programs significantly restricted their ability to implement effective inclusive practices. Without proper support and training, teachers struggled to create inclusive learning environments, which ultimately affected educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

The study also identified significant gaps in the physical infrastructure of schools, complicating the implementation of inclusive education. Many schools lacked essential modifications, such as ramps and accessible restrooms, which are crucial for accommodating students with physical disabilities. Observations revealed that an inclusive physical environment is essential for

encouraging participation among all students. The lack of these necessary facilities not only restricts access for students with disabilities but also sends a message to the community that their needs are not prioritized.

Additionally, schools encountered insufficient resources and support, such as specialized staff and teaching materials, making it difficult to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Inaccessible physical infrastructure often created barriers, limiting access for students with physical disabilities. Resistance to change from some educators and community members further hindered the adoption of inclusive practices. The diverse needs of students complicated these efforts, as teachers had to balance individualized support within a single classroom. Limited collaboration among stakeholders, funding limitations, and time constraints also contributed to the challenges of effectively implementing inclusive education in these primary schools.

4.6. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight both the progress made and the challenges faced in implementing inclusive education in selected primary schools in Addis Ababa. While the presence of policies that endorse inclusive education indicates a commitment to this approach, the actual execution reveals significant inconsistencies. This aligns with Tirussew (2005), who noted that despite Ethiopia's supportive policies, practical implementation often falls short due to various obstacles, including a lack of resources and training. The disparity between policy and practice underscores the need for a more robust framework that not only establishes policies but also ensures their effective execution in schools.

A significant finding from this study is the varying levels of teacher preparedness to cater to the needs of students with disabilities. The reported lack of specific training on diverse learning needs echoes the concerns raised by Jha (2012), who emphasized that effective teacher training is essential for the successful implementation of inclusive education. While some educators participated in professional development workshops, many still felt unprepared, indicating systemic issues within teacher education programs. This inconsistency in readiness can lead to ineffective application of inclusive practices, as teachers may revert to traditional methods that do not address the diverse needs of their students. Thus, targeted and ongoing professional

development is critical for equipping educators with the skills needed to foster inclusive classrooms.

An examination of the schools' physical environments reveals significant gaps in infrastructure that hinder inclusive education. The absence of essential adaptations, such as ramps and accessible restrooms, highlights broader issues identified by Tefera et al. (2018), who reported that inadequate physical infrastructure poses a major barrier to inclusion in Ethiopian schools. This lack of accessibility not only limits participation for students with disabilities but also sends a negative message about their value within the educational system. Research suggests that creating an inclusive physical environment is vital for enhancing engagement and academic success for all students (EASNIE, 2018).

The study also emphasizes the lack of collaboration among key stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community organizations, which is crucial for effectively implementing inclusive education. This finding aligns with Cobley et al. (2018), who argued that effective communication and collaboration are essential for developing individualized support plans and fostering a supportive school culture. In this study, inconsistent partnerships with NGOs and poor communication between teachers and parents hindered the establishment of comprehensive support systems for students with disabilities. Strengthening these collaborative efforts could enhance the educational experience for all students by providing a more integrated approach to addressing diverse classroom needs.

The challenges teachers encounter when managing diverse student needs within a single classroom illustrate the complexities of inclusive education. As noted in the findings, teachers often struggle to balance individualized support while delivering the curriculum to all students. This concern is consistent with observations from other researchers, who have noted that the diverse needs of students can overwhelm educators, especially in under-resourced settings (EMIS, 2007). Additionally, resistance to change from some educators and community members complicates the transition to inclusive practices.

The current state of inclusive education in Ethiopia presents significant challenges that impede its effective implementation, particularly in the selected primary schools. Despite the existence of policies designed to promote inclusive education, these policies are frequently overlooked by

decision-makers, resulting in a lack of political will and inadequate community support. Research indicates that the successful realization of inclusive education requires not only clear policies but also a commitment from all stakeholders, including government officials, educators, and the community (UNESCO, 2020). The gap between policy formulation and practical application suggests a need for greater engagement and understanding among policymakers regarding the importance of inclusive education.

One of the primary barriers to inclusive education is the widespread misunderstanding of its principles. Many community members, as well as some teachers, lack a clear understanding of what inclusive education entails, which can perpetuate stigma and misconceptions about students with disabilities. A study by Liasidou (2012) highlights the importance of awareness-raising initiatives in cultivating a supportive environment for inclusive education. Such initiatives can help shift perceptions and encourage families to view education for students with disabilities as a shared responsibility, rather than a task solely for special schools.

The concerns expressed by school principals regarding the inadequate implementation of inclusive education policies underscore the need for comprehensive training and resources for educators. Teachers often feel unprepared to address the diverse needs of their students, particularly those with disabilities. Research by Florian and Linklater (2010) emphasizes that professional development programs are crucial for equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to implement inclusive practices effectively. Without proper training, teachers may struggle to establish inclusive classroom environments, ultimately affecting the educational outcomes of students with disabilities.

Furthermore, the physical infrastructure of schools is crucial in facilitating or obstructing inclusive education. Many schools, as noted, lack essential adaptations, such as ramps and accessible restrooms, which are vital for accommodating students with physical disabilities. Research indicates that an inclusive physical environment is fundamental for promoting participation among all students (Ainscow, 2005). Therefore, it is essential for policymakers to prioritize funding for infrastructure improvements that support inclusive education.

Additionally, the hesitation of parents to enroll their children with disabilities in regular schools reflects broader societal attitudes toward disability. Many parents believe that special schools

offer a superior education for their children, which can lead to increased isolation and fewer opportunities for social interaction (Mitchell, 2014). Engaging parents and communities in discussions about the benefits of inclusive education is essential for changing these perceptions and fostering more inclusive practices. The effective implementation of inclusive education necessitates a multifaceted approach that addresses gaps in policy, awareness, teacher training, and infrastructure. By fostering collaborative efforts among policymakers, educators, and communities, it is possible to create a more inclusive educational environment that benefits all students. Future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of training programs and community engagement initiatives while exploring innovative strategies to enhance school accessibility for students with disabilities.

Enhancing community engagement to support inclusive education initiatives requires a comprehensive approach that includes raising awareness through workshops and media campaigns, forming partnerships with local organizations, and actively involving parents in advocacy efforts. Training educators in inclusive practices and establishing feedback mechanisms can ensure that community voices are considered in decision-making processes (Florian & Linklater, 2010). Additionally, conducting accessibility audits of community spaces and organizing inclusive events will promote participation from all members, celebrating diversity and fostering acceptance (Mitchell, 2014). By implementing these strategies, communities can create an environment where all children, regardless of their abilities, have access to quality education (Liasidou, 2012).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The implementation and participatory planning of inclusive education are still in their infancy, leading to the marginalization of students with disabilities in schools.
- A lack of understanding of inclusive education, insufficiently trained teachers, an unwelcoming atmosphere, inadequate infrastructure, a scarcity of specialized teaching and learning materials, and minimal engagement from key stakeholders, such as parents and teachers, have significantly obstructed the effective execution of inclusive practices.
- The support for the recurring budget to finance teaching aids is insufficient, discouraging school administrators and stakeholders from pursuing inclusive education due to financial limitations.
- Regular teachers have not received adequate training or support to effectively incorporate students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms. As a result, these students may face academic challenges because teachers are unable to meet their individual needs without the necessary training.

5.2. Recommendations

- Schools should invest in improving physical accessibility across the campus. This includes ensuring all classrooms, restrooms, and school facilities are accessible to students with disabilities, such as wheelchair ramps, accessible doorways, and sensory-friendly spaces.
- Schools should actively engage with parents to discuss the specific types of support needed for students with disabilities. Regular meetings and workshops can help parents understand how to reinforce learning at home and ensure that their children receive consistent support both at home and in school.
- Continuous awareness-raising within society is essential, led by the government and relevant organizations. This can involve campaigns that educate the community about the importance of inclusive education and the rights of students with disabilities.

Additionally, schools should seek alternative funding sources to reduce reliance on recurrent budget support, ensuring the sustainable implementation of inclusive practices.

- Stakeholders should invest in ongoing training programs for teachers focused on inclusive education strategies, classroom management, and individual support techniques. This will enhance teachers' skills and confidence in accommodating students with diverse needs.
- Schools should collaborate with local NGOs and advocacy groups specializing in disability rights and education. These partnerships can provide resources, training, and additional support for implementing inclusive education.
- A system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of inclusive education practices within schools should be established. Stakeholders should regularly assess progress and make necessary adjustments to strategies and support mechanisms based on feedback from teachers, parents, and students

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Appendix 1

Interview Guidelines for Teachers and School Principals, Observation Checklist in Regular Classrooms and with Students with Disabilities Regarding “The Practices of Inclusive Education in Four Selected Government Primary Schools in Lafto Sub-city, Addis Ababa.”

Addis Ababa University

College of Education and Behavioral Studies

Department of Special Needs Education

I am Belay Getnet, a Master of Education student at Addis Ababa University, specializing in Special Needs and Inclusive Education. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study titled "The Practices of Inclusive Education in This School." I want to assure you that the information you provide will be used solely for research purposes, and your identities will remain confidential. Additionally, I guarantee that the data collected from this study will be kept private and will only be used for research-related purposes.

General Instructions

- Please share your insights on the topic to the best of your ability.
- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions that will be posed. All responses are valued and appreciated.

1. Interview guide for regular teachers about the practices of inclusive education

School name: _____

School type: primary school

Section A: Demographic information

Teaching experience in years:

| Years Intervals | Indicate with (X) |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 0-5 | |
| 6-10 | |
| 11-20 | |
| Above 20 | |

Teaching qualification:

| Level | Indicate with (X) |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Certificate in Education | |
| Diploma in Education | |
| Degree in Education | |
| Master in Education | |
| Others (<i>specify</i>) | |

Their gender classification

| Gender | Indicate with (X) |
|--------|-------------------|
| Male | |
| Female | |

Their age classification

| Age | Indicate with (X) |
|----------|-------------------|
| 25-30 | |
| 31-36 | |
| 37-42 | |
| 43-48 | |
| Above 48 | |

1. How would you define inclusive education in the context of your school?

2. What do you think are the key principles of inclusive education that you try to implement in your classroom?

3. Can you describe the teaching strategies you use to support students with diverse needs (e.g., students with disabilities, different learning abilities)?

4. How do you modify your lesson plans or teaching materials to accommodate students with special educational needs?

5. Have you received any formal training on inclusive education? If so, how has this training influenced your teaching practices?

6. What additional resources or training would help you feel more prepared to teach in an inclusive classroom?

7. How do you adapt your classroom environment to make it more inclusive for students with different learning needs? And Are there any specific resources (e.g., teaching aids, technology, and teaching assistants) that you use to support inclusive education? How effective are these resources?

8. What are some of the major challenges you face in implementing inclusive education in your classroom? If you know the challenges, how do you address the those of balancing the needs of diverse students while ensuring the curriculum is covered for all students?

2. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL S

School name: _____

School type: _____

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Working experience as school principal in years:

| Years Intervals | Indicate with (X) |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 0-5 | |
| 6-10 | |
| 11-20 | |
| Above 20 | |

Qualification:

| Level | Indicate with (X) |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Diploma | |
| Degree | |
| Masters | |
| Others (<i>specify</i>) | |

Their gender classification

| Gender | Indicate with (X) |
|--------|-------------------|
| Male | |
| Female | |

Their age classification

| Age | Indicate with (X) |
|----------|-------------------|
| 25-30 | |
| 31-36 | |
| 37-42 | |
| 43-48 | |
| Above 48 | |

1. How would you define inclusive education in the context of your school, and what key principles do you think should be emphasized to make it successful?

2. Can you describe the policies or guidelines your school follows to ensure the implementation of inclusive education? Are there any specific governmental or institutional frameworks that influence these practices?

3. How do you ensure that your teachers are adequately trained and supported in implementing inclusive education practices? Do you offer any specific professional development programs related to inclusive teaching?

4. How does your school allocate resources (e.g., special education staff, teaching materials, classroom accommodations) to support inclusive education? Are there any gaps in resources that you feel need to be addressed?

5. To what extent does your school adapt the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students with different abilities? Could you share some examples of adaptations or modifications made in the classroom?

6. How does your school engage parents and the wider community in the process of inclusive education? Do you think community involvement is crucial for its success?

7. How does your school assess the academic and social progress of students with disabilities or those requiring special support? Are there any specific tools or methods used to track their development?

8. Challenges and Barriers

- What are the main challenges your school faces in implementing inclusive education? How do you address issues like lack of resources, negative attitudes, or inadequate training among staff?

8. Does your school have any support services in place, such as special education teachers, counselors, or therapists? How effective do you think these services are in helping students with disabilities?

9. Looking ahead, what are your goals for improving inclusive education in your school? Are there any plans or strategies you have in mind to make your school more inclusive in the future?

Tick the mark (X) in appropriate box.

| Indicators | Good | Very good | Poor | Very poor |
|---|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| Teachers using a variety of teaching methods (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) to cater to different learning styles? | | | | |
| Teachers modify the content, process, or product based on the needs of individual students? | | | | |
| Teaching assistants or support staff actively engaged in helping students during lessons? | | | | |
| students receiving one-on-one or small group instruction based on their needs | | | | |
| classroom materials (e.g., books, worksheets, technology) accessible to all students, including those with visual, hearing, or mobility impairments | | | | |
| the teacher encourage and facilitate participation from all students, ensuring that none are excluded | | | | |
| Use peer teaching positive reinforcement used to support students' engagement and behavior, particularly for those with behavioural challenges | | | | |
| there assistive technologies (e.g., speech-to-text software, hearing aids, screen readers) available and used in the classroom | | | | |
| Use visual aids, such as charts, graphs, and written instructions, clearly visible to all students, especially those with vision impairments | | | | |
| The ramps, elevators, or other mobility aids that available for students with special needs | | | | |