

**Challenges to Implement Inclusive Education in some selected Schools of  
Kolfe Keranio Sub City, Addis Ababa.**

**By  
Hana Etana**

**Addis Ababa University  
College of Education and Behavioral Studies  
Department of Special Needs and Inclusive Education**

**Advisor: - Tilahun Achaw (PHD)**

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIOURAL STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS AND INCLUSIVE  
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**This Thesis is Submitted to Department of Special Needs and Inclusive  
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This certifies that Hana's thesis, "Challenges to Implement Inclusive Education in some selected Schools of Kolfe Keranio Sub City, Addis Ababa." complies with university rules and standards for originality and quality. It was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for MA degree in Special Needs and Inclusive Education

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_____	_____	_____
Advisor	Signature	Date
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Internal Examiner	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
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## DECLARATION

I, Hana Etana, thus certify that this thesis is wholly original with me and that all references used in the research paper have been properly cited. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the material included in this thesis has never been presented for the award of a master's degree.

Name:

Signature

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

I Tilahun Achaw, confirm that this research has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University Supervisor.

Main Advisor Name

Signature

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

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## **List of Acronyms**

SEN:	Special Needs Education
SNE:	Special Needs Education
JVSA:	Joint Vision Success Academy
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organizations
INGO:	International Non-Governmental Organizations

## ***Abstract***

*This study assessed the challenges inhibiting effective inclusive education for selected Kolfe Keranio Sub-city schools in Addis Ababa. Through a qualitative approach and descriptive design, data collection took place through semi-structured interviews and observation with general education teachers, school administrators/deans, and SNE specialists. This study found that critical challenges inhibiting effective inclusion exist in teacher training and funding, access to assistive technology, and adapted resources for learning and participation. The greatest challenge inhibiting effective inclusion exists in the ideological approach to an inclusive education policy, where policy suggestions remain vague and assessments fail. Furthermore, low stakeholder engagement was noted. As a result, this study concludes that effective inclusion at these Kolfe Keranio Sub-city schools is challenged and limited by training, resource, policy, and facilities challenges that can only be addressed with far-reaching critical attention. Time dedicated to training teachers, redrafting best-practice policy to fit the situational need, increasing stakeholders engagement.*

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Historically, children with disabilities have been largely excluded from formal education, often due to deep-rooted societal misconceptions about their abilities. Prior to the 20th century, they were often excluded from mainstream education and sent to segregated schools that provided little to no real education (Winzer, 1993). Societal attitudes towards disabilities often lead to discrimination, limiting the acceptance of children with disabilities in mainstream schools (Genovesi et al., 2024).

For a long time, education for students with disabilities was treated more as an act of charity than a basic human right. These children consequently frequently relied on insufficient support networks that were unable to satisfy their requirements (Mittler, 2000). But by the end of the 20th century, human rights movements and legislative changes started to put these discriminatory practices into question. All children, regardless of ability, have the right to learn together in regular classrooms, according to the global movement for inclusive education.

Even though inclusive education has been acknowledged globally since the UNESCO Salamanca Statement in 1994, its implementation has proven to be much more difficult. The full implementation of inclusive policies is still a challenge for many nations, and ongoing obstacles frequently make such initiatives less successful.

The gap between policy and practice makes it difficult to implement an inclusive education system. Many countries have frameworks for inclusive education, but transforming these frameworks to concrete action is still a challenge. Transferring theory to practice in the Asia-Pacific region has been hampered by inconsistent policy guidelines and unclear follow-up action (Beamish et al., 2024). Inherent beliefs and cultural perceptions frequently make the problem worse. Disability is not well understood in many places, and social stigma still serves as a barrier (Sabela, 2023).

In India, the conditions have been slowing down the acceptance of such practices due to lack of knowledge and stigma (Uma, 2023). Another important barrier happening in Indonesia is the low community participation and negative attitudes towards disability (Nabiela & Ulfatin,

2023). In South Africa's Buffalo City Education District, these challenges are further compounded by the inadequate infrastructure, lack of learning materials and unqualified teachers. Teachers in this region struggle to teach the diverse learning needs of students in the regular classroom (Chisango & Lepheana, 2022) Pakistan faces similar obstacles. An investigation in Tehsil Liaquatpur exposed many hindrances to inclusion. These were at the level of family like reluctance and poverty, insufficient facilities, outdated methods, teacher untraining and transportation issues (Saeed et al., 2024). In addition, many low- and middle-income countries still cope with low levels of government support, restrictive budgets, and adverse attitudes which continue to marginalise children with disabilities (Sijuola & Davidova, 2022).

Teachers in low-income areas are seldom exposed to professional development which makes them not equipped to address the wide variety of learning needs (Khoiriyah et al., 2024). In some societies, communities still associate disabilities with something spiritual or punishment, which means their social isolation and education access is limited (Peters, 2004). As an example, some people in rural Ethiopia associate disability with wrongdoings of ancestors, causing social rejection and reluctance not to send children with disabilities to school (Teferra & Hailu, 2018). Those with disability are considered witches in parts of Nigeria. So, families go for spiritual solutions instead of educational (Abang, 1988). These views add to the exclusion of disabled children from schools and limit their growth opportunities. (Groce, 1999) In Ethiopia, especially in rural areas, people have wrong ideas about disability. Parents may keep disabled children at home to avoid discrimination and social shame (Tadesse, 2015).

Besides the social problems, there are big physical obstacles. Many schools do not have good teachers; they also do not have easy-to-find books and other materials or a teaching way that can change to help students with different needs (Forlin, 2012). Teachers say they do not feel ready; this is because of little training in how to teach all types of students well (Florian & Rouse, 2009). Also, hard curricula, buildings that are not easy to get into and no helping technology make it harder to include everyone (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014). To address these barriers, the Ethiopian schools should enact an inclusive policy that can adjust curricula, adopt flexible pedagogy, and furnish teachers with proper training, skills, and resources (Abebe, 2015). As Zelalem (2017) observed, a truly inclusive school is one that makes the environment friendly

for all children irrespective of their differences. This entails not only training the teachers but also sensitizing the leaders and members of schools.

This research tries to identify major challenges in the implementation of inclusive education in two schools found in Woreda 01 of Kolfe Keranio Sub-city, Addis Ababa. By exploring real situations in these schools, this study highlights challenges to inclusion and propose concrete steps toward making education accessible to all learners.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Ethiopian inclusive education have received little attention because the majority of research has concentrated on broad concepts or specific student populations. Despite Ethiopia's official policies require implementation of inclusive education, because the effectiveness and result that is seen in the majority of primary and secondary schools .

In Ethiopia, an estimated 1.7 to 3.4 million children with disabilities will be of school age. Approximately 96.8% of them are still not enrolled in school (MoE, 2012). For those who do attend the quality of education is often poor and fails to meet their needs.

The major gaps to conduct these research is ineffective implementation of inclusive education strategy that is hindered by several challenges. There are several studies that shows these problem like (Zelalem, 2017), although inclusive education has been discussed for more than 30 years, there is still little evidence of its actual implementation in Ethiopia The nation has ratified a large number of international conventions and declarations pertaining to inclusive education. However, the actual situation on the ground reveals a different picture, one in which the promises of inclusion are still mostly unmet (Aiemro, 2020).

The enduring negative attitudes and cultural myths surrounding disability are among the main problems. Disability is still associated with shame, punishment, or supernatural causes in many communities (Teferra & Hailu, 2018). In addition to perpetuating stigma, these ideas keep families from funding their kids' education.

The absence of sufficient programs for teacher preparation and training is another significant obstacle. Due to a lack of professional development in inclusive pedagogy, many educators feel unprepared to meet the diverse learning needs of their students (Florian & Rouse,

2009). The implementation of inclusive education is further hampered by resource and infrastructure limitations. Many low-income areas' schools lack assistive technology, adaptive learning resources, and accessible facilities (Peters, 2004). Despite the adoption of inclusive education policies in many nations, there is still a disconnect between policy and practice because of insufficient funding, monitoring, and teacher preparation (Peters, 2004).

As Ethiopia is one of developing sub-Saharan countries, making education accessible for CwDs has been highly challenging issue for both the government and the family of CwDs (Tirussew, 2006). Even those who have access to education are not equipped with modified teaching material and assisted trained teachers as well as have no modified environment. This either shows that the implementation of inclusive education is a dream or at its peak of challenge in the context of the country (zelalem, 2017).

Several studies have identified varying primary challenges in the implementation of inclusive education, reflecting inconsistencies in findings. For instance, Abate and Gebru (2024) emphasized administrative shortcomings and lack of accountability as the main obstacles, while Belay and Yihun (2020) from Bahir dar city pointed to insufficient budget allocation and a lack of essential materials as the key challenges. In the same way, research conducted in Jimma identified the main obstacle as the lack of legally binding rules and educational legislation (Bikila, 2020). However, the main issue, according to Taddese et al. (2025), is the absence of opportunities for teachers to engage in ongoing professional development.

Given these divergent findings, the current study aims to investigate the issue more comprehensively by focusing on the identified inconsistencies, which informed the selection of the research title. While most studies, such as that of (Temesgen, 2017) have examined the challenges of implementing inclusive education at the national level in Ethiopia, only a few—such as the study by (Tizazu, 2023) conducted in Kolfe Keranio Sub-city—have focused specifically on teacher-related challenges. However, other significant challenges in this area have remained largely unaddressed. In order to address these gap the present study seeks to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the various interrelated challenges associated with the implementation of inclusive education. In addition the study provided more targeted insights and practical recommendations to enhance inclusive education practices within the area.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

- i. How do teachers qualifications and training impact the implementation of inclusive education in schools?
- ii. How do resource availability and funding impact the implementation of inclusive education in schools?
- iii. What strategies should be employed to overcome these challenges and implement effective inclusive education practices?

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this study is to examine the key challenges hindering the effective implementation of inclusive education in schools. Specifically, the study aims to:

- ✓ To examine the impact of teacher qualifications and training on the implementation of inclusive education.
- ✓ To assess how the availability of resources and funding affects the implementation of inclusive education in schools.
- ✓ To recommend strategies for overcoming the challenges and promoting effective inclusive education practices.

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The significance of this study lies in identifying exclusionary factors and providing recommendations to enhance the implementation of inclusive education, thereby contributing to the improvement of the existing educational framework.

The major significance of the study are:

- Provide a better understanding and creation of inclusive education environment in schools.

- The study may serve as a source of information for other researchers who will be engaged in studying in this area in Ethiopia.
- The study will help teachers how to create inclusive practice in the school and how to minimize challenges of inclusive education.
- The study will also be useful in indicating the responsibilities expected from teachers, and school administrators in creating inclusive practice in the school.

## **1.6 Scope of the study**

Geographically, this study is designed to explore the challenges schools face in implementing inclusive education in Addis Ababa, with a specific focus on Kolfe Keranio Sub-city, Woreda 01. It concentrates on both public and private primary and secondary schools within this area. Two schools have been purposefully selected for the research: Abune Baslios Primary School, representing public institutions, and Joint Vision Success Academy, representing private institutions. These schools were chosen because they are among the first in Woreda 01 to provide educational services to students with disabilities and, compared to other schools in the area, they have a higher number of learners with special educational needs.

The scope of this study is confined to examining the challenges that affect the implementation of inclusive education in the selected schools within Kolfe Keranio Sub-city, Woreda 01. Due to the wide range of issues surrounding inclusive education, the research will be delimited by the specific challenges to its implementation. These include the shortage of trained teachers and support staff, inadequate infrastructure, weak enforcement and execution of inclusive education policies, effective monitoring systems, teachers unfavorable perceptions, limited awareness and collaboration among stakeholders, inadequate funding and poor resource allocation, a rigid curriculum, peer perception, and the absence of continuous professional development opportunities for teachers. In addition the study explores strategies for the effective implementation of inclusive education. By narrowing the focus to these areas, the research aims to provide a clearer understanding of the major obstacles to inclusive education in the selected context.

## 1.7. Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following key terms are defined as follows:

**Inclusive Education** – Refers to an education system designed to accommodate all learners, including children with disabilities, by identifying and addressing challenges to learning. In this study, inclusive education specifically focuses on how schools implement policies, strategies, and practices to ensure equitable access and participation for children with disabilities.

**Implementation** – This entails the process of translating inclusive education policies into practice within schools. Therefore, the learning environment of children and the related policies and strategies that create an inclusive learning environment for children with disabilities will be examined in this study.

**Challenges** – These are the difficulties encountered in implementing inclusive education. The challenges include teacher preparedness, availability of resources, policy gaps, and societal attitudes. The obstacles to and the impact on proper inclusive education will be explored in this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1 The Concept of Inclusive Education and Its Definition**

Definitions of inclusive education have varied, but the emphasis remains the same—ensuring the co-existence of children with various abilities and backgrounds in the same learning environment. According to UNESCO, learning “a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education.” (2005). In its 2008 publication, another form is provided for that “to address and respond diversity requires further strengthening capacity of education systems to accommodate all learners.” Ainscow (2015) adds that inclusive education ensure equal access to quality education accommodate diverse learning needs.

### **2.2 Overview of Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education in Ethiopia**

Though it initiates inclusive education, Ethiopia faces a set of challenges with effective implementation. The most important problem is that there are not enough trained teachers and teaching resources to support children with disabilities. That is vague—most educators do not train them specifically to work with learners who have disabilities; hence, they find it difficult to have diversity in their classrooms (Franck & Joshi, 2017). Besides that, the schools lack adequate provision for essential learning materials like braille books, audio materials which are assistive technologies required by students having visual or hearing impairments (Belay & Yihun, 2020). Another big problem is the physical infrastructure. Most of the school buildings are not structured in a way that they can accommodate students with mobility challenges. Inadequate or non-accessible toilets, absence of ramps, and improper classroom layouts restrict the participation of physically-disabled students (Kassaw et al., 2017; Genovesi et al., 2024). The need for systemic change to establish truly inclusive environments is reflected in these infrastructure issues.

Ethiopia does not effectively implement its policies, such as the 2012 Inclusive Education Strategy. Many schools don't have the chance or resources to adopt effective inclusive practices (Yorke et al. 2022). Also, there is no available national data on how many students with disabilities, making it even harder for decision-makers to budget appropriately (Malle et al. 2015). Financial constraints, add another layer of complexity to the issue. Schools, and particularly rural schools, operate on extremely limited budgets, that mitigate their ability to

support students with special needs (Hankebo 2018). Families often lack adequate income to cover the additional costs associated with assistive devices or transportation (Genovesi et al. 2023). The risk of social attitudes that reinforce exclusion in many communities contributes to the ongoing barriers faced by families with disabilities. Disabilities are often still understood as a matter of reproach, punishment and superstition, contributing to systems of discrimination (Negash & Yadavalli, 2020).

Financial limitations further complicate the issues. Most schools, especially those in rural communities, have tight budgets and do not have means to provide necessary material in support of students with special needs (Hankebo, 2018). Families frequently lack the funds to pay for transportation or assistive technology (Genovesi et al., 2023). As a result, it becomes challenging for kids with disabilities to go to school.

The implicit exclusion of students with physical disabilities from physical education classes is another issue. Since there is a lack of adapted equipment and staff in service training, these students do not get an equal opportunity for important development (Kassaw et al., 2017). Furthermore, available data concerning children with disabilities is seriously deficient and does nothing to help further planned efforts toward implementing inclusive programs (Yorke et al., 2022). The lack of knowledge among key stakeholders, including teachers and community members, regarding inclusive education exacerbates this (Zegeye, 2022).

According to a 2009 World Vision report, even though some schools have begun implementing inclusive education, many are still overcrowded, with over 70 students in a single classroom, making it challenging to teach effectively, even for students without disabilities. Thomas (2005) noted that Ethiopian services for students with disabilities are still underdeveloped and poorly understood.

According to a joint study conducted by Handicap International and the Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau (AACAE, 2012), many schools rely on the goodwill of principals to implement inclusive education because they lack supportive and clear guidelines. Often, regular classroom teachers are expected to teach students with special needs without any training or administrative support (Ethenesh, 2007).

Out of over 40,000 schools in Ethiopia, only about 213 (2.9%) have established inclusive education resource centers. Not surprisingly, schools with these centers tend to offer better support to students with disabilities.

The situation is still dire in spite of these efforts. According to Aemiro (2020), 97% of Ethiopian children with disabilities do not attend school, and those who do frequently receive subpar instruction.

## **2.3 Difficulties in Putting Inclusive Education into Practice**

### **2.3.1 Lack of Trained Teachers and Support Staff**

The lack of qualified teachers and support staff is one of the main obstacles to Ethiopia's inclusive education implementation. Many educators simply do not have the knowledge or skills to effectively support students with diverse learning needs (Franck & Joshi, 2017). As a result, even when policies promoting inclusion are in place, the people responsible for carrying them out often feel unprepared or unsupported (Zegeye, 2022). Sarker and Unzum (2023) emphasize that without structured, hands-on training in inclusive teaching practices, it becomes difficult for teachers to respond effectively to the needs of students with disabilities.

This is not just a local problem. In many developing countries, the shortage of professionals trained in special education is a common challenge. Teachers frequently receive little to no training in inclusive education, if any at all, which leaves them unprepared to handle the needs of students with disabilities (Loreman et al., 2005). In order to support all students, teachers must be trained in both general education and special education techniques and be able to collaborate with one another (UNESCO, 2009).

### **2.3.2 Difficulties with Infrastructure**

In Ethiopia, a large number of elementary, secondary, and university schools were not constructed with inclusivity in mind. Poor building designs, such as the absence of ramps, handrails, or adapted restrooms, frequently make buildings inaccessible to students with physical disabilities. Wheelchairs and other mobility aids may not be able to fit in classrooms that are overcrowded or poorly organized (Aemiro, 2020). Simple amenities like playgrounds, clean water, and signage are often lacking as well.

Furthermore, the majority of schools lack access to the specialists—such as school psychologists, special needs educators, and sign language interpreters necessary to assist students with disabilities. These infrastructure constraints are one of the main barriers to establishing inclusive learning environments in Ethiopia, according to Panda and Meher (2023).

### **2.3.3 Weak Policy Implementation and Enforcement**

Ethiopia has implemented a number of inclusive education policies, but these are frequently poorly or inconsistently carried out. Schools frequently lack the authority to enforce these policies or are not aware of them (Zegeye, 2022). Putting policies into practice is made even more difficult by unclear regulations and a dearth of trustworthy data on children with disabilities (Yorke et al., 2022).

Vindigni (2024) also emphasizes how imprecise policy wording and inadequate enforcement strategies impede meaningful classroom advancement.

All children, including those with disabilities, should attend their local schools, according to the Salamanca Statement (1994). Governments must make data-driven plans and offer financial and legal assistance for this to occur (Dark and Light Blind Care, 2008). Many current policies, however, are still poorly implemented, and some even impose arbitrary age restrictions or other barriers on students with disabilities (UNESCO, 2009). According to academics like Oliver (1990) and Davis & Watson (2000), policies need to be transformative and based on principles like social cohesion, diversity, and equity in order for true inclusion to take place.

### **2.3.4 Limited Awareness and Lack of Stakeholder Collaboration**

Another major obstacle is the general lack of awareness about inclusive education among key stakeholders teachers, principals, parents, and community members. This lack of understanding prevents effective implementation of inclusive practices (Kassaw et al., 2017). While inclusive education requires the active participation of all parties involved, many teachers and administrators are not adequately informed or engaged.

Research shows that strong collaboration between teachers, parents, and policymakers is essential for successful inclusion (UNESCO, 1994; Lazarević, 2013). However, in many cases, parents are only involved in limited ways, such as being asked to help with fundraising or disciplinary issues, rather than playing a meaningful role in their child's education (Leyser, 2013;

Mafa, 2012). Burningham et al. (2024) found that while parents and teachers often support the idea of inclusion, they also recognize serious barriers that make it difficult to implement in practice.

Parental hesitation is often rooted in fears of stigma, limited understanding of disabilities, and a general lack of educational background. To move forward, schools need to build stronger partnerships with families and ensure open communication channels (UNESCO, 2005).

### **2.3.5 Inadequate Funding and Resource Allocation**

Financial limitations are another major hurdle. Although some critics argue that inclusive education is costly, studies show that it can actually be more cost-effective than running separate systems for students with disabilities (Mitchell, 2010). Still, many Ethiopian schools struggle to provide even the most basic resources needed to support inclusive education.

Schools often lack teaching aids, assistive technologies, and adapted materials. Infrastructure—such as ramps, accessible bathrooms, and school transport—is also lacking (Sebsibe et al., 2016). Aemiro (2020) notes that important tools like Braille books, large print materials, hearing aids, and tactile graphics are either too expensive or unavailable in local markets due to low demand.

Yismaw (2014) and Meher (2023) highlight the mismatch between the limited resources allocated by the government and the actual needs of schools. In rural and low-income areas, the situation is even worse, as schools are severely underfunded and families cannot afford the extra costs required for inclusion (Abate & Gebru, 2024).

### **2.3.6 Inflexibility of the Curriculum**

Inclusive education requires a curriculum that can be adapted to meet the needs of all learners. However, the Ethiopian curriculum is often rigid and does not allow for flexibility in how lessons are taught or assessed (Maghuve, 2006; Marsh, 1997). For students with disabilities, this means that the teaching methods and materials used may not be accessible or appropriate.

UNESCO (2005) recommends that inclusive curriculum policies should allow for variation in teaching time, learning styles, and evaluation methods. Without this flexibility, many

students with special needs are left behind, which contributes to high dropout and repetition rates (Aemiro, 2020).

### **2.3.7 Lack of Ongoing Professional Development**

Finally, professional development opportunities for teachers are limited and often inadequate. Training sessions are usually one-off events that are poorly coordinated and not tailored to local needs (Stubbs, 2008). As a result, teachers remain unprepared to manage inclusive classrooms (Desta & Bezabih, 2020).

Moreover, some teachers still hold negative attitudes toward students with disabilities, which creates additional barriers to inclusion (Gudina, 2018). Burningham et al. (2024) argue that professional development needs to be continuous, hands-on, and relevant to the real challenges teachers face.

Carrington & Robinson (2006) also emphasize the importance of collaboration and communication among educators, policymakers, and community members. Without it, efforts toward inclusion remain fragmented and ineffective. At the same time, public awareness campaigns have yet to shift social attitudes in a meaningful way (Sarker & Unzum, 2023).

Ainscow & Sandill (2010) express that this calls for change in both school leadership and culture to develop inclusive systems; therefore, it should be considered in any reform. As Tirusew (2005) put it, “The challenges toward inclusive education can arise from many directions—attitudinal barriers, resistance to change, rigid school systems, lack of clear educational strategies, limited instructional materials, and inadequate funding.”

## **2.4 Strategies for Addressing Challenges in Inclusive Education**

The challenges of implementing inclusive education should be addressed through a multifaceted approach in effective ways. The varied needs of learners place them at one great strategy of investing in comprehensive teacher training. Ongoing professional development for educators to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to support students with varied abilities and learning styles (Anggreani et al., 2024) is required. These training programs should be based on the UDL guidelines that teach flexibility in methods and assessment to meet the needs of individual students (Rahmi et al., 2024). Better infrastructure is also an important step

toward inclusion. Making classrooms physically accessible to equip the school with assistive technology and provide inclusive learning material help engage better students with disabilities. fully engage in learning (Anggreani et al., 2024; Dildora, 2024). Supportive environment means not only physical accessibility but also an environment that fosters the feelings of worth and ability among students. Equally important is engaging families and communities. Where parents and community members understand and support inclusive education, schools are more likely to develop inclusive values and practices (Anggreani et al., 2024). Raising awareness can break down stigma and foster a culture of acceptance and collaboration.

Policy support acts as the base in sustaining the inclusive practices. Thus, the government should make clear and enforceable policies on the proper use of resources for supporting inclusive education and then allocate adequate resources (Anggreani et al., 2024; Dildora, 2024). It is upon schools and institutions to advocate reforms, hence ensuring that these policies are implemented at all levels of the education system. It is equally necessary in the form of personalized support systems, individual education plans (IEPs). Under this, sensitive and specific goals, teaching methods and accommodation related to the special needs of children with disabilities help them succeed both academically and socially (Syed & Jain, 2023). At the same time unconscious biases are addressed, cultural competence is enhanced among educators to have more inclusive attitudes and reduce participation barriers (Syed & Jain, 2023). Technology, when used effectively, can be a powerful tool for inclusion. Assistive devices and digital platforms allow for customized learning experiences and broader access to educational materials (Dildora, 2024). Furthermore, promoting collaborative learning environments—where students support one another enhances both academic achievement and social integration (Poly & Harishma, 2023).

Curriculum adaptation under diverse and flexible presentation modes is another major strategy. Flexible and diversified curricular engagement captures the students' varying needs and fosters belonging (Syed & Jain, 2023). The last significant strategy comprises monitoring and evaluating the inclusive practices to make necessary refinements toward sustaining progress by educators and policymakers (Poly & Harishma, 2023).

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework of the Study**

### **2.5.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

This study is guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner's theory enables a multi-layered analysis of the contextual factors influencing inclusive education implementation, ranging from classroom dynamics to national policy frameworks. Together, these frameworks will shape the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes, ensuring that findings address not only immediate school-level challenges but also the broader systemic factors impacting inclusive education,

To grasp the multifaceted factors that sway the enactment of inclusive education this study borrows from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The theory underlines that human development gets molded by interactions with a set of linked environmental systems extending from immediate surroundings to wider societal influences. These systems—micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono—provide a useful lens for examining how inclusive education is shaped and challenged at multiple levels (Swart & Pettipher, 2016).

At micro level, students come face-to-face with family members, peers, teachers, and the classroom setting. Teachers do not receive adequate training on inclusive education and besides, there happens to be a prevailing stigma or misunderstanding among the students which leads to peer exclusion of students with disabilities (Sharma et al., 2019). The majority of parents are also not fully sensitized to policies on inclusive education or how to fight for the rights of their children (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

The relationships between families and schools are one example of how the various components of the microsystem interact to form the mesosystem. Efforts toward inclusion may be hampered by a lack of collaboration among teachers and poor communication between educators and parents (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). However, students with disabilities typically achieve better results when families and schools collaborate (Ainscow, 2020; Loreman et al., 2014).

A student's experience is indirectly impacted by exosystem elements such as resource availability, teacher preparation programs, and educational policies. Despite the adoption of inclusive education policies by nations such as Ethiopia, their implementation is frequently uneven, primarily because of a lack of resources and training (UNESCO, 2020; Florian, 2017).

The macrosystem consists of general educational frameworks, cultural beliefs, and societal attitudes. Deep-seated stigma toward disability and traditional notions of teaching that

prioritize conformity over diversity can create systemic barriers to inclusion (Forlin, 2018; Sharma et al., 2019). Policy gaps at the national level further slow down meaningful reform (UNESCO, 2020).

Finally, the chronosystem takes into account how structures and experiences change over time. Inclusive practices can be hampered by institutional and individual resistance to change, and educational reform is frequently sluggish. Schools run the risk of leaving out students who most need support if they don't adjust to new pedagogical approaches and learners' evolving needs (Mitchell, 2020; Donald et al., 2020).

The researchers examined the dynamic interaction of institutional, societal, and personal factors on inclusive education using Bronfenbrenner's framework. It also aids in determining the areas where focused interventions can have the biggest effects.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study used a qualitative approach to investigate the difficulties in establishing inclusive education in Addis Ababa's Kolfe Keranio Sub City. Selected school administrators, teachers, and special needs education officials who are actively engaged in the implementation process have been critically studied through a descriptive design that explore challenges of implementation inclusive education in terms of nuances and ground contexts. Because of the exploratory nature of descriptive design, the triangulation of multiple sources of data are often used for additional insight into the phenomenon.

### **3.2 Research Site**

The study was carried out in Addis Ababa's Kolfe Keranio Sub City, where very few schools have begun to use inclusive education. The sub city's mix of public and private educational establishments offering a valuable context for evaluating the level of exclusivity, recognizing the difficulties faced, and investigating potential solutions in various educational contexts. Specifically, the research focused on two schools: Abune Baslios Primary and Secondary School (public) and Joint Vision Success Academy Primary and Secondary School (private).

These schools are selected based on their experience of teaching SEN students each have more than ten year experience. Both schools have been implementing inclusive education early comparing to other schools from woreda 01. Based on these each school can differentiate challenging factors of implementing inclusive education from several years and suggest strategies better.

### **3.3 Population of the study**

In accordance to the data collected from each targeted school, the profile of the general population of schools of 2024/25 academic year is illustrated here under;

Table 3.1 Teachers' Profile

No	Name	Academic year	Sex			Teachers Information synopsis										
			M	F	Total	Qualification								Experience		
						Certificate		Diploma		Degree		MA		0-15	16-30	31 &
						M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
1	Abune Baslios	2024/25	98	128	226	-	12	80	47	59	28	2	-	112	66	18
2	Joint Vision Success	2024/25	23	46	69	-	16	9	13	18	9	-	-	35	10	4
Total			121	174	295		28	89	60	77	37	2		147	76	22

### 3.4 Sample size and sample selection technique

Given the needed for detailed insights, purposive sampling had been employed to select key participants who had direct experience with inclusive education. Participants had been selected based on their roles, expertise, and lived experiences in inclusive education. The study targeted approximately 15 participants from each school. Therefore, the sampling size had been the following.

- 2 principals of the schools.
- 8 teachers who teach in inclusive class rooms.
- 4 SNE professionals.

Criteria s for sample selection to conduct this study of both schools teachers had been selected based on their ongoing interaction with students with disabilities, their extensive experience in teaching these students, and their ability to provide valuable insights into the implementation of inclusive education.

Among the two principals, for ABPS the director and for JVSA the vice director been chosen to offer relevant information about the school's progress and challenging factor in implementing inclusive education. Special needed educators had been purposefully selected from available candidates.

### **3.5 Data Collection Instruments**

#### **3.5.1 Semi-Structured Interviews**

This method was chosen to gain profound individual perspectives on personal experiences and views, which may not be fully expressed in a group setting. The method allows flexibility to probe specific areas of interest regarding inclusive education. It is particularly applicable in the case of sensitive or contextual issues that demand more individual reflection and a sense of confidentiality.

The researcher prepared 11 open ended questions for school principals, 13 open ended questions for teachers and 10 open ended questions for SNE professionals.

Example of teachers interview question

- 1) How accessible are resources and facilities to enable students with special needs to participate fully in school activities?

Then the researcher interviewed school principals, special educators, and teachers. Open-ended questions from a semi-structured interview guide were used, enabling the researcher to ask follow-up questions in response to the respondents' responses. In order to identify recurrent themes and difficulties, the interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and subjected to either content analysis or thematic analysis. Open-ended questions focused on challenges, experiences, and potential solutions for inclusive education.

### **3.5.2 Observations**

To see directly how inclusive education is carried out in actual classrooms the researcher prepared items for checklist by referring prior related research's . This helped the researcher note things like non-verbal behaviors, dynamics of the classroom, interactions between teachers and students, as well as both the physical and instructional settings. Observations helped balance out data from group discussions and interviews by adding a real-world context. With a focus on student participation, teaching strategies, peer relationships, and accessibility, the researcher observed classrooms recognized for implementing inclusive education. a guided observation using a list or notes to systematically record what was observed. These documents were examined in order to identify real-world issues. Direct school visits had been conducted to observe teaching methodologies, classroom inclusivity, and accessibility. Field notes had been documented challenges related to infrastructure, instructional methods, and teacher-student interactions.

Combining these methods enabled the researcher to triangulate the data and hence increase credibility, depth, and reliability of findings on the challenges of inclusive education implementation.

### **3.6 Data Collection procedures**

Data collection had began after receiving approval of the instrument from my advisor. Following this, I had taken letters of request for permission from the department to access essential documents such as office minutes, guidelines, and other relevant materials related to inclusive education. I had also personally reached out to individual participants for their involvement in the research. To ensure triangulation and data validity, the following four data collection methods had been employed.

The next step had been involved translating the English version of the instrument into Amharic to overcome any potential language challenge among participants. Once the data had been collected through semi-structured interviews and observations the researcher proceeded with thematic analysis to analyze the data.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Approach**

The process had involved familiarizing with data, coding, generating themes, reviewing, defining, and interpreting findings using direct quotes and case evidence.

To thoroughly understand the challenges of implementing inclusive education, the researcher organized and examined interview transcripts and observation notes. Thematic analysis was applied as the major analytic approach. This is a method which entails important steps in the process of data familiarization, coding of significant segments, theme generation, and refinement of themes. The responses of each interviewee have been attributed to relevant areas of themes and described in narrative form. As indicated by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2020) in their related study, thematic analysis provides flexible yet very systematic ways through which the researcher can meaningfully discern patterns and obtain deeper understanding of complicated phenomena.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

This research strictly adhered to the ethical principles in conducting research to ensure that the rights and well-being of participants are fully protected (Creswell, 2007; Grant, 2002). The measures which were taken are as follows:

Before the commencement of the study, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and benefits of their participation in the research. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identity, and personal identifiers were eliminated to maintain confidentiality. The study was entirely voluntary, and participants were fully informed of their right to withdraw from it at any time without suffering any negative repercussions.

Besides that, institutional approval has already been secured from the department of special need and inclusive education. School administrators' permissions have also been secured before conducting any interviews or observations within the selected schools.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

This section of the study presents main findings drawn from interviews which have been interpreted and analyzed under sub themes relating to: challenges hindering the effective implementation of inclusive education, teacher qualifications, training, and professional development, policy interpretation and implementation, resource availability and funding, stakeholder collaboration, strategies for overcoming challenges. The above is in line with the sub themes whereby the main finding of this study is presented.

### 4.2 General Profile of Participants

Demographic characteristics of interviewees

**Table 4.1: General Teachers' Demographic Characteristics**

no	Code of the participants	sex	Qualification	Experience in years
1	T1	F	Diploma	10
2	T2	F	BSC	20
3	T3	M	Diploma	13
4	T4	M	BA	7
5	T5	F	Diploma	4
6	T6	M	BSC	11
7	T7	F	Diploma	26
8	T8	F	Diploma	15

The general teachers' group consisted of eight educators with gender representation (6 females and 3 males). Their qualifications varied, including five diploma holders, two Bachelor of Science (BSC) graduates, and one Bachelor of Arts (BA) holder. Experience levels showed significant variation, ranging from a novice teacher with just 2 years to a veteran with 15 years of experience. Notably, the most female diploma holder, female BSC holder experienced teacher was a male BSC holder, while the least experienced was a female BSC graduate. Respondents from T1-T4 represent general teachers from Abune Baslios school and respondents from T5-T8 represent general teachers from Joint Vision Success Academy.

**Table 4.2: Special Needs teachers Demographic Characteristics**

no	Code of the participants	sex	Qualification	Experience in years
1	SNE 1	F	Diploma	9
2	SNE 2	F	BA	4
3	SNE 3	F	Diploma	5
4	SNE 4	M	BA	6

The special needs educators group comprised four professionals with a female majority (3 females, 1 male). Their educational backgrounds were evenly split between diploma holders and BA graduates. Experience levels were moderately clustered between 4 to 9 years, indicating these educators were primarily in mid-career stages. The most experienced was a female diploma holder with 9 years in the field, while the least experienced was a female BA graduate with 4 years of service. SNE 1 and SNE 2 are respondents from Abune Baslios school and respondents SNE 3 and SNE 4 from Joint Vision Success Academy.

**Table 4.3: School Principals' Demographic Characteristics**

no	Code of the participants	sex	Qualification	Experience in years
1	P1	M	BA	10
2	P2	M	BA	8

The schools leadership group consisted of two male principals, both holding BA degrees and possessing significant leadership experience (10 and 8 years respectively). While this scenario reflects a lack of gender diversity, it aligns with many educational studies that highlight male dominance in school leadership positions. The comparable experience levels suggest similar career progression patterns among these administrators. The absence of female representation in this case contrasts with trends advocating for greater gender balance in educational leadership roles. P1 respondent is from Abune Baslios school and P2 respondent is from Joint Vision Success Academy.

### 4.3 Finding

The finding of the study is organized in to four major themes each related with the research question the themes are challenges hindering effective implementation of inclusive education, teachers qualifications and training, resource availability and funding and potential strategies to overcome these challenges all are discussed with sub themes.

### 4.3.1: Challenges Hindering Effective Implementation of Inclusive Education

#### *A. Infrastructural accessibility*

The researcher assesses the physical environment and facility-related challenges affecting inclusive education implementation at both institutions.

#### Physical Infrastructure Challenges

At Joint Vision Success Academy and Abune Baslios, the infrastructural shortcomings are profound. Interviews with administrators revealed:

*"Our school buildings were constructed without any consideration for students with disabilities. We have multiple floors but no ramps or elevators."*

T4 emphasized the daily struggles:

*"We've had situations where students with physical disabilities miss classes because they can't access certain floors."*

*"Even basic modifications like handrails and wider doorways are missing, creating constant challenges."*

Observational data corroborated these narratives:

*"Multiple architectural challenge observed, including steep staircases, narrow corridors, and inaccessible washrooms."*

School Abune Baslios have planed several infrastructural improvements. An administrator explained:

*"We will systematically modify our facilities. All new constructions will include ramps, wider doorways, and accessible washrooms."*

*"Most facilities are inaccessible. We have two buildings without elevators, so we've had to move classes to the ground floor. The toilets are not accessible."*

*(T1 )*

Another professional adds:

*"Our physical environment is not at all suitable for inclusive education. The school compound itself presents barriers—ramps are missing, pathways are uneven, and toilets are not accessible."(SNE 1)*

**Table 4.4: Accessibility of Different Infrastructure Items for SNE Students in Joint Vision Success Academy (JVSA)**

No.	Observation points	Accessibility	Remarks
1	Physical setting of the school	Not suitable	Buildings and pathways are not adapted; no ramps; uneven terrain.
2	Library	Not accessible	No assistive or accessible materials; entrance not wheelchair-friendly.
3	Laboratory	Not accessible	Exists, but not functional for SNE students; lacks adapted materials.
4	Classroom entryways	Not suitable	High edges at entrances; difficult for wheelchair access.
5	Classroom seating arrangement	suitable	Adapted seating or layout for mobility-impaired students but low space .
6	Toilet facilities	Not available	No separate or accessible toilets for wheelchair users.
7	Roads and pathways	Not accessible	Ragged, uneven cobblestone paths; unsafe for wheelchairs and canes.
8	Administration offices	Partially accessible	Some offices have ramps, but most remain inaccessible.
9	Department offices	Not accessible	Have high edges; no ramps available.
10	Pedagogy center	Not accessible	Exists but located upstairs without elevator or ramp access.
11	Entertainment/playground areas	Partially accessible	Spaces exist but have narrow gates and are fenced; surfaces uneven.
12	Clubs and co-curricular spaces	Not accessible	Facilities are inaccessible due to high and wood edges.
13	Cafeteria	Not accessible	High edges and ragged roads make access difficult.
14	Mini media/announcement center/flag	accessible	Located in flat areas.
15	Elevator	Not available	No elevators in any multi-story buildings.

Source: Field observation, 2025

**Table 4.5 Accessibility of Different Infrastructure Items for SNE Students in Abune Baslios Primary School (ABPS)**

No.	Items	Accessibility	Remarks
1	Physical setting of the school	Partially suitable	Ground is better maintained, but gate and building access are elevated.
2	Library	Not accessible	Library location and lack of materials limit access for students with disabilities.
3	Laboratory	Not accessible	lacks adapted furniture and materials.
4	Classroom entryways	Not suitable	Many classrooms are in elevated buildings with no ramps.
5	Classroom seating arrangement	Not suitable	Seating does not accommodate physical disabilities.
6	Toilet facilities	Partially	Toilets were built by INGOs for wheelchair users but usually locked.
7	Roads and pathways	Partially accessible	main gate is elevated and access is limited.
8	Administration offices	accessible	Head offices have better ramps
9	Department offices	Not accessible	Lack of ramps; most have steps or high entry points.
10	Pedagogy center	Not available	No functional center specifically serving students with special needs.
11	Entertainment/playground areas	Accessible	Playground is open and, but not specifically designed for inclusive use.
12	Clubs and co-curricular spaces	Not accessible	Inaccessible due to location and infrastructure.
13	Cafeteria	Not accessible	Access is difficult due to elevation and rugged pathways.
14	Mini media/announcement center/ flag	Not accessible	Ramp is not bulild proprely
15	Elevator	Not available	No elevators in any building.

Source: Field observation, 2025

Findings from both schools indicate that fundamental physical accessibility remains a significant challenge in the implementation of inclusive education. Most classrooms in both schools are not designed to accommodate students with physical disabilities. Specifically, neither Abune Baslios Primary School nor Joint Vision Success Academy (JVSA) has sufficient ramps or modified entrances, making it difficult for students who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids to move freely and independently. The classrooms are often elevated with high edges, acting as physical obstacles that limit access.

At JVSA, the layout includes three separate compounds located within a short walking distance approximately three to five minutes from the main road. However, the cobblestone pathways leading to the school buildings are uneven and filled with potholes, making navigation hazardous for wheelchair users and students with visual impairments who rely on canes. Moreover, the left and right paths are frequently occupied by parked vehicles, further restricting access and forcing students with special needs to maneuver through unsafe and narrow passages.

The majority of classrooms are built in a row-house style with elevated entrances and breaks between connecting paths. These structural barriers prevent students from entering classrooms easily and independently, requiring them to seek assistance or expend considerable effort just to access learning spaces.

In the case of Abune Baslios, although the general environment and surrounding roads are relatively better maintained, the main school gate is situated at an elevated level, and many classrooms are housed in multi-story buildings without elevators or functional ramps. As a result, students with disabilities often face considerable difficulty locating and accessing ground-floor classrooms.

T1, T2 and T4 confirmed these challenges, with stating,

*“The poor infrastructure challenged students with disabilities to come to school.”*

*"Students with significant mobility impairments are typically assigned to ground-floor classrooms, while those with milder difficulties are often placed in upper-level (G+1) classrooms, where they are vulnerable to being pushed or jostled during busy transition times when other students exit rapidly."*

*"Look! a KG3 student had to be physically supported just to enter her classroom, as the entrance was not accessible for wheelchairs due to raised edges that hinder smooth movement."*

## **B: Overcrowding and Space Constraints**

There are problems related to class size, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient learning space that challenge the delivery of inclusive education.

At Abune Baslios overcrowding is a persistent issue. Interview responses included the following statement:

*"Our classes are extremely overcrowded, making it practically impossible to attend to the individual needs of each student."*

Abune Baslios teachers elaborated on these space constraints:

*"Handling a class of 90 students, including several with special needs, is a major challenge."*

*"Often, there is simply not enough space for students needing mobility aids or specialized learning stations."*

In the case of Joint Vision Success Academy

*"we are currently teaching 45 students in a class which is hard to implement individual learning."*

Both observational data at joint vision success academy and Abune Baslios further underscored room limitations:

*"Classes appear congested with little room for specialized activities or adaptive teaching techniques."*

### **C: Skills Gap**

When asked whether the country had a sufficient number of teachers equipped with the necessary skills in Braille and sign language to effectively implement inclusive education, the interviewees highlighted significant challenges in the current practice.

SNE2 added,

*"No, we don't have adequate skilled teachers."*

The participants noted that poorly trained teachers cannot effectively teach others, and that the limited number of trained teachers is insufficient to support a national inclusive education system.

As T6 further remarked,

*"Universities and colleges are more focused on preaching than truly training,"*

Suggesting that the current teacher education programs are largely theoretical and disconnected from practical classroom needs.

Due to this gap, graduates of teacher education programs often lack the hands-on skills required to teach Braille, sign language, or essential daily living skills to students with disabilities.

#### **D: Administrators' Lack of Commitment to Implementing Inclusive Education**

One of the major challenges in the implementation of inclusive education is the apparent lack of responsiveness and commitment from educational administrators.

It is continually reported by teachers that when they raise concerns or submit requests—like for professional development, special needs training, or extra staff—those requests often go unanswered.

As P1 said,

*“We always ask for training together with professional staff, but are not responded to us.”*

This experience captures clearly what appears to be an inadequately attended systemic problem regarding priorities or the lack of focus inclusive educational issues within a person's administrative responsibility. Another teacher revealed the gap in the school and the higher authorities saying,

*“We take our necessities to higher bodies, but nothing is done. I do not know why.”(T4)*

Lack of response from educational authorities at all levels does not attend to the need stress, but leads to frustration among school staff, which eventually result in helplessness. When absent from those who are supposed to support and manage the education framework offer no clear instruction or materials necessary, all the load ends up on teachers who are usually not ready and equipped to take on the needs of numerous children with disabilities. Such unwillingness on the part of the administrators indicates that there is little effort made to understand inclusive education, or a softened somewhat commitment to its realization. Most likely, lacking fully attentive supports at the school level is due to the fact that the administrators are not trained or simply do not comprehend the imposed difficulties.

Additionally, limited funding, poor policy enforcement, and weak accountability mechanisms contribute to this lack of response. Because of this, open teaching stays mostly in ideas with little real help or important doing in many schools. This inaction has very real

consequences for the learners. In the absence of proper accommodation, resources, or personnel available in capacity children with disabilities are either taken out of the learning process or placed in special units. This goes against the very principle of inclusive education because those children do not get to learn—those who have some physical, intellectual, or even emotional challenges—and participate fully in mainstream educational settings. Unless administrators at all levels are held accountable for and empowered to support inclusion, real progress toward educational equity for SEN students will remain out of reach.

### **E: Shortage of Special Needs Education (SNE) Teachers**

Another major challenge in inclusive education is the huge deficit of teachers trained in special needs education who are critical to the support and the actual process of including children with disabilities within the mainstream classroom. Not only their expertise is required for work directly with SNE students but also in guiding and mentoring general education teachers on how to adapt their instruction and create an inclusive learning environment. The country does not have enough capacity to train an adequate number of SNE teachers that can satisfy this growing demand.

T3 said,

*"No, I don't think we have enough teachers trained in special needs education."*

Others echoed this; and therefore, it is how the scarcity of qualified personnel directly impacts the quality and accessibility of education for SNE students. Without the assistance of trained specialists, general education teachers often find it challenging to address the diverse needs of their students, leading to situations where children with disabilities receive minimal attention or support.

*"Sometimes since parents who have SNE children couldn't get Professional support for their children at schools they prefer to sit their child at home." (T6)*

This choice is not made out of a want less place in education but rather a want of better options. Parents feel that sending their children to school without the necessary support would do more harm than good. In short, it is the absence of SNE teachers that creates this indirect form of

exclusion whereby families, bearing the brunt of inadequate accommodation by the system, are forced to keep their children out of school.

## **F. Understanding of Inclusive Education Policies**

The results indicate that educators and school leaders have different—and more often than not, inadequate—perceptions of formal policies regarding inclusive education. Although some were certain such policies are indeed available, a lot of emphasis was placed on the gap between knowing about such policies and comprehending how to actually use them in real-life teaching contexts.

As P2 said:

*“Guidelines exist within the frameworks, and some have been adopted. However, the rest are impractical given the situation.”*

This quote illustrates an understanding about the existence of an inclusive education policy which is rather skeletal in nature, but at the same time, emphasizes how difficult it is to use policies in real-world situations in schools that are short on funds and other resources. This is indicative of how, regardless of frameworks, policies are not necessarily helpful because there is little foresight behind what educators are expected to do on a daily basis.

The teachers, too, voiced that the understanding and application of inclusive policies usually happened on the spot. As one teacher noted,

*“We believe that there are guidelines, but we are implementing them in our own way.”*

This type of answer illustrates how policies are interpreted in a personal manner due to the absence of a shared approach. The quote “in our own way” captures the essence. This points out that a teacher can navigate the system as they please and without proper guidance or instruction, which suggests the absence of full-fledged training.

In some situations, the absence of knowing is more striking.

*“Honestly, I believe I possess only reasonable understanding of the policies that are in place.”(T2)*

This kind of lack of certainty highlights a bigger problem: policies are not being communicated and reiterated in practice. If teachers are uncertain about textbook contents and requirements of the frameworks for inclusive education, then the systematic and assured execution of these frameworks becomes highly improbable. Such gaps in knowledge restrict the level of assistance that students with disabilities ought to be given, as well as exposing gaps in the sharing of policy information in the education system.

One gap that surfaced consistently throughout the data was the worrying discrepancy between the goals set out in the policies and the reality of the practices within the educational institutions. A number of respondents mentioned that the policies seem to be working with an ideal school setting that is just not available to them.

A principal at JVSA commented in relation to this quote:

*“Not all parts of the guideline are practical in our current conditions.”*

This quote illustrates a considerable issue: policies that are reasonably crafted and intended to be supportive are very difficult to put in place owing to inadequate resources, infrastructure, and staffing to allow for inclusive practices. This would result in what is supposed to be a pathway to achieving inclusion turning into an inclusive nightmare instead.

Alignment with policy is frequently cited as a reason for meeting policy targets, suggesting that policies might already be partial solutions to gaps in the classroom. The comment made by T1, T3, and T4 of “inaccessible classrooms,” “toilets that students with disabilities can’t use,” and “poor desk arrangements that limit movement” were critical from our discussion about physical barriers. These oversights are not trivial—they are fundamental to the learner's environment relative to mastering school participation and learning.

In the end, in numerous interviews and in every focus group, the data show quite clearly that educators wish to implement policies supporting the inclusion of category D students but an absence of enabling conditions makes that difficult. Ultimately, the research shows that many educators want to follow inclusive education policies, but they are often held back by practical limitations. When the physical and institutional environment doesn’t support what the policy asks for, even the most committed teachers are left without the tools to make inclusion a

reality. The policy constraints extend beyond infrastructure to include human resources and materials. One teacher explains,

*"Teaching materials are not readily available,"*

while P2 notes,

*"We need more accessible teaching materials."*

These statements highlight how the absence of appropriate resources creates a practical impossibility for implementing inclusive practices, regardless of policy mandates. The gap becomes even more pronounced when teachers describe feeling "overwhelmed or helpless" when faced with students who have unique learning needs, not because they lack compassion, but because they "genuinely don't know what to do" without proper training and resources which policies should consider and put strict guidelines to these challenges.

*"The policy must go beyond proclamations, slogans, and pictures of inclusion on school walls. What we need are serious, practical guidelines that can be implemented at the ground level. Inclusion should not just be symbolic—it should be part of our everyday practice," remarked P6 participant.*

This statement underscores a critical concern among educators regarding the gap between inclusive education policy and its actual implementation. While schools may publicly endorse inclusive values through visual displays and mission statements, such symbolic gestures are insufficient without corresponding, actionable strategies. The participant emphasizes the need for concrete, practical guidelines that can support teachers and school staff in translating the principles of inclusion into day-to-day teaching and learning processes. This reflects a broader call for policy measures that are not only aspirational but also operational and impactful at the classroom level.

*Extra time during tests, it's the teacher who decides that."* he effective implementation of inclusive education depends not only on policy commitment but also on clear, accessible guidelines. Teachers, school leaders, and educational officials at all levels require specific directives to translate policy into practice. However, in the context of the Ethiopian education system, such operational guidelines are either lacking or unknown to practitioners. Research

participants consistently highlighted the absence of a formal document that explains how inclusive education should be carried out at the school level.

Several educators confirmed this gap. T6 stated,

*"As far as I know, we don't have any detailed guideline that tells us how to implement inclusive education."*

T1 shared a common frustration among teachers:

*"There's a national plan, yes—but it's too general. It doesn't provide concrete steps or instructions we can follow in our classrooms."*

Similarly, T 8 added:

*"The Ministry of Education has talked about preparing one, but we haven't seen any official document yet."*

In contrast, one special needs education (SNE) teacher offered a different perspective:

*"In my opinion, the strategic plan might be enough if interpreted and applied correctly."*

These differing viewpoints highlight a deeper issue—many educators are unclear about the role of strategic planning versus actionable guidance. While some are waiting for clearer tools, others believe existing plans could work if better understood and supported.

Such confusion exposes a lack of clarity in the delivery of inclusive education. Strategic plans provide long-term visions and policy intentions, but seldom offer realistic aids needed for daily classroom instruction. In the absence of this clarity, schools are free to apply inclusive education in the manner of their choosing. This freedom fosters disparities in practices across schools and regions, which in turn influences the support provided to SEN students. Oftentimes, a student's access to a usable educational framework of inclusion is at the mercy of unregulated educator's views rather than overarching unified systems.

Teachers also voiced concerns about the national curriculum's lack of flexibility, particularly in how it addresses students with disabilities. According to the interview data, the curriculum remains largely uniform across the country and does little to support inclusive education practices.

As T7 pointed out:

*“The curriculum is the same for everyone—there’s no adaptation for students with disabilities.”*

T2 echoed this, saying:

*“Although we have some awareness about disability, we don’t know how to develop a curriculum that considers it properly.”*

SNE1 was even more direct:

*“To be honest, I don’t think our curriculum is designed with the needs of disabled students in mind.”*

One major issue raised was the lack of accessible learning materials. Students with visual impairments, for example, often struggle to engage with charts, images, and diagrams in textbooks because these visuals rarely come with descriptive text. Teachers also noted instances where textbooks included insensitive or outdated language, suggesting that disability inclusion has not been thoroughly considered in curriculum development.

Together, these insights point to a larger systemic issue: without curriculum flexibility and inclusive content, students with disabilities remain on the margins of the learning experience. Teachers want to support these learners, but they lack the tools and training to adapt the materials in meaningful ways.

Regarding content and instructional adjustments,

SNE 3 shared, *“Modifying content for students with disabilities is left entirely up to the teacher’s judgment.”*

T8 added, *“If a student with visual impairment needs ex*

T6 and other participants agreed that the curriculum does not offer any structured instructional differentiation for students with visual, hearing, or intellectual disabilities.

Ultimately, all participants acknowledged that responsibility for adapting instruction and materials is placed solely on individual teachers. According to them, this gap stems from insufficient training, limited awareness, and a lack of accountability in the curriculum development process. As a result, the needs of children with disabilities are not adequately considered, leaving inclusive education goals unfulfilled in practice.

### **G. Stakeholder Collaboration in Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education requires the collaboration of both teachers and administrators and most certainly needs to be done collectively. However, data suggests that this is not the case for most teachers. Their intentions appear to be positive but are usually met with systemic constraints. A number of teachers did recognize the role of school administration, but were quick to note that this support is seldom backed with practical action.

A quote from one of the teachers is illustrative (T3):

*“Administration is very supportive in regard to disability participation acceptance.”*

Both expressions reflect an effort to include the students but suggest that any level of support beyond enrollment is quite unlikely. The principal of JVSA had this to add when elaborating on the school’s approach to inclusivity:

*“Guideline is full inclusion, partial inclusion, exclusive support. From the admission process, we are prepared to accept SNE students and provide inclusive education.” (P4)*

This kind of thinking demonstrates that there is an attempt to address students on different levels, which needs to be appreciated as indicative of thoughtful administrative logic. But the problem is, the “preparing” mindset does not offer much for actual boots-on-the-ground work.

Teachers often talked about the lack of alignment. They indicated that while school leaders were mostly helpful, they felt the assistance given to them was helpful but not enough. Statements such as “provided assistance by the school is inadequate” or “support from the

administration is unreliable” were the order of the day. These worries examine how philosophical backing regarding inclusion is not always coupled with the necessary training, systems, or funds that would enable it to work in practice. Teachers, therefore, as willing as they might be, seem to have no ways through which inclusive approaches may be effectively implemented. This discrepancy between endorsement and execution constrains collaboration and impact while progress toward meeting truly inclusive learning environments is slow.

In the context of inclusion, parents are essential stakeholders, but their participation is on a spectrum – from full-fledged advocacy to total disengagement. The interviews illustrated the full range of parental involvement in inclusion processes and their impact on these processes. Responding P2 said:

*“Most parents support us in terms of dealing with their children with special needs. Even though there is ignorance from some parents, we are trying to change that.”*

This statement captures the paradox of the reality schools grapple with – some parents are hands-on, while others require additional support and guidance. The phrase “continue our efforts” indicates that school wanted to breach this gap as a concern through stronger communication towards partners.

Nonetheless, many families encounter significant socioeconomic challenges that restrict their participation in their child's education. One principal shared:

*“Most parents are concerned with their economic difficulties more than caring about their children's education. Though some parents do follow up consistently.” (P1)*

This captures what is a painful reality – parents wish to be involved in their children’s educational journey, but their day-to-day struggles makes it hard for them to live up to their aspirations. This is a tough situation for schools who actively seek the cooperation of families, but also have to grapple with the lived experiences of these families.

This statement illuminates the harsh reality that many families face, where immediate economic survival takes precedence over educational engagement. The economic pressures on families can create a situation where parents, despite caring deeply about their children's education, simply lack the time, energy, or resources to actively participate in school-based

collaborative efforts. This creates a challenging dynamic for schools, as they must work to engage parents while being sensitive to the real constraints that families face.

The most engaged parents often become powerful advocates and collaborators, as evidenced by the statement,

*"We collaborate with engaged parents; some even serve as representatives."(SNE 4)*

This level of involvement represents the ideal of parent-school collaboration, where parents not only support their individual children but also contribute to broader institutional decision-making and advocacy efforts. In some cases, highly engaged parents become important allies—acting as bridges between the school and the wider community. They not only support their own children but also raise awareness about inclusive education and advocate for better resources and policy improvements. However, such committed involvement remains relatively rare. The findings suggest that while these parents play a powerful role, their level of engagement is the exception rather than the norm. This points to the need for schools to create flexible strategies that allow for different levels of parental involvement, while still promoting meaningful collaboration whenever possible.

The lack of access to professional specialists remains an important dilemma in relation to inclusive education. Research indicates that schools do not have regular access to vital services provided by speech and occupational therapists and psychologists. This observation was stated by both the teachers and the administrators. The comments of P1 were representative of this gap:

*"We do not have means to access specialists like speech therapists, occupational therapists and psychologists."*

P2 also recounted,

*"Specialist support is one of our most important gaps."*

These accounts reveal more than the absence of speech therapy services; there is an important gap in knowledge that educators possess referring to the special skills needed to address educational needs in the process of instruction. Without specialist staff, educators bear the responsibility of addressing sophisticated student needs, which is neither sustainable nor

feasible. This affects the student's educational experience and outcome while adding to educator stress and burnout.

Even when available on a very limited basis, specialist support makes a significant impact. T5 described the impact quite well:

*“When we do get access to specialists, it makes a huge difference in how we can support our students.”*

In addition, specialists have skills and tools which aid in assessments, intervention techniques, individual therapy, and the application of assistive devices which teachers do not possess.

Moreover, the data indicates that when schools do access specialists, it's often through informal or temporary arrangements, not through structured and reliable systems. The lack of planning is why gaps in support programming logic exist. This approach is haphazard as it opens a gap between achieving key progress markers within projects. And aiming to support stimulus while lacking critical guidelines in meeting set goals results in services falling short of anticipating targets.

The direct partnerships and help from other community members can strengthen inclusivity within education, however the integration strategies employed exposes both deficiencies as well as challenges. While some schools have partnered with NGOs and other groups, these collaborations are often short-lived or poorly integrated into long-term strategic frameworks.

As P2 explained:

*“We have received training from Gudina Tumsa Organization, but it wasn't continuous.”*

This highlights both the value and the challenge of external support. Training from organizations can be helpful, but when it's delivered as a one-time event with no follow-up, its lasting impact is limited. Without ongoing engagement, schools are unable to build on initial efforts or develop consistent, sustainable practices.

P2 notes,

*"We don't have much collaborations with external stakeholders. It's a big gap to collaborate only what come to us"*

P1 said

*"several INGOs have build toilets and provide materials but are not in use"*

emphasizing the recognition among school leaders that external partnerships could significantly enhance their capacity to provide inclusive education. The lack of formal partnerships with NGOs, health professionals, government support teams, and community organizations means that schools are often left to address complex needs with limited resources and expertise.

### **4.3.2 Teacher Qualifications and Trainings**

#### **A. Pre-service and In-service Training: Adequacy of Teacher Preparation for Inclusive Classrooms**

Abune Baslios school data shows huge lacunas in both pre-service and in-service training on inclusive education. Many of the educators have openly acknowledged that their initial teacher preparation did not equip them to deal with the complexities of students with diverse needs.

A teacher shares,

*"Most regular teachers have not received any formal training related to inclusive education," (T3)*

This creates a basic difference that makes many people feel very worried. When given a child with special learning requirements, some teachers feel very worried or unable to help—not because they do not care, but since they truly do not know what to do.

This statements reveal that the lack of specialized training is not a matter of indifference, but it is a systemic shortcoming in teacher preparation programs.

The situation regarding in-service training is equally concerning. Teachers describe professional development opportunities as irregular and insufficient, with one noting,

Observations from the school environment reinforce these concerns, showing that training sessions do not occur or are often one-off events, once in long time organized by external organizations such as Gudina Tumsa Organization.

However, as T4 points out,

*"We have received training from Gudina Tumsa Organization, but it wasn't continuous."*

In addition, school principals were asked to explain the reasons behind the gap in in-service training. In response, they indicated that the primary challenge was a lack of resources. As one principal noted,

*"We do not have resources for the continuous training sessions."*

This reflects a broader issue of financial and logistical constraints, which prevent schools from organizing ongoing professional development programs for their teachers. Consequently, the absence of regular training opportunities undermines efforts to enhance teachers' capacity to implement inclusive education effectively.

Moreover, the trainings that are provided infrequently—typically only once a year—do not effectively achieve their intended objectives. Alarming, some teachers appeared uncertain or could not clearly recall whether they had received any training at all. One teacher remarked,

*"No, I have never had a training... oh, yes, I think training was given when we started the year. I think it was about inclusion."*

This highlights the lack of clarity, consistency, and impact of the training sessions. The limited trainings that are offered are not enough in both size and content. Instead of giving teachers useful, true-based ways for teaching students with special needs, these times mostly talk about general facts. Because of this, teachers are still not well ready to use inclusive ways in the classroom properly.

## **B: Inadequate Teacher Training**

While quality training is essential for promoting inclusive education, inadequate teacher preparation fosters a sense of incompetence among educators. This, in turn, hinders SNE learners from accessing quality education. Participants highlighted this issue as follows:

SNE 1 stated, *“our teachers aren’t capable of modifying lessons.”*

T3 added, *“Regular teachers in these school can’t communicate in sign language.”*

SNE 2, commented,

*“graduate students of special needs education have no mastery of Braille and sign language.”*

Consequently, quality education for SEN students is compromised. This brings out an extremely embedded issue in the teacher training institutions. They do not adequately prepare teachers to address students with varied abilities and backgrounds. Even those trained in special needs education do not have adequate skills in Braille and sign language. The training, particularly for in-service teachers, is neither well organized nor comprehensive enough to build competence in inclusive practice. Teacher quality and confidence which influence training on teachers' capacity to handle different needs. Insufficient training affects directly teacher quality and confidence in handling inclusive classrooms. The absence of continuous, hands-on training is a constant worry as one teacher says,

*“we often feel abandoned—expected to perform miracles with no tools or preparation.”*  
(T5)

This sense of abandonment is not just about training, but also about the absence of practical resources and sustained support that would enable teachers to develop and maintain their competence.

Another major issue is the gap between policy and practice which again lowers teacher confidence. A good number of teachers have expressed uncertainty about or knowledge of no explicit inclusive education policies.

T6 admits,

*“I don't know much about the existing policies,”*

which evidently suggests that even when frameworks exist they are not effectively communicated or trickled down to the classroom level. This disconnect further undermines teachers' confidence and ability to apply those strategies effectively in their day-to-day practice.

### **C: Continuous Professional Development**

Ongoing learning and support opportunities focus group discussions reveal that the teachers want continuous professional development in a more systematic way. They underscore the urgency for regular, practical, and accessible training opportunities.

*"Ongoing, practical teacher training is mandatory. Teachers can't be expected to deliver effective inclusive education without the right skills." (SNE 2)*

“One of the things we need most is real support—not just once-off training but a system that backs us up continuously,” one participant explained, highlighting the shared need among educators for long-term guidance and institutional commitment.

A major concern raised by many teachers is the lack of consistency in professional development. While occasional workshops are offered, they often lack follow-up or relevance to teachers' daily classroom challenges. Without continued support, the benefits of these sessions tend to fade quickly. Teachers spoke about their need for not just initial instruction but ongoing mentorship and skill-building opportunities that evolve with their experience. Many also pointed out the importance of incentives and flexible support systems that encourage participation and growth.

The data clearly point to widespread gaps in teacher preparation when it comes to inclusive education. Teachers often feel underprepared to meet the needs of learners with disabilities, citing minimal exposure during their training and limited opportunities afterward. There's a need for professional development that is both sustained and practical—training that doesn't just raise awareness of policies, but equips educators with the skills and confidence to put inclusion into practice. Without that, the goals of inclusive education remain out of reach, and the quality of teaching suffers.

Interestingly, holding advanced degrees, such as a master's, doesn't necessarily mean teachers are ready to support students with special needs. Some teachers may understand the

theory behind inclusive education, but they struggle with the practical side—how to adapt lessons, how to communicate effectively, and how to make the classroom welcoming for every student. In fact, a few participants noted that even those with specialized training in SNE sometimes lack empathy or real commitment to inclusion. As one teacher put it,

*“You can have all the qualifications, but if you don’t care, it will not be fruitful.”*

Another major obstacle is the limited access to affordable training. Teachers shared that most programs related to special needs education are either too expensive, too far away, or scheduled at times that don’t work with their jobs. Numerous individuals indicated that their family and work schedules made it impossible for them to attend training sessions except on weekends or during school holidays. One teacher put it very starkly:

*“We want to learn more, but how do we do that when we can’t pay to be away from work or pay the exorbitant fees?”*

Teachers also expressed concern regarding the allocation of resources actually spent—or rather not spent—because training has not been conducted. One teacher remarked, “We have materials that can serve as instructional materials in the lesson, but we have put them in some storage boxes because we do not know how to put themed units together.” It was noted in several classrooms that some of the special needs teachers did not have some basic competencies like Braille or sign language crucial for instructing deaf or blind students.

The classroom observations highlighted another troubling fact: SNE students often do not receive equal opportunities to participate. Most of the time, the problem was not a shortage of resources, but the understanding and awareness from the teachers, in this case, an oversight. At one school, Joint Vision Success Academy, some staff were actually fired because of how they dealt with students with special needs. One such case was of teachers calling these students “zegemetegochu” which is a deeply insulting term demonstrating severe disrespect and stereotypes. Attitudes like this not only damage students’ confidence but also reinforce the very barriers inclusive education aims to dismantle.

### **4.3.3 Resource Availability and Funding**

#### **A: Inadequate and Insufficient Teaching Materials**

Multiple participants highlight a critical shortage of appropriate teaching aids and learning materials necessary for effective inclusive education. For instance, a principal from JVSA states:

*"Teaching materials are in short supply. What we have is barely enough for general education, let alone the tailored materials required for students with disabilities." (P2)*

This quote reveals that the existing resources in schools are not only insufficient for the general student population but are even less adequate for students with disabilities who require specialized materials. The lack of visual aids, sensory tools, Braille materials, and adapted books means that teachers are unable to deliver lessons in ways that are accessible to all learners. As a result, students with disabilities are often left behind, and teachers are forced to improvise, sometimes using their own money or creativity to fill the gaps—an unsustainable and inequitable solution.

Similarly, teachers from ABPS emphasize:

*"We don't have the specialized teaching aids that many of our learners need—no Braille materials, no assistive technologies, not even enough visual aids or manipulatives." (SNE 4)*

This further illustrates the systemic neglect of providing essential tools for inclusive education. The absence of assistive devices like hearing aids, tactile books, or communication aids directly limits the scope of inclusive practices, often forcing teachers to improvise or rely on personal resources, which is neither sustainable nor equitable.

The researcher explores constraints in teaching materials, assistive devices, and educational resources needed for inclusive practices.

#### Resource Availability and Management

Resource limitations are a critical concern at both institutions, albeit with varying degrees of impact. At Joint Vision Success Academy interviews with school leader highlighted:

*"We struggle with severe shortages of basic teaching materials adapted for special needs. Our library lacks Braille books and audio resources, and we can't afford to maintain or replace assistive devices."*

On the other hand Abune Baslios school administrator noted

*“we have some materials in the store that are donated and provided by the government but not utilized since delivered to us ”*

T 3elaborated on these constraints:

*"Creating individualized learning materials is almost impossible due to the lack of resources."*

Observational data further exposed classroom realities Limited availability of assistive devices and improvised teaching aids noted across several classrooms.

The lack of assistive devices and technological support is explicitly noted:

*"We do not have sufficient assistive technology, such as screen readers or special keyboards for students with physical disabilities. There's also a lack of teaching aids—like tactile books, learning apps, or communication boards."*

*(JVSA SNE 4)*

This quote points to the absence of modern tools that could bridge the gap for students with sensory or physical disabilities. Without these technologies, students are unable to access the curriculum on an equal footing, and teachers are left without the means to differentiate instruction effectively.

## **B: Human Resources (Specialized Staff, Teacher-Student Ratios, Support Personnel)**

The shortage of specialized staff and the overwhelming teacher-student ratios are also prominent concerns. One teacher notes:

*"The main challenge is the lack of adequate support for SNE students due to high workloads and a shortage of SNE professionals."(T2)*

This highlights how the lack of trained special needs educators and support staff means that general classroom teachers are left to manage diverse needs on their own, often without the necessary expertise. This not only increases teacher stress but also diminishes the quality of support that students with disabilities receive.

Class sizes often exceed 90 students, making individualized attention and the development of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) nearly impossible:

*"Due to 90 students in each class, we don't have time to develop IEPs."*

*(T5)*

This quote illustrates the practical impossibility of providing tailored support in such crowded environments. Teachers are unable to give students with disabilities the attention they need, and the quality of education for all students suffers as a result.

The lack of assistant teachers and support staff directly impacts the quality of inclusive education:

*"We try to support students individually, based on their needs, but with the large class sizes, that's nearly impossible to do effectively."*

*(T8 and T6)*

This indicates that the ratio of support personnel to students is grossly inadequate, making individualized attention and support for students with disabilities unfeasible.

## **C: Financial Resources (Funding, Budget Allocation, Government Support)**

### **Insufficient and Delayed Funding**

Multiple stakeholders articulate frustrations regarding the inadequacy and unreliability of financial support. The principal of P1 School Principal states:

*"There is a lack of attention from the government. Our school is government-led, so resources are allocated directly from there. Most of our requests concerning students with disabilities go unanswered or are significantly delayed."*

This observation highlights a disconnect between the allocation of resources and the actual needs of schools, a situation made worse by frequent delays and limited funding.

The absence of dedicated budgets for infrastructure improvements, assistive devices, and ongoing professional development significantly restricts the ability of schools to fully implement inclusive education.

One of the major consequences of these funding shortfalls is the slow and often incomplete progress in improving infrastructure—such as building ramps, adapting restrooms, and modifying classrooms to meet the needs of all students. For instance, the principal of JVSA shared:

*“In recent years, we have constructed ramps, and we plan to expand on this in the coming year.”*

While this indicates some movement in the right direction, the continued need for expansion and regular maintenance remains unmet due to tight financial constraints.

#### **4.3.4: Potential Strategies to Overcome these Challenges**

##### **A: Improving Infrastructure and Resource Allocation**

It include proposed solutions by teachers and SNE professionals for enhancing physical infrastructure and resource management.

##### **Proposed Infrastructure Improvements**

Joint Vision Success Academy and Abune Baslios teachers and administrators suggested several strategies:

*"In my opinion we need a phased renovation plan to make our facilities accessible."*

*"Partnering more with INGOs could help fund essential infrastructure modifications like the toilets which was builded earlier."*

*"Creating a resource mobilization committee could help address immediate needs."*

*"i think we have to starts with basic modifications like ramps and handrails would make a significant difference."*

*"Establishing a dedicated resource room with essential learning materials."*

*"Regular audit of facility needs helps prioritize improvements."*

*"Community partnerships will help fund specialized equipment."*

##### **B: Enhancing Training and Capacity Building**

Professional development and skill enhancement strategies proposed by both schools. Joint Vision Success Academy and Abune Baslios teachers and administrators emphasized:

*"Regular in-service training programs are essential for all teachers."*  
*"We need specialized workshops focusing on different types of disabilities."*  
*"Collaboration with special education experts could enhance our capacity."*  
*"affordable and accessible ongoing training should be meet especially for teachers like us who can not pay to training s"*  
*"Peer learning sessions could help share effective teaching strategies."*  
*"Online training resources could supplement formal training programs."*  
*"Practical workshops focusing on classroom management techniques."*  
*"Regular professional development sessions keep staff updated."*  
*"Partnerships with special education institutions provide valuable expertise."*

### **C: Strengthening Policy Implementation**

Both schools identified key approaches. Joint Vision Success Academy and Abune Baslios administrators suggested:

*"Creating clear implementation guidelines adapted to our context."*  
*"Establishing monitoring mechanisms to track progress."*  
*"Regular review and adaptation of implementation strategies."*  
*"Regular stakeholder meetings help address implementation challenges."*  
*"Flexible adaptation of policies based on school-specific needs."*

### **D: Boosting Community and Parental Engagement**

Enhancing parent and community participation is regarded as one of the core enablers of successful implementation of inclusive education. Both Joint Vision Success Academy and Abune Baslios School suggested a number of strategies aimed at enhancing this collaboration. They suggested the following activities:

*"Increasing parent knowledge of inclusive education by hosting regular awareness sessions"*  
*"Fostering local support for community outreach programs that promote inclusiveness"*  
*"Encouraging inclusive practices by persuading parents in inclusion resource mobilization."*

*“Conducting school-wide observances that promote awareness and acceptance of students with special needs.”*

*“Collaborating with local stakeholders to strengthen the support system for inclusive education.”*

These strategies aim not only to inform and engage stakeholders but also promote an all-embracing attitude that stretches beyond the classroom walls into the society.

### **E: Responding to Challenges of Overcrowding and Space Availability**

These physical constraints associated with limited space and large class sizes were highlighted as additional challenges by both schools. Teachers and administrators from all sides agreed that overcrowded classrooms make inclusion very difficult and offered many suggestions that were inventive.

Joint Vision Success Academy and Abune Baslios School offered the following institutional strategies:

*“Planning modifications to classroom layouts to better accommodate students with diverse physical and learning needs.”*

*“Developing mobile learning units that can be moved and shared across classrooms.”*

*“Using small group learning techniques to better manage space and provide more focused support.”*

These solutions reflect the schools’ efforts to work within existing limitations while still striving to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter offers analysis of the study's main findings, with a focus on how they relate to the existing literature. The discussion is structured around the major themes that constructed after the data collection process.

### **5.2 Challenges hindering the effective implementation of inclusive education**

The study revealed that one of the most significant barriers to implementing inclusive education is the presence of structural and systemic limitations. Many schools—particularly those in under-resourced areas—lack even the most basic infrastructure needed to support students with disabilities. Features such as ramps, wide doorways, and accessible bathrooms are often missing, making it difficult for learners with physical challenges to fully participate in school life. These results are consistent with Meher (2023), noting that a lack of accessible educational opportunities for students with disabilities continues to be compounded by the gaps in infrastructure. Pearl (2024) asserts that it is extremely difficult for society to adopt inclusive education when disability is understood as a deficit instead of a variation of human diversity. This position is also supported by Avoke (2010), who noted that effective inclusion is dependent not only on policy changes, but also attitudinal shifts at the societal level. Remarkably, these problems are not only confined to rural or under-resourced areas. Schools in urban settings such as Addis Ababa face both infrastructural rooted cultural misconceptions, contrary to the assumption that urban areas are ready for inclusive practices.

The study also uncovered a noticeable gap between the country's inclusive education policies and how they are actually implemented in schools. Many school leaders and teachers expressed confusion about what the policies really mean in practice. These findings support Vindigni (2024), who argues that vague policy language often leads to inconsistent interpretation and application.

Even when policies are clear, enforcement remains weak. This concern is echoed by Sarker and Unzum (2023), who found that without proper follow-up or monitoring, even well-intended policies fail to produce real change. Tirussew (2005) similarly pointed out that in

Ethiopia, many education policies are more aspirational than actionable due to a lack of technical and logistical support. What this study adds is the observation that the issue isn't just lack of awareness—it's also a structural disconnect between those writing the policies and those expected to implement them.

A recurring issue in the study was the lack of effective collaboration among key stakeholders, including teachers, parents, school leaders, and local communities. Teachers noted that they rarely engaged with parents in meaningful ways, and that community involvement in inclusive efforts was minimal. These findings align with those of Pearl (2024), who found that disjointed communication between stakeholders slows the adoption of inclusive practices.

Ainscow and Sandill (2010) argue that meaningful inclusion relies on teamwork and shared problem-solving. This study reinforces that view by demonstrating how fostering bottom-up collaboration enables scaling inclusivity rather than imposing it top down. A critical concern emerging from the findings is lack of structured community participation and sustained awareness raising. Schools, as noted, struggle to meaningfully engage all stakeholders without these elements and demonstrate that a coordinated, holistic approach is needed where everyone is part of the educational system ecosystem.

### **5.3 Teacher Qualifications, Training, and Professional Development**

The study reveals another critical challenge: the unpreparedness of teachers to facilitate inclusive education. Most of the interviewed teachers acknowledged that they had little to no training, either during their pedagogical education or through post-graduate professional development, on how to handle learners with specialized needs. Such neglect of training results in inadequate preparation and leaves these teachers feeling unsupported in their instructional environments. These findings are corroborated by Sarker and Unzum (2023), who noted that teachers from many low-income countries struggle with similar problems due to the lack of access to pertinent professional development resources focused on inclusive education.

This problem is worsened by the fact that when professional development programs are offered, they do not focus on inclusive classrooms. This supports Florian and Black-Hawkins' (2011) claim that effective inclusivity in teaching is predicated on having the appropriate resources to flexible, adaptive strategies.

Unlike in high-income countries where regular training is the norm (Sharma & Loreman, 2014), most Ethiopian teachers are left to navigate inclusive classrooms without adequate support, underscoring the urgent need for investment in teacher capacity building.

#### **5.4 Resource Availability and Funding**

The availability of resources both financial and material—was another major challenge identified in this study. Many schools lack even basic assistive tools or teaching materials suitable for students with disabilities. This supports findings from Pearl (2024) and Panda & Meher (2023), who also stress that inadequate funding stifles progress toward meaningful inclusion.

Eleweke and Rodda (2002) noted that the biggest divide between inclusive policy and practice lies in how resources are allocated. The current study reinforces that point, showing how budget shortfalls, especially in public schools, leave teachers and administrators unable to meet students' needs. Ainscow and Miles (2008) have long argued that inclusion requires investment at all levels not just in policies, but in the tools and people that bring those policies to life.

#### **5.5 Solutions for Overcoming Challenges**

Study participants offered a number of practical suggestions to the barriers related to inclusion. A commonly suggested strategy was ongoing, practical, and customized training for inclusive classrooms. Burningham et al. (2024) argue that teachers professionally trained for actual work need to be provided with the adequate, relevant tools associated with diverse and dynamic learning environments. This proposition is supported by Booth and Ainscow (2011), who suggest that inclusive education should be viewed as a whole school change initiative, encompassing not only pedagogy but also leadership, school ethos, and communal values. The findings from this study strongly support the need of these claims with regard to solicited supportive leadership and institutional commitment towards inclusive policies.

Reformulation of policies emerged as one of the most important strategical recommendations. Policies are not defined using clear-cut boundaries; participants emphasized the need for stronger monitoring and clearer implementation rules which were in Vindigni's (2024) focus on the need to make policies doable and definable. Investment on finances as well

as active collaborations with the communities were also highlighted to ensure uninterrupted positive change or development, which was also the vision put forward by UNESCO (2020) for systemic change with a focus on equity informed transformation).

These findings can be explained using Bronfenbrenner's systems approach ecological theory. At micro, lack of teacher training and negative social relations amongst peers were seen as day to day obstacles. At the mesosystem level, weak bonds between families and schools showcased wider community attitudes, which is a phenomenon highlighted by Mekonnen et al. (2023). At exosystem level, active policy under-support from managers, lack of specialists' contribution, were noted. Policy covers and social biases deeply embedded on culture are macro level issues. All these are in close alignment with RISE (2022) which found out that Ethiopia, in als gave with a policies framed by inclusion actively, suffers in issues of implementing those policies on the ground in practice.

Additionally, these findings fit with the disability rights based approach which views policies designed as inaccessible not as gap in services, but rather violation of a person's freedoms. This is supported by UNICEF (2018) reinforces this, urging a shift from symbolic inclusion to practical action. At the chronosystem level—representing change over time—the study found limited long-term progress, supporting Bronfenbrenner's view that meaningful inclusion requires change at all levels of the system.

## **CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Summary of Major Findings**

This research looked into the problems of putting inclusive education into practice at Joint Vision Success Academy and Abune Baslios Primary School within Woreda 01, Kolfe Keranio Sub-city of Addis Ababa.

The schools' lack of ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms. Furthermore, the overcrowded classes especially at Abune Baslios where classes surpassed 90 students made it almost impossible to provide tailored support.

Another issue of great concern was teacher's preparedness. A great number of teachers reported having little or no training in inclusion. Most did not possess skills in Braille and sign language and there were limited or no opportunities for advancement. These problems were further complicated by the absence of qualified professionals in special needs education.

The study also covered a significant gap between policy and practice. While teachers and administrators were not generally aware of national inclusive education policies, few felt they had the guidance or support needed to implement them effectively. Challenges such as rigid school schedules, lack of clarity, and weak monitoring systems added to the difficulty.

Stakeholder awareness, especially parents of SEN students was reported by teachers to be limited. Many families lacked information and time for their SEN children, which often led to low engagement and participation for follow up with challenging environment for implementation of inclusive education.

These solutions encompassed enhancing infrastructure, increasing training for teachers, tailoring policy to local context, building stronger partnerships with communities, and applying out-of-the-box thinking to the utilization of space.

### **6.2 Conclusion**

These research is conducted on the challenges of implementing inclusive education in two schools which are found in Kolfe Keranio subcity worda one JVSA and ABPS private and public schools respectively. The study was conducted to answer the research questions how do teachers qualifications and training impact the implementation of inclusive education in schools, how do resource availability and funding impact the implementation of inclusive education in schools and what strategies should be employed to overcome these challenges and implement effective inclusive education practices. In order to study the researcher employed qualitative approach and used descriptive design for the study. Data collection was made through interview and observations then analyzed by thematic data analysis. From the general population 8 teachers, 4 SNE professionals and 2 school principals were participated in the study teachers were selected based on criteria. Based on the findings, several conclusions can be made: Teaching preparedness deficiency: In the absence of periodic, practical training, teachers express feeling equipped to address the myriad of needs emanating from the students' diverse backgrounds. Not enough resources: Some of the biggest problems are not having enough money in the budget and not having some of the tools and materials that are needed. Infrastructure needs attention: The sooner the better adding ramps and handrails, even the most basic changes, makes things a lot easier to get to.

Getting stakeholders involved is very important: When parents, community members, and local groups work together, they can get more motivation and resources.

Policy tools need to be calibrated: Policies should be clear and include ideas that deal with inclusion in a more direct and useful way. There is a need to use clear, flexible policies that outlines enabling frameworks accompanied by vigorous monitoring and guidance frameworks.

Holistic approach works best: These factors should be tackled together as they provide all-round benefits; inclusive education provides better enduring results followed by a curriculum provided with infrastructure, the community, and the aim of teacher training.

## **6.3 Recommendations**

### **For school administrative and government**

#### **A. Invest in Teacher Training and Professional Growth**

- Conduct regular, hands-on training on inclusive teaching strategies.
- Partner with universities, NGOs, and experts for coaching and mentoring.
- Leverage digital tools and peer-learning networks for accessible, ongoing learning.

#### **B. Improve School Infrastructure and Use Resources Wisely**

- Start with low-cost upgrades such as ramps and handrails.
- Form school committees to coordinate fundraising and donor outreach.
- Routinely assess infrastructure and prioritize essential improvements.

### **For teachers and SNE professionals**

#### **A. Strengthen Community and Parental Involvement**

- Organize awareness campaigns to educate the community on inclusive education.
- Engage parents in school planning, fundraising, and volunteering.
- Build alliances with local groups to extend support for students and families.

#### **B. Adapt Curriculum and Integrate Technology**

- Modify curricula to allow for differentiated instruction and assessments.
- Use assistive technology and digital tools to support accessibility and inclusion.
- Provide teachers with training and technical support to implement these tools effectively.

#### **C. Make Policy Work on the Ground**

- Develop practical, context-specific guidelines for policy implementation.
- Create feedback loops and monitoring systems to track progress and share best practices.
- Ensure policies are not just flexible but also enforceable and supported with real resources.

#### **D. Address Overcrowding and Optimize Space**

- Use flexible scheduling, mobile learning setups, and repurposed areas to ease space constraints.
- Encourage small-group learning models to better meet individual student needs.

#### **6.4 Directions for Future Research**

The ways in which teacher training impacts classroom practices and learners in an inclusive setting over a longer period of time requires further exploring. There may also be relevance in looking at how changes in school facilities affect marking and access to the school. Moreover, involving communities in the construction of frameworks on inclusion, particularly in resource-poor areas, may present new opportunities for deepening the impact of inclusive education.

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## **Appendix A**

**Addis Ababa University**  
**College of Education and Behavioral Studies**  
**Department of Special Needs and Inclusive Education**

**Invitation to Participate in Research Study**

Dear .....,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Hana Etana Dinka, and I am conducting a research study as part of my Master's degree in Special Needs and Inclusive Education at Addis Ababa University. The study has received approval from the Department of Special Needs and aims to explore the challenges and Challenges to implementing inclusive education in Kolfe Keranio Sub-city woreda 1, Addis Ababa.

You have been identified as a potential participant due to your valuable experience and expertise in inclusive education. I would like to invite you to participate in this study, where your insights and perspectives will contribute significantly to understanding the factors that impact inclusive education. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

The study involves an interview lasting approximately 40 minutes at a time and place convenient for you. If you choose to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accurate data collection. Any information you provide will remain strictly confidential, and your identity will not be disclosed in any publications resulting from this study. However, anonymous quotations may be used with your permission.

If you agree to participate, I will ask you to sign the consent form on the next page. I sincerely appreciate your time and willingness to contribute to this research. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Addis Ababa University**  
**College of Education and Behavioral Studies**  
**Department of Special Needs and Inclusive Education**

**CONSENT FORM**

I have read and understood the information provided in the study information letter regarding the research on challenges in implementing inclusive education in Ethiopia. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, receive satisfactory answers, and provide any additional input I deemed necessary.

I understand that my interview may be audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of my responses. I also acknowledge that excerpts from my interview may be used in research publications, with the assurance that my identity will remain anonymous.

I have been informed that I can withdraw my consent at any time without any consequences by notifying the researcher. With full awareness of the above, I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

**Participant's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Name:** Hana Etana Dinka

**Researcher's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B**

### **The Interview guide for school principal**

1. How aware are educators and the local community about the rights of children with disabilities to education?
2. Have there been awareness programs or initiatives to promote inclusive education? If so, how effective have they been?
3. Has the Education Bureau developed clear guidelines to implement inclusive education? If so, how well are these guidelines being followed in schools?
4. Do you think the national curricula are flexible and sensitive enough to accommodate students with disabilities?
5. What are the major challenges that schools and teachers face in implementing inclusive education?
6. Are the competencies and expertise available in the school being effectively utilized to support inclusive education?
7. What is the current practice of implementing inclusive education in your school?
8. Do you have a dedicated budget for students with disabilities?
9. What specific efforts are made to provide equal access to education for students with disabilities?
10. Is the school practicing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with special needs? If so, how effective is it?
11. Do you believe that inclusive education improves the academic achievement of students with disabilities? Why or why not?
12. Do you think students with disabilities benefit from being included in general education classrooms? What are the advantages and challenges?
13. What strategies and solutions do you recommend at the national and regional levels to overcome Challenges and ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education?

## Appendix C

### Guiding questions to facilitate teachers' Interview

- 2) How accessible are resources and facilities to enable students with special needs to participate fully in school activities?
- 3) Has the Education Bureau developed clear strategies or guidelines to implement inclusive education? How are they being applied in schools?
- 4) Do you think current education policies and curriculum effectively support students with disabilities? What improvements would you suggest?
- 5) What are the major constraints and difficulties faced in implementing inclusive education in your school?
- 6) How do you manage the challenges of teaching children with disabilities in your class? Can you describe a typical day in your classroom?
- 7) Do you feel that teachers receive sufficient training and support to effectively teach students with disabilities?
- 8) Do you apply differentiated lesson planning to recognize and accommodate the learning needs of students with disabilities? If yes, how?
- 9) What education delivery modes are currently used for children with special needs? Which type of delivery do you suggest for children with disabilities?
- 10) How do you foster a positive classroom culture that encourages students with disabilities to participate and perform well?
- 11) How do peer groups interact with students with disabilities? Do you provide any lessons or guidance to promote inclusion?
- 12) What strategies and policy changes would you recommend to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education in the future?

## **Appendix D**

### **Questions for SNE Professionals**

- 1) What do you think are the biggest problems have when it comes to including students with disabilities in their classes?
- 2) How would you rate the general education teachers' readiness and ability to help students with special needs?
- 3) How accessible and helpful are school buildings (like classrooms, bathrooms, and learning materials) for students with different kinds of disabilities?
- 4) What kinds of in-service or per-service training can teachers take to get better at teaching in an inclusive way? Do these trainings work?
- 5) In your opinion, how well do schools put into practice policies that promote inclusive education? What differences do you see between policy and practice?
- 6) Do you think the current school curriculum is flexible enough to accommodate pupils with different learning needs? Why, or why not?
- 7) How would you describe the collaboration among SNE professionals, general education teachers, and school administrators to promote inclusive education?
- 8) Are the resources (financial, human, and material) dedicated to inclusive education sufficient? If not, which are the most critical shortages?
- 9) How do views from teachers, students, and parents influence the effectiveness of inclusive education in your community?
- 10) What techniques or interventions have you seen or implemented that have effectively reduced obstacles to inclusion for students with disabilities?

## Appendix E

### Observation checklist

#### Abune Baslios school

##### Observation checklist

S.no	Observation Points	Yes	no	remark
1	Does the school physical setting is suitable for students with disabilities		*	
2	Does students with disabilities participate in the extracurricular clubs		*	
3	Does teachers practice different method of teaching and evaluation method recognizing the needs of students		*	
4	Does teachers have differentiated lesson plan considering the diversified needs of students		*	
5	Is there a presence of adapted physical exercise for students with disabilities during physical education period		*	
6	Is there a presence of different teaching & supportive materials in the library and the resource room		*	
7	Is there the presence of different documents & guide lines in the school administration which facilitate inclusion in the school	*		
8	Does the school have organized data about students with different disabilities		*	
9	Does the school employ practice of learner- centered approach in the classroom		*	
10	Is there peer support of students with different disabilities	*		
11	Is there access of teaching material for students with disabilities	*		
12	Is the class room size and the seating arrangement suitable for students with disabilities		*	
13	Does the school have special needs activities in the resource room		*	
14	Is there adequate Provision of teaching materials for students	*		
15	Are activities modified to meet a variety of children`s needs		*	
16	Does teachers allow and encourage students to express themselves to ask or answer questions.	*		
17	Does the school professionals treat all students with respect		*	

**Joint Vision Success Academy school  
Observation checklist**

S.no	Observation Points	Yes	no	remark
1	Does the school physical setting is suitable for students with disabilities		*	
2	Does students with disabilities participate in the extracurricular clubs		*	
3	Does teachers practice different method of teaching and evaluation method recognizing the needs of students	*		
4	Does teachers have differentiated lesson plan considering the diversified needs of students	*		
5	Is there a presence of adapted physical exercise for students with disabilities during physical education period	*		
6	Is there a presence of different teaching & supportive materials in the library and the resource room		*	
7	Is there the presence of different documents & guide lines in the school administration which facilitate inclusion in the school	*		
8	Does the school have organized data about students with different disabilities	*		
9	Does the school employ practice of learner- centered approach in the classroom	*		
10	Is there peer support of students with different disabilities	*		
11	Is there access of teaching material for students with disabilities		*	
12	Is the class room size and the seating arrangement suitable for students with disabilities	*		
13	Does the school have special needs activities in the resource room		*	
14	Is there adequate Provision of teaching materials for students		*	
15	Are activities modified to meet a variety of children`s needs	*		
16	Does teachers allow and encourage students to express themselves to ask or answer questions.	*		
17	Does the school professionals treat all students with respect	*		