



College of Education and Behavioral Studies

Department of Special Needs and Inclusive Education

The Role and Challenges of Special Needs Education Teachers in
Implementing Inclusive Education: The Case of Kokeb Tsibah and
Dagmawi Minilik Secondary Schools

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DECLARATION

I the undersigned, declare that this thesis entitled (The role and challenges of special needs education teachers in implementing inclusive education. Yeka & Arada Sub City, Addis Ababa City Administration) is my original work and that all sources of materials used for this research have been accordingly acknowledged.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAU - Addis Ababa University

CEDS - College of Education and Behavioral Studies

SNE - Special Needs Education

SNET - Special Needs Education Teacher

IE - Inclusive Education

UDHR - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

FDRE - Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

MOE - Ministry of Education

SEN - Special Educational Needs

TVET - Technical and Vocational Education and Training

ESDP - Education Sector Development Program

IEP - Individualized Education Plan

FGD - Focus Group Discussion

SNET - Special Needs Education Teacher

CWDS - Children with Disabilities

SWSN - Students with Special Needs

GBV - Gender-Based Violence

NCDA - National Council on Disabilities Affairs

SNE/IE - Special Needs Education/Inclusive Education

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals

AIE - Areas of Inclusive Education

Abstract

The objective of this study was to investigate the roles and challenges faced by special needs education teachers in implementing inclusive education in two government secondary schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. A qualitative research approach specifically a case study design was applied. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of 8 students with disabilities; 4 special needs education teachers, and 2 school principals. Semi-structured interview and focus group discussion were used as the data collection tools, and the data were analyzed by categorizing the data into four thematic areas. The findings revealed that special needs education teachers play a critical role in promoting inclusive education. The study findings identified that special needs education teachers faced significant challenges, including attitudinal barriers, lack of job description, resource and budget shortages. The study emphasized that job descriptions, collaboration between special needs education teachers and regular teachers, appropriate resource allocation, and ongoing training are needed to optimize the role of special needs education teachers in fostering inclusive education and to ensure that the rights and needs of students with disabilities are met in an inclusive educational setting. The study recommended that in order to increase special needs education teachers role in assisting students with disabilities, employers like educational sectors should provide clear job descriptions, promote collaboration, allocate resources appropriately, and provide continuous training.

Keywords: *Roles and challenges of special needs education teachers, Qualitative research*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 (2) (UDHR, 1948:P.7) states that education is "key for the maintenance of peace and shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups.

UNESCO (2005) states that education is seen as a tool to support everyone's human growth and functioning, irrespective of obstacles of any kind, whether they be structural or not. Disability, as a physical, social, and/or emotional aspect of human diversity, cannot, therefore, be a bar to entry. By addressing the range of needs of all students, including those who are susceptible to marginalization and exclusion, inclusion entails embracing a broad vision of Education for All. This is why the Salamanca statement (1994) says that "No matter what obstacles or differences they may have, all children should learn together, wherever possible."

The government of Ethiopia embraced and ratified international trends and practices based on international human rights instruments and documents. It also adopted policy and programmatic documents that are disability specific and mainstreamed, promoting the inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular school system (UNC, 2006). This covers the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP II) and its implementing documents, the Special Needs and Inclusive Education Program Strategies that were adopted and revised in 2006, 2012, and 2023, the 2008 National TVET Strategy, the 2016 Master Plan of Inclusive Education, and the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on June 1, 2010 by the Ethiopian Parliament, which became a national law through Proclamation Number 676/2010as per the FDRE Constitution 9(4).

However, research on inclusive education conducted in Ethiopia's context has shown that there is a significant gap between policy and practice when it comes to meeting the needs and rights of children with disabilities in terms of their education (Abebe, 2015).

Inclusive education requires recognizing impairment as one of many forms of human diversity, and welcoming and viewing diversity as a resource rather than a problem. Therefore, inclusive education creates a situation where all children can be valued and experience a sense of belonging and where all children are encouraged to reach their full potential in all areas of development (Oliver “&” Barnes, 2010).

Inclusive education for students with special educational needs does not happen by itself. The success of teaching students with special educational needs is influenced by a number of factors. These factors range from the commitment, role and responsibilities of the stakeholders such as school staff management, teachers and parents to pedagogical approaches and support in the classroom (Avramidis et al., 2002). But, among all of these elements, special needs education teachers hold the key to success.

The reality that the role and responsibility of special needs education professionals is profusely recognized and enumerated in relevant international and domestic policy and legal frameworks adopted for the promotion and implementation of inclusive education (Abebe, 2015).

Special needs education teachers are required to put their role into practice by implementing the art of consultation and establishing collaborative working relationships all relevant staff of the regular schools where inclusive education is operational. Recently adopted International and Domestic inclusive education policy frameworks, directives and guidelines strongly recommend schools to facilitate cooperation between special needs education and regular teachers in planning, preparing and diversifying instruction through sharing resources, solving problems, adapting learning materials and modifying curriculum content to facilitate the achievement of curriculum objectives for all students (Villa et al. 2005; Quigney, 2009; Solis et al. 2012; Todd 2012). Certainly, the role of special needs education teachers’ is a key to the success or failure of inclusion in the school where students with disabilities are attending their study with their non – disabled peers. As the instructional leaders of the school, special needs education teachers should have a workable understanding of both relevant laws, policies and programmatic documents that promote special needs education as a specific program and the education center and they are expected to work with varied curricula and methods in delivering instructional services to increasingly diverse school populations (Praisner, 2000). SNIE teachers’ role is to focus their duties within the inclusion practices that encompass the alignment of the goals of the

inclusive education policy and the SNIE teacher is a vital partner in the development and success of inclusive education (Valliant, 2011).

Depending on the context and resources available, special needs education teachers face different challenges when implementing inclusive education in their schools. These challenges include a lack of training and professional development, lack of or scarcity of SNE teachers, limited resources, negative attitudes and beliefs about disabilities, and limited collaboration among stakeholders (Alquraini “&” Gut, 2012).

Hence, considering the irreplaceable role of special needs education teachers and the challenges they may face in the course of the implementation of the inclusive education, the study aims to conduct contextual analysis on the situation how the targeted special needs education teachers have been discharging their role and responsibility and overcome the challenges they may encounter in implementing inclusive education in the study schools.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The successful implementation of inclusive practice is largely relied up on the commitment of special needs education teachers. As special needs education teachers have the main responsibility for implementing inclusive education policy being guided by relevant policy frameworks and programmatic documents, their commitment, professional expertise and diligence are critical in ensuring the success of inclusive practice (Shade “&” Stewart, 2001; WHO, 2011).

Special needs education teachers are responsible for educational arrangements and related issues concerning pupils with special educational needs (Abbott, 2007; Cole, 2005; Mackenzie, 2007). They are responsible for identifying, assessing, overseeing and co-coordinating all special educational needs. In addition, they prepare individual education plans and provide guidance and support for regular teachers. They work in conjunction with a wide range of assistants, parents and therapists. All of this requires excellent organizational and problem-solving skills (Abbott, 2007).

Special education teachers have responsibility for such tasks as to implement special needs education implementation policy, and to have opportunities to influence whole-school policy (Layton, 2005; Shuttle worth, 2000; Szwed, 2007). Because special needs education covers a

number of focus areas, and its framework and content are not clear to everyone involved in the teaching and learning process of a sector. The role of special needs education teachers is wide and has widened. They carry out their role in diverse settings, with considerable variations in how their role is interpreted (Mackenzie et.al, 2007). They operate in increasingly complex contexts within very different management structures (Szwed, 2007). Special needs education teachers have been considered as key facilitators in tearing down barriers and developing approaches that accommodate the divergent needs of students (Emanuelsson 2001; Wasburn, Moses, 2005; Ramberg, 2001, Todd, 2012).

Special needs education teachers are appointed as ‘extras’ within an already predefined system and are expected unaided to resolve many dilemmas regarding their professional role and identity. On the one hand, they have to build their professional status and secure their position within the teaching staff by maintaining their expertise in providing individual instructional support and, on the other, to serve as mediators for the inclusive policy implementation that involves partially abandoning their specialism in favor of working jointly with their mainstream associates to meet the students’ needs (Crowther, Dyson “&”Millward, 2001). The ambiguity of role is the major challenges of special needs education teachers they had to face in their everyday practice. Lack of a legislative framework and official guidelines concerning the role and duties of the special needs education teachers resulted in a series of further problems with regular schools (Vlachou”&”Didaskalou, 2015).

Internationally and nationally supportive studies were conducted such as: Shevchenko (2020) stated that the role of special needs education teachers in the organization of inclusive education of primary school students is a key one due to the high level of inclusion of primary school students at public schools. In this case, personalization, differentiation and the proper form of education (public school or specialized school) determine the effectiveness of inclusion and the effectiveness of the teacher. Evangelia (2007) further emphasized that Special needs education teachers are important people in the process of inclusion and they are the means through which the issues of rights, participation and democracy may be enacted in schools. Allam& Martin (2021) Sated that most teachers teaching children with special needs did not receive any special needs education training from the school, they feel that they are not qualified to teach children with disability. Moreover, teachers assigned in special education classes lack of strategies in

dealing with learners with disability. And placement of learners with special needs in an inclusive classroom with ordinary learners is not enough without proper support because learners with disability did not receive all the necessary support and services for accessing the curriculum facilities. Gudina (2022) stated that special needs education professionals were important in schools to help and build accommodate learning opportunities for children with special needs in regular educational programs. Amelework (2017) that investigated special needs education graduates also face difficulties related to job placements and lack of clear job description and the majority were not interested in their job placements due to their work is not related with their field of study. Even though the researcher of the study tried to search whether such kinds of studies were conducted in the context of Ethiopia regarding the role and responsibility of special needs teachers in implementing inclusive education in regular school system and the problem they encountered in discharging their duty, the researcher could not find relevant research undertaken on the issue under discussion. Hence, in order to fill this gap, the author of the research decided to take this opportunity to investigate the role and challenges of special needs education teachers in implementing inclusive education in the context of Ethiopia. Specifically the current study focused on the following research questions.

1. Are special needs education teachers aware of their role and responsibility referring their job description?
2. What are the challenges that special needs education teachers encountered in the course of the implementation of inclusive education in their respective school?
3. What are the strategies and support systems available that facilitate special needs education teachers to provide specialized services needed to address the unmet requirements of students with special educational needs?
4. What should be done on the way forward to enhance the role of special needs education teachers in promoting and implementing inclusive education in their respective school?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of the study was to investigate the role and challenges of special needs education teachers in implementing inclusive education in regular school system: Dagnawji Minilik & Kokeb Tsibah secondary schools.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the roles and responsibilities that special needs education teachers play in the implementation of inclusive education.
- To identify the challenges encountered by special needs education teachers in their professional roles.
- To explore the strategies and support systems available to special needs education teachers to address their challenges in meeting the needs of their students.
- To assess the way to enhance the role of special needs education teachers in promoting and implementing inclusive education in their respective school

1.4. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be expected to provide informative data regarding the responsibilities and difficulties that special education teachers encounter when implementing inclusive education. Provide information on how to handle problems with the implementation of inclusive education policies to government representatives, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, officers, and organizations involved in providing education for all individuals with special needs. It might also mark a turning point for other researchers who want to look more closely at this topic. Will increase understanding and create a welcoming environment for learning in the school.

1.5. The Scope of the Study

The study is limited in scope, focusing on the geographical area of Addis Ababa, specifically Yeka and Arada Sub city. Only this area was delimited because of time and financial constraints. The contribution and services of special needs education teachers in implementing inclusive education is a broad concept. However, the scope of this study was limited to explore the roles and challenges of special needs education teachers in implementing inclusive education in the context of the study institutions.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Theoretical Foundation of Inclusive Education

Various models and frameworks of inclusive education have been developed to promote inclusive practices. A key model is the social model of disability, which posits that disability arises from social barriers rather than individual characteristics. This model contends that disability is a socially constructed phenomenon, stemming from the interaction between individuals with impairments and their environments. As Oliver (2013) states, "it is not disability, but society that disables people," suggesting that individuals are hindered not by their physical or mental conditions but by societal obstacles, including inaccessible buildings and discrimination. The social model emphasizes the need for society to eliminate these barriers to foster inclusivity. While the model has gained recognition, it faces criticism for potentially overlooking the experiences of individuals with impairments, who may still encounter medical and physical challenges despite the removal of social barriers (Kafer, 2013). Critics also argue that it places the onus on disabled individuals to advocate for their rights. Nevertheless, the social model remains vital for understanding disability as a social construct, highlighting the influence of systemic factors like poverty and discrimination.

Additionally, the ecological model of disability pertains to inclusive education by emphasizing the impact of systemic influences on the success of inclusive practices. It underscores the complex interactions between individuals and their environments, asserting that disability is not only determined by personal traits but also by social and environmental factors. Recent research, such as that by Carter et al. (2020), indicates that work-related environmental aspects, including accommodations and supportive supervisors, significantly affect job satisfaction and retention for employees with disabilities. The ecological model also incorporates multiple levels of analysis, including individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy levels. For example, a study by Hoffman et al. (2021) highlights how environmental policies create transportation barriers for individuals with disabilities, leading to social isolation and limited access to healthcare and resources. In

summary, the ecological model illustrates the intricate interplay between individuals and their environments in shaping disability experiences.

The ecological model of disability highlights the complex interactions between individuals and their environments that shape disability experiences. It asserts that disability arises not only from individual characteristics but also from social and environmental factors. Recent research underscores this model's relevance in employment contexts.

For instance, Carter et al (2020) emphasize that workplace accommodations and supportive supervisors significantly impact job satisfaction and retention for employees with disabilities. Furthermore, the model acknowledges multiple levels of analysis, including individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy levels. Hoffman et al. (2021) investigate how environmental policies create transportation barriers for people with disabilities, leading to social isolation and limited access to healthcare and resources. In conclusion, the ecological model illustrates that disability is influenced by intricate interactions between individuals and their environments.

Recent research highlights the importance of this model in employment and transportation policy. A holistic understanding of disability can enhance social inclusion and equality. Another model of inclusive education is universal design for learning (UDL), which advocates for instructional materials and activities tailored to diverse learning needs. This approach allows teachers to use various techniques to ensure all students access the curriculum, regardless of their abilities. UDL promotes flexible, diverse, and inclusive materials and activities, encouraging technology use, alternative assessments, and differentiated instruction to support all learners.

2.2.The Concept of Special Needs Education

A novel idea that is starting to take shape to meet the needs of all children with special needs is called Special Needs Education (SNE). The term "Special Needs Education" is being replaced with "the education of persons with disabilities," which is a more limited definition.

MOE (2012) defines "Special Needs Education" as the education of all children with diverse needs.

Special needs education is instruction established to support the learning of people who, for a variety of reasons, need extra help and flexible teaching strategies in order to engage with and complete program objectives. Special needs education programs may have a curriculum that is similar to that of the parallel regular education system, but they also take into account the unique needs of each individual by offering resources (such as space, equipment, or specially trained personnel) and, if necessary, modifying the curriculum or learning objectives (UNESCO, 2011).

The scope of modifications to special education programs is broad and varied, spanning from child abandonment and segregation to inclusion in-service training: The few categories that are eligible to receive support services are blind, deaf, intellectually disabled, and physical impairments to every person who might require special assistance. As such, it is accepting of all children attending regular or general schools without facing discrimination (Tirussew, 2005).

This new concept covers all children's needs for all educational developmental objectives and the process of implementing policies to increase educational access and improve quality for all. Special needs education should be offered as part of regular school programs from the start until placement in order to specifically meet these educational goals. An alternative viewpoint to enhance the delivery of special needs education based on the needs and contextual possibilities should be offered by special needs education, which is moving toward taking into account all needs to be met through appropriate resources and responses (Hallahan”&” Kauffman, 2006).

2.2.3. Special Needs Education in Ethiopia

In 1925, Ethiopia launched the first special education program in the modern sense. It was previously mentioned that blind individuals had achieved great success the Orthodox Church, particularly in oral education, because they had been receiving traditional church education. "People with special needs have long been educated by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and have gone on to hold positions of leadership in various churches and monasteries (Temesgen, 2014). Up until the introduction of "western education" to the nation at the start of the 20th century, this practice persisted. People with special needs or disabilities were enrolled in traditional education in Ethiopia earlier than in modern times, according to church chroniclers who describe the situation. Many visually and physically impaired students could be found near churches and mosques. The oral mode of instruction contributed to the success of these students. The

existence of physically and visually impaired instructors who still teach the Bible, the Qur'an, poetry, and meditative songs in mosques and monasteries serve as evidence of this.

Individuals with special needs were the ones who established training centers, special schools, and played a crucial role in their development. Religious organizations also played a significant role in the establishment of unique schools and centers in Ethiopia.

Individuals with special needs were the ones who established training centers, special schools, and played a crucial role in their development. Religious organizations also played a significant role in the establishment of unique schools and centers in Ethiopia.

The 1994 education and training policy mentioned special needs education for the first time in history, despite its shortcomings. The policy's Article 2.2.3 stipulates that classes and special units must be provided for students with special needs. Accordingly, the policy (Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia, 1994) has permitted the establishment of special units and classes for students with disabilities in regular schools.

2.2.4. The Concept of Special Needs Education Teachers

Special Needs Education Teachers who have received formal training in teaching children with special educational needs requirements at the bachelor's, master's, or doctoral levels are considered special needs education professionals (MOE, 2015). The materials and individualized instruction for the implementation of inclusive education are provided by the special needs education teachers. In every educational setting, including general education, special education, preparatory education, preschool education, technical and vocational training in universities, and information sharing with regional, zonal, and Woreda educational bureaus (ESNEPA, 2016).

According to Howell (2004), they were working with to provide individual instruction and special materials to students with special educational needs, as well as consulting services to schools, teachers, and families of children with special educational needs.

According to Eklund et.al.(2020), special needs education teachers play a crucial role in the support system by continuously supporting students with various learning disabilities. The role that specialists play in providing support to teachers should be highlighted in addition to the importance of teachers in the structure of inclusive education. According to Benton 2007, special needs education professionals offer assistance in modifying and shaping the gaps between a

child's ability and adaptive curriculum in the classroom and in their day-to-day activities. Special needs education teachers have developed a specific role and responsibility in the area of individual instruction and various types of disabilities. As per UNICEF' (2013), specially trained special needs education teachers have multiple roles in the school as they play a significant role in promoting inclusive education.

2.2.5. Theory and Practice of Special Needs Education Teachers

Special education teachers need to be highly knowledgeable in the field of special education and also possess strong communication skills for effective consultation. They primarily work with small groups of students, occasionally collaborating with other teachers in larger classes to provide support. Before teaching, they engage in discussions with parents and educators (Markussen, 2004). In addition they participate in school meetings, complete written work such as Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), undergo training, evaluate students, and created materials. All of these activities constituted background work. Additionally, they conferred with a number of partners, including partners, educators, parents, psychologists, and school administrators (Takala, Pirttimaa”&”Tormanen, 2009).

According to ministry of education regulations, a special needs education teacher is expected to perform essential duties in addition to their core responsibilities, such as accepting students with special needs and providing them with equal learning opportunities; organizing training sessions, workshops, and other special activities targeted at enhancing the caliber and delivery of special education programs and services; monitoring the execution of special education programs and providing periodic reports on their progress; and conducting assessments to ascertain the academic performance of students (MOE, 2006).The other primary responsibilities include conducting field visits to schools to witness the implementation of inclusive education, developing and implementing vocational programs at inclusive schools or at schools where students with special needs are enrolled, collaborating with subject teachers, working with other professionals within the school, including administrators, and working with the community to facilitate the implementation of special education programs, and preparing comprehensive progress reports semi-annually that include the accomplishments of the semester (MOE, 2006; Takala, Pirttimaa”&”Tormanen, 2009).

In order to effectively design, develop, implement, and oversee programs for students with special needs in the least restrictive environment, school administrators can benefit from the training provided by Special Needs Education Teachers. This training focuses on bridging the knowledge gap between theory and practice (Dianne “&” Montageith, 2000).

The responsibility of special needs education teachers to incorporate educational technologies into their teaching methods and can use a variety of technological devices that were previously unavailable to children with special needs to individualize and differentiate instruction (Akpan“&” Beard, 2014, as cited in Baglama et al.,2017). These devices can help students become more independent by allowing them to complete tasks that other students with special needs are either unable to complete or find difficult to complete.

2.2.6. Principle of Special Needs Education Teachers

Numerous international conventions and policy instruments pertaining to special needs education have been ratified and accepted by Ethiopia. The Ministry of Education's July, 2012 strategy for implementing inclusive education and special needs education guidelines states that colleges and universities must ensure that their departments are fully equipped to train SNE/IE teachers in response to regional and national demand. Additionally, all teacher education programs must include a practical, hands-on SNE/IE course that will equip graduates to provide appropriate support for SWSN. Article 27 of the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states: Work and employment states the parties acknowledge that individuals with disabilities have the right to work, and that right includes preserving those individuals' rights on an equal footing with others, establishing conducive working environments with equal opportunities and compensation for work of equal worth, and establishing safe and healthy working environments.

Recruitment and training of educational personnel is one area where the Salamanca Frame Works for Action (1994) Article 5 no 40 II guidelines for action at the national level highlight the importance of properly preparing all educational personnel in order to advance inclusive schooling. More and more people are realizing the value of hiring teachers with disabilities so they can act as role models for kids with disabilities. Aligning our Collective Commitments with

Education for All is one of the strategies 5 of the Dakar Framework for Action (2000). Boost teachers' status, confidence, and professionalism

General regulations for the provision of special education programs and services, as stated by the Ministry of Education (2006); to meet the needs of students with special needs and to educate them, work in conjunction with certified professionals in all areas of special education. Monitor the training and work of employees with special needs, support professional and personal development programs for them, and conduct surveys to ascertain the personnel needs for the zone, Woreda, and sub-city. By instituting quality assurance procedures and laying out nationally recognized standards that specify the knowledge, abilities, and competences expected of graduates, the Ethiopian National Qualifications Framework (ENQF) (2007) seeks to increase the prestige of credentials.

2.2.7. Role of Special Needs Education Teachers in Implementing Inclusive Education

The research in the field of special needs education has highlighted, several work –related challenges. For example; role confusion, role conflict, paper work, in adequate support which can adversely affect special educators' sense of satisfaction with their positions (Billingsley, 2004).

The official policy documentation (Greek Government Gazette 199/2008) recognizes special needs education teachers as a distinct professional group responsible for promoting policy objectives and facilitating the development and delivery of special education support programs in secondary schools (Koutrouba, Vamvakari, and Theodoropoulos 2008; Coutsocostas and Alborz 2010).The role of special needs education teachers, as defined in the following responsibilities: (a) assessing individual students' learning needs to determine their eligibility for the resource room, typically for those struggling with mainstream curriculum objectives, often referred by mainstream teachers or parents; (b) facilitating collaboration among students' parents, mainstream teachers, and personnel from Diagnostic and Evaluation Centers regarding students' needs and educational strategies; (c) supporting students with special educational needs (SEN) in their educational and psychosocial adaptation within the school; (d) monitoring and documenting the academic and social progress of students in the resource room; (e) developing Individual

Education Plans in consultation with Diagnostic and Evaluation Center professionals and mainstream staff; (f) providing instructional support within mainstream classrooms when mutually agreed upon by both mainstream and special needs teachers, considering what is best for the students; and (g) advising mainstream teachers on special education matters and fostering collaborative practices. Special needs education teachers are expected to offer tailored instructional support to a diverse group of secondary education students based on their varying academic and psychosocial learning needs. According to the Official Greek Government Journals (449/2007, 1319/2002), these students may have significant disabilities or special educational needs that necessitate additional support to access the mainstream curriculum and achieve its objectives. Referrals to the resource room are either specified in reports from Diagnostic and Evaluation Centers or based on assessments of students' learning needs conducted by special education teachers.

Special needs education teachers have a unique opportunity to influence how a service delivery model is implemented in a school setting. Throughout the collaborative process, special needs education instructors can serve as critical consultants in the planning, implementation, and assessment of interventions throughout the educational continuum (Cummings, Yent, Allison “&“ Cole, 2008). The role of special needs education teachers indirectly coordinates special needs education and teaching (Soan, 2006). Special needs education teachers are in charge of putting inclusion policies and agreements into action (Cole, 2005).

To positively impact inclusion, learning environments and teaching methods must be thoughtfully designed to foster effective learning for all children. Special needs and general education teachers should collaborate and embrace the philosophy of inclusion, supported by strong administrative backing and strategies to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The presence of a special needs educator is essential for the success of inclusive education (Kumar, 2020).

Many classes use a collaborative teaching format, in which both teachers are present throughout the day. Others utilize a push-in strategy, in which special education staffs deliver instruction at specific times of day. To create an inclusive class, general and special education instructors must work very closely together. Special education teachers frequently sit with or near children who have IEPs to assess their progress and provide any specific instructions or study materials.

Students require varying degrees of education and individual support based on their needs. Teachers can also take students out of class for individual lessons or neurological activities, as well as meet with counselors, speech therapists, dyslexia trainers, and other specialized professionals. Special education teachers may need to ensure that academics or therapists are in the classroom occasionally to help students. They can assist general education teachers with course presentation, documentation, law enforcement, and other strategies to foster a positive classroom environment. Regular and special educators may break classes into smaller groups to enhance participation (York-Barr, Ghere, “&”Sommerness, 2007).

Sindelar et al. (2014) emphasize that the role of special educators is complex and varies across schools, teachers, and years. Both special and general educators share the responsibility of identifying and supporting at-risk students. While the specific duties of special education teachers in this process remain somewhat undefined, they may involve interpreting assessment data, planning interventions, delivering direct instruction to individuals or small groups, evaluating and adjusting support systems, and contributing to ongoing system-wide evaluations.

Collaboration among teachers enhances instructional diversity and broadens access to the general education curriculum (Santamaria “&” Thousand, 2004). As classrooms become more inclusive and grade-level standards more rigorous, educators must be ready to adapt their teaching methods.

According to Cummings et al. (2008), special needs education teachers play a vital role in the education system. Their responsibilities have developed in four key areas: (a) assessing students' needs, (b) using testing tools, (c) implementing interventions, and (d) working within a professional setting.

2.3. Challenges of Special Needs Education Teachers

2.3.1. Attitudinal Barriers

In many Ethiopian communities, disabilities are viewed as divine punishment for wrongs against ancestors or as consequences of personal faults. Consequently, a child with a disability is often regarded as cursed or possessed by evil spirits (Zelalem, 2007).

As Zelalem's findings in his master's dissertation (2007) master's dissertation exposes that negative attitudes from the community and family hinder young people's access to education. The primary obstacles to participation stem from societal attitudes rather than specific medical issues. Prejudice arising from negative perceptions of differences creates significant barriers to learning. These ingrained attitudes can be difficult to change and may become institutionalized. As noted, "We frequently see the impact of negative attitudes in how one person treats another." Such attitudes often underpin harmful policies and services (UNESCO, 2009).

Successful inclusion relies on the attitudes and actions of school leaders and the commitment of other officials who shape the school culture and can either support or hinder inclusion efforts. (Ainscow, 2002).

Inadequate support and resources, along with widespread negative attitudes toward disability, contribute to the confusion surrounding the implementation of inclusive education (Stubbs, 2008). Etenesh (2000) emphasizes a strong correlation between teacher attitudes toward inclusion and their effectiveness. Supportive teachers provide more practice opportunities and higher success rates for their students. Furthermore, researchers have explored factors associated with the successful inclusion of students with disabilities.

Most research on inclusive education suggests that a positive attitude toward inclusion is essential for successfully integrating Children with Disabilities (CWDS) into inclusive classrooms (Dark and Light Blind Care, 2008).

However, teachers' attitudes are crucial for successful inclusion, as effective inclusive education relies on teachers being prepared to support students with disabilities in regular classrooms. However, many teachers feel unqualified and unprepared to meet these students' needs (Etenesh, 2000).

2.3.2. Budget Inadequacy

In terms of cost, the inclusive schooling has been shown to be less expensive than segregated schooling (Mitchell, 2010; Dyson, 2004). While some consider inclusive education to be expensive, Richler (2004) argues that it is cost-effective. Thus, inclusive education not only provides quality education for vulnerable children but also has economic rationale (Barrett,

2014). The funding of inclusive education is a source of contention. Mitchell (2010) highlights that this discussion is centered on the "cost analysis" of inclusive VS segregated environments. To be successful, inclusive education must have a budget that does not surpass that of segregated schools. The effective inclusion of children with special needs is dependent on sufficient financial allocation and resource availability. Many experts think that inclusive education expenses are comparable to those of special education programs. It is commonly known that finance has a considerable impact on the implementation of inclusive education, implying that government financial allocation can either assist or hinder its achievement (Barrett, 2014; Mitchell, 2010; Wormnaes, 2004).

2.3.3. Lack of Job description

The lack of job descriptions for special needs education teachers can lead several significant issues such as role ambiguity, impact on student outcomes, challenges in professional development (Rosenberg, 2015).

A job description is a formal document created by an employer to outline the nature of a job, expected tasks, and its position within the organizational hierarchy. It identifies job duties, responsibilities, specifications, and the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the role (Krumer-Nevo et al., 2011). Additionally, Pennell (2010) assesses the role and establishes a performance plan. Therefore, a job description serves as a comprehensive list of duties, responsibilities, and the organization's expectations for the employee (Dessler, 2013; Marsden, Caffrey, & McCaffery, 2011).

A job description can be viewed as a component of the internal talent management process, encompassing recruitment, succession planning, coaching, training, and compensation (Pavur, 2010; Stybel, 2010). This perspective highlights the significance of job descriptions in human resource management. Job descriptions facilitate employee recruitment and selection (Hawkes "&" Weathington, 2014) and support performance management, identification processes, training and development opportunities, and various aspects of Human Resource Management, including planning and measuring rewards.

Belias et al. (2014) found that employees are unsatisfied when they do not understand their employment. Addae et al. (2008) found that employees do not perform as well as they should in

public sector jobs when they lack clear knowledge about their tasks. This concept was reinforced by Um and Harrison (2000), who offered evidence showing a decline in job satisfaction, is directly related to employees who do not complete activities as indicated in their job descriptions.

A work description helps employees get to know with their job (Brannick, Levine, “&”Morgeson, 2007). However, when individuals are assigned activities that are not stated in the job description, they begin to question whether they are qualified for their positions (Lane, 2005; Robbins & Judge, 2013), and their familiarity with the job begins to dwindle (Brannick et al., 2007). The lack of a clear job definition leads to inaccuracies in job and role satisfaction, and employees are obliged to perform extra responsibilities outside of their job description (El-Hajji, 2011).

2.3.4. Lack of Teacher Training

Winter (2006), claims that training and education are essential to the effectiveness of inclusion programs. According to the findings, teachers believe they are unprepared to teach in an inclusive environment because they have not received adequate training or professional development to appropriately integrate inclusion in their classrooms. It demonstrates that teachers believe they are not prepared to create and implement adjustments for students with impairments. As Winter (2007) states, that both pre-service preparation and in-service training are essential for teachers to develop their beliefs about inclusion and enhance their ability to educate students with special needs. A well-structured teacher training plan focused on the educational needs of students with disabilities is vital for successful inclusion in general education classrooms. For inclusion to succeed, teachers must be adequately prepared, confident, and skilled to provide appropriate interventions for all students.

2.3.5. Lack of Staff Collaboration

Staff collaboration involves teachers, support staff, and other stakeholders in schools to foster inclusion. Effective inclusion depends on teamwork and the involvement of all parties. Voltz and Brazil (2001) state that regular meetings between general and special education teachers for collaborative planning and problem-solving are essential for successfully including children with disabilities. This dynamic can result in the general education teacher taking a leading role, while the special education teacher acts more as an instructional aide than a co-teacher. Wilson and

Michaels (2006) found that poor teaching arrangements can cause frustration and helplessness among both students with disabilities and teachers. Students may feel they lack the individualized instruction they need, while teachers may feel unsupported by administration in making necessary classroom accommodations to effectively implement inclusion.

2.3.6. Structural Barriers

Many mainstream schools built before the Disabled Persons Act (1992, revised 2001) lacked essential accessibility features, such as wheelchair ramps, wide doorways, rails for blind students, and soundproof classrooms for those with hearing impairments. Some schools, with two or three stories, were particularly challenging for wheelchair users. Additionally, insufficient sanitary and ablution facilities in rural areas significantly hindered inclusive education (Bines and Philippa, 2011). Many disabled students also struggled to access libraries, and these institutional barriers were compounded by cultural obstacles and negative attitudes towards disability still dominated the education environment (Peters, 2009).

2.4. Relevant Domestic Policy and Legal Frameworks and Programmatic Documents

Ethiopia has ratified a number of international conventions related to inclusive education. As a result, national legislation, including the Federal Constitution (FDRE, 1995 Art. 41: p. 25), ensures citizens' equal access to publicly funded services and assistance for people with disabilities. The Education and Training Policy (ETP, 1994) emphasizes the importance of expanding quality primary education for all, with a focus on children with disabilities' education rights. Furthermore, according to FDRE Negaritgazeta (2009, as cited in Abdulfatta, 2014), institutions must adapt their facilities and programs to make them accessible to physically challenged students. The Federal Ministry of Education's ESDP V (2015) is the central strategy document for Ethiopia's educational development from 2015/16 to 2019/20. Its priorities align with regional and international agreements, including Education for All, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Additionally, all clusters will train special needs expert teachers. By the end of ESDP V, each of the 800 resource centers will have an itinerant special needs educator to support local schools. Furthermore, the federal government has mandated through Proclamation No. 691/2003 E.C. that all federal ministries are responsible for addressing the needs of persons with disabilities within their organizations.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

3.1. Research Design

The study employed qualitative approach with a case study design. A case study is an intensive analysis of an individual unit (e.g., a person, group, or event) stressing developmental factors in relation to context (Patton, 2000). In most cases, a case study method selects a small geographical area and in-depth examinations of people or groups of people and it explores and investigate contemporary real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships (Zainal, 2007). The rationales why the researcher selects a qualitative research approach because it helps to understand detail and deeply to study the role and challenges of special needs education teachers in implementing inclusive education in its natural settings and it provide a picture of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs. Qualitative research involves an interpretive & naturalistic approach to the world (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

3.2. Study Area

The study site was two (2) secondary schools in Addis Ababa City administration; specifically KokebeTsebah and DagnawMinilik Secondary schools. KokebeTsebah School was established in 1950 E.C. The geographical location of KokebeTsebah School is located Yeka sub city district 5 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and DagnawMenelik Primary School was established in 1908 E.C. The school is located in Arada Sub-city, woreda 2 of Addis Ababa City Administration the geographical location of DagnawMinilik Secondary school is Arada Sub City. The reason why this particular school was chose by researcher the schools have long year experiences in practicing inclusive education; it has an outstanding history of encouraging inclusion by educating children with special educational needs and convent for the researcher in terms of managing time and money.

3.3. Population

A target population is the group of individuals whose characteristics are being studied and it is important because it determines the sampling frame, which is the list of individuals from which the sample is drawn. The study population may be smaller than the target population because of practical constraints such as money and time (Creswell, 2014). The targeted population in the study was all special needs education teachers, student who have visual and physical impairments and school principals at the selected two secondary government schools.

The study targets a population of 145 individuals: 4 special needs teachers, 2 school principals, and 139 students with special educational needs. Detailed information is provided in the table below.

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of Special Needs Education Teachers are described under here from both selected schools

Table No	Number of Special needs education teachers	Sex	Education level	Experience of the position
1	Special needs education teacher1	Female	BA degree	36 years
2	Special needs education teacher 2	Male	BA degree	31 years
3	Special needs education teacher3	Male	Masters degree	17

4	Special needs education teacher2	Female	BA degree	34
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Table 2

Demographic characteristics of students with disabilities are described under here from both selected schools

No	Types of impairment	Sex		T	Grade level
		F	M		
1	Visual impairment	50	31	81	9,10,11,12
2	Hearing impairment	19	19	38	9,10,11,12
3	Physical impairment	7	4	11	9,10,11,12
5	Epilepsy	6	-	6	9, 9, 10
6	Learning disability	-	3	3	9, 11,
Total = 139					

Table 3

Demographic characteristics of school Principals are described under here from both selected schools

No	School principal	Academic Qualification	Year of experience	Sex
1	Principal	MS	14	Male
2	Principal	MS	12	Male

3.4. Participants, Sampling Techniques, and Sample Size for the Study

Participants in this study included school principals, students with physical and visual impairment and special needs education teachers who had experiences of supporting and assisting students with special educational needs. The selection of all research participants took into their prior experiences and their understandings of the topic of the study. Additionally the researcher thinks they can offer rich and pertinent details regarding the phenomenon under investigation.

Purposive sampling was employed in order to investigate the roles and challenges faced by special needs education teachers when attempting to implement inclusive education. With purposeful sampling, participants are chosen according to predetermined standards or criteria, like their knowledge or experience of a given phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposive sampling has become a popular technique in qualitative research studies; it allows researchers to select participants who can provide rich and relevant information about the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015). And in this type of sampling items for the sample are selected intentionally (Kotharri, 2004). The participants were selected purposively from the two schools such as KokebTsebah and DagmawiMinilik secondary schools. The reason why the researcher selects using this sampling technique is based on the specific criteria such as their expertise; who are likely to be knowledgeable about the topic of the study, familiarity with inclusive education, and their experience within the school environment. Thus, through the use of purposive sampling, all special needs education teachers, school principals, and students with physical and visual impairments were chosen from the targeted populations for this study.

The researcher selected fourteen participants from the target populations listed in the above table, including two principals, four special needs education teachers, and eight students with disabilities, in both secondary schools. The focus group discussions include eight students with disabilities, interview includes four special needs education teachers and two school principals were purposefully chosen by the researcher for this study. The researcher limited the number of respondents to 14 because this smaller sample provided richer data about the role and challenges faced by special needs education teachers in implementing inclusive education, allowing for a more in-depth analysis in qualitative research.

Determining the quality of the data to be collected for qualitative research ultimately comes down to judgment and expertise regarding sample size (Hammersley, 2015). In light of various methodological and practical considerations, sample sizes ought to be adequate to foster knowledge and comprehension of the phenomena being studied (Emmel, 2015). To enable the thorough analysis of this kind of inquiry, sample sizes in qualitative research are typically small. Furthermore, Vasiliou (2018) notes that a small sample size yields detailed information pertinent to the phenomenon being studied.

3.5. Data Collection Instrument

The researcher conducted two main types of data collection tools: interview guides and focus group discussion.

3.5.1. Interview

The researcher prepared semi-structured interview guide for two school principals and four special needs education teachers from two government secondary schools. This format promotes two-way communication, allowing both the interviewer and participants to ask questions and engage in thorough discussions. The conversational tone helps participants feel comfortable sharing techniques (Holland “&” Janet, 2013). The interviews validated existing information, leading to higher response rates and a better understanding of the issues. The questions were translated from English to Amharic to facilitate communication. To accurately capture responses and reduce note-taking challenges, the interviews were audio taped with participants' consent. Rapport was established, and consent was obtained before starting the sessions, which lasted about an hour and addressed all four research questions, with all interviews digitally recorded.

3.6.2. Focus Group Discussion

The researcher utilized focus group discussions (FGDs) for qualitative data collection, FGD guidelines developed with the support of a research advisor and university lecturers in the field. The study purposively selected eight students with disabilities from both secondary schools for seek of communication these 8 students were selected by the researcher. Purposive sampling was used to select FGD participants. This strategy facilitated in-depth research by providing participants a comfortable setting to discuss their thoughts, experiences, and opinions. The FGD

sessions lasted 1 hour and 40 minutes. Focus groups allowed for the exploration of shared experiences and perspectives. Finally, accordingly the willingness of the participants' preferences, the discussions have been audio and transcribed afterwards.

3.7. Data Collection Procedures

The qualitative study employs several philosophical assumptions, strategies, data collection methods, analyses, and interpretations. These processes involve emerging questions and procedures (Creswell, 2007). The researcher gathered data from the participants in the schools, and then inductively did an analysis from specifics to broad themes and interpreted the meaning of the findings. Hence, before data collection, the researcher asked for approval to conduct the research. After approval, the researcher prepared conversation and a meeting about the study with the stakeholders of the school and participants to inform them about what the researcher would be doing. This was used as a transition for involvement and gathering relevant and accurate data. At the end of the discussion, the consent forms were given to participants to sign if they agreed to participate. Then finalizing data collection instruments, providing orientation for respondents, and deciding specific schedules or dates, times, and venues to meet with the respondents, were designed. If the interview and FGD guide lines are not conducted in the respondents' native language, it may lead to under coverage. Language can affect how respondents create responses by influencing their cultural and cognitive perspectives (Andreenkova, 2018). It was crucial to translate the tools into Amharic because the majority of study participants were native speakers of the language, ensuring participant comfort and high-quality responses. The original question was first translated from English to Amharic by English language and literature experts and Amharic native speakers in order to achieve this. Based on the research questions, the interview and FGD guide lines were set before gathering data. The researcher collected data after ensuring validity by using the comments of advisor and by asking other experts and professional colleagues to check and assess the accuracy of the content area and reliability.

3.8. Data Analysis Approach

The data collected through interview and focused group discussion were analyzed qualitatively that was focused on the exploration of the role and challenges of SNIETS in implementing inclusive education in the two (2) selected government secondary schools. The researcher was followed the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview and FGD guide lines. The process of analyzing qualitative data was involved coding or categorizing the data. It was involved making sense of huge amounts of data by reducing the volume of raw information, followed by identifying significant patterns. The researcher was drawn meaning from data and was built a logical chain of evidence. The researcher used direct participants' wording, 36 field notes, and documents to state the real result. The data interpretation was taken place by interpreting the findings inductively, synthesizing information, and was drawn inferences. Based on the results that was stated through the use of descriptive text and narrative explanation, the discussion was held by integrating results with the review of related literature and researcher knowledge. Lastly, the researcher stated the conclusion and recommendation separately based on the interpretation of the result and the professional judgment of the investigator.

3.9. Research Ethics

Before starting this study, the researcher was asked permission from the school with legal letter from Addis Ababa University Department of Special Needs and Inclusive Education. Then after rapport strengthen with the members by using dialogue on the proposed learn about intention and their right till the cease of the study. Therefore, throughout the study the researcher strongly considered the following ethical issues privacy and confidentiality would be maintained at all times, all findings were represented in a confidential manner. No personal or identifiable information were recorded or printed in the study. The researcher was used codes instead of the names of participants when presenting the data in this study. Therefore, the researcher obtained the informed consent of all participants verbally to start the interview process for the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDING

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

This section presents the demographics of the study participants, from whom the researcher collected data through focus groups and interviews. The data which are presented below show roles and challenges of special needs education teachers in implementing inclusive education in KokebTsibah and DagmawiMinilik secondary schools. The study respondent profiles of the discussant and interviewee are shown in the following table.

Table1

Demographic characteristics of special needs education teachers

No	Code of the respondents	Sex	Qualification	Experiences
1	SNET1	M	MA	17
2	SNET2	F	BA degree	34
3	SNET3	M	BA degree	31
4	SNET4	F	BA degree	36

Table2

Demographic characteristics of school principals

No	Code of the respondents	Sex	Qualification	Experience
1	P1	M	MA	19
2	P2	M	MA	11

Table 3

Demographic characteristics of students with disabilities

Total number of student respondent			Students with visual impairment			Students with physical impairment		
M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
3	5	8	1	3	4	2	2	4

4.2. Awareness of Special Needs Education Teachers about their Role and Responsibility Referring to their Job Descriptions

All school principals and SNETS were asked about the roles of special needs education teachers in promoting inclusive education in the study area.

SNET1 said that,

” I don’t know clearly my duties referring to job descriptions but based on my experiences and educational background carry out my tasks. I assist students with special needs in the school by helping them with various tasks like reading books and preparing and distributing test programs and monitor how teachers are helping students with disabilities in the classroom”.

SNET2 showed that

“There is no professional job description for special needs education teachers. As far as I know, the list of tasks is a guiding frame that shows that the general practitioner should do the work in question, but there is no professional job description no one is given to us from the Education Bureau or the Ministry of Education and we also not clearly aware of our duties”.

SNET3 showed that,

“In collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organizations, it is my responsibility to establish a welcoming classroom environment for students with disabilities and to provide the materials when they are required”.

SNET4 mentioned,

“I am not aware of my responsibilities referring to job descriptions due the absence of professional job descriptions. I work using what I've learned and regarding on my experiences it's very difficult to do without a job description”. My role is to create awareness about the principles of inclusive education as well as the commitments that Ethiopia has signed international agreements to the school community, parents, and school management and identify students with special needs and make their needs accessible to arrange students with physical disabilities to be assigned to the first ground classes, and give awareness to regular teachers not to assign the children to the upper floor. It is my professional responsibility to advocate students with disabilities to participate equally in the classroom and not be excluded”.

P1 said that,

“In our school, special needs education teachers play a major role. They assist and monitor our school's students with disabilities to ensure that their needs are met”.

P2 stated that,

“Yes, I believe that their role is to identify the needs of students with disabilities and make them accessible. And they also raise awareness through mini media for the school community”.

All of the focus group participants who were students with disabilities shared interesting insights on the role of special needs education teachers, offering the following clarifications on their views:

All special needs education teachers facilitate equal learning opportunities for students with disabilities by providing tailored support and resources such as Braille books, slates, styluses, mobility aids, and crutches. They also assist with exam scheduling and they examine students in the absence of an examiner.

From the group discussions one discussant to elaborate briefly the roles of special needs education teachers she explained that:

They provide excellent support well and make sure that we learn equally like others by giving us special support. Let me tell you what happened to me. I “injured both my hands. As a result of this injury, I scored the lowest in my sport field test among all the students in my class. However I never expected such a result because I am a level student. When I asked our teacher, but he told me that I couldn't help you because you couldn't work like the others and I would have to report the problem to the special needs education teachers and try to find a solution. However, he decided that if my results were not improved, I would have to change schools. However, I told them about it without being afraid, and they immediately called our teacher and informed him that he should not do that, and they corrected my results. I am truly great full to them.”

Focus group discussion was conducted to know the roles of special needs education teachers. By FGD students with disability were elaborate the roles of special needs education teachers. Therefore, the data was triangulated by focus group discussions of the study participants.

4.3. The Challenges that Special Needs Education Teachers Encountered in the Course of the Implementation of Inclusive Education in their Respective School

Special needs education teachers and school principals were asked questions regarding the challenges that special needs education teachers encountered in the course of the implementation of inclusive education in their respective school.

SNIT1 said that,

“Yes, there are barriers in our school. These include incapacity and a lack of self-motivation, attitudinal barriers, and the issue is left to the special needs teachers alone. We are unable to fully address Section 61's requirements for identifying and evaluating students with disabilities and the regular teachers don't volunteer for this work, so they leave it to us alone”.

SNET2 mentioned that,

“Yes, we have encounter obstacles to implement inclusive education. These challenges are the new curriculum's textbook isn't printed in Braille for students who are blind; the resource

center's location at the end of the school and students with different disabilities face a high barrier when they come to use"

SNET3 said that,

"The absence of a resource center, lack of job description, lack of adequate budget, negative mind set toward students with disabilities lack of collaboration between regular teachers and special needs education teachers, is the major challenges".

SNET4 said that,

"It is very difficult to provide the resources needed to meet students' needs and enable them to learn because there is no budget specifically allocated for special needs education and our school does not have enough sign language interpreters, mean that the students with deaf are not learning as much as they could be which another major issue is for us. This is due to the low salary paid to sign language interpreters and many have left their job".

Special needs education teachers have not professional job descriptions, and nothing has been given to them from the upper management the lack of job descriptions makes it difficult for special needs education teachers to decide which tasks to focus on and complete without a job description, they are confused of what to concentrate on and the budget does not consider the special needs education teachers services and programs (P1 & P2).

4.4. The Strategies and Support Systems Available that Facilitate Special Needs Education Teachers to Provide Specialized Services Needed to Address the Unmet Requirements of Students With Special Educational Needs

The other prepared questions for the participant special needs education teachers and principals' interview intended to investigate the strategies and support systems.

P1 said that,

"For the purpose of facilitating the services of special needs education teachers we use training collaborating with non-governmental organizations".

"Training is the major strategy to facilitating the services of special needs education teachers" (P2).

P1 & P2 mentioned that,

“There is cooperation among special needs education teachers and regular teachers because they try to accept and put into practice the guidance and methods those special needs education teachers provide them on how to identify and assist students with disabilities in the classroom but we don’t believe it is satisfactory”.

P1 said that,

“Special needs education teachers are receiving some materials, but I can't say that they are fully receiving because special needs education teachers are having problems getting the resources they need”.

P2 said that,

“I think they are partially receiving”.

“Yes they are incentivized, but there isn't a planned incentive for them when they provide training, interpret sign language, and read to students with special needs in these cases, they are encouraged to do so even though it isn't satisfactory” (P1 & P2).

Accordingly SNET 1 & 2

“Special needs education is included in the annual action plan, but the budget is said to be on paper we have never used any of the budgets not in a way that makes sense in real practice it is always read to us in writing”.

“The school does not consider the specialized services of SNE teachers in developing annual action and there isn’t earmarked budget to support and facilitate the services of SNE teachers” (SNET3&4).

There are some availability of adaptive educational materials and devices needed to making their work effective in addressing the needs of students with disabilities such as slate, stylus, Braille paper, white cane, computer, jaws, head phone, and recorder. But not Braille text books are available” (SNET, 1, 2, 3, 4

According to all respondents' explanations they were utilize resources and assistive technologies to enhance learning opportunities for students with special educational needs such as Jaws, white cane, sign language training book, head phone, computer, tab recorder, resource room, and computer training to students with special needs.

All of the participants in the focus groups, who were students with disabilities, offered an interesting viewpoint on the strategies and systems of support that help special education teachers offer the specialized services required to meet the needs of students with special education needs . Regarding their concepts, they offered the following clarifications:

Students with special educational needs received adaptive educational materials such as Jaws, white cane, sign language training book, head phone, computer, tab recorder, resource room, and computer training. Both regular teachers and students with special needs should be train, and students with disabilities able to talk openly with their teachers about any challenges if they having (FGD discussants).

4.5. The Way Forward to Enhance the Role of Special Needs Education Teachers in Promoting and Implementing Inclusive Education in their Respective School

Special needs education teachers and school principals were asked questions regarding what should be done on the way forward to enhance the role of special needs education teachers in promoting and implementing inclusive education in their respective school.

P1, p2 and two SNETS explained that,

“On-going training; collaboration between special needs education teachers and general teacher, adaptive resources they need to do the job, job descriptions for special needs education teachers, education opportunity, financial incentives, self motivation, a well-defined job description, increasing the salaries of special needs education teachers and sign language interpreters, incentives, rewards, hire additional special needs education teachers, adequate training to all school staff members are necessary steps that we prefer further to enhance the role of special needs education teachers in promoting and implementing inclusive practices”.

SNET3 responds that,

“As a school, “we should have an independent budget and resource. I also think that having an independent human resources department and management and in addition to this rewards and incentives will be more powerful in order to enhance the role’s of special needs education teaches”.

In line with this statement SNET4 stated that,

“Working collaboratively is to increase the role of special needs education teachers and promote inclusive education; We are not sure that none of us will be injured tomorrow, so if all the staff of the school accept that the work of special needs is my job as a society and work hard; Leave from bad attitudes and work cooperatively and create a comfortable environment for children with special needs.”

Should hire additional special needs education teachers and special needs education teachers should give training for the whole school community in order to enhance their contributions (All FGD discussants).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1. Special Needs Education Teachers' Awareness of their Responsibilities and Roles in Referring to their Job Descriptions

The study's showed that special needs education teachers are not aware of their roles and responsibilities referring to their job descriptions due to the absence of professional job descriptions. This indicated that job descriptions are one aspect to hinder the roles of special needs education teachers in promoting inclusive education. The findings of the current study also agree with those of Armstrong and Tylor (2014), their finding confirmed that clear job descriptions are essential for ensuring that employees aware and understand their roles and can perform their duties effectively. Addae, Parboteeah, and Velinor (2008) found that employees do not perform as well as they should in public sector jobs when they lack clear job descriptions about their tasks. And Katsafanas (2006) also recommended that the necessity of clearly defined roles and responsibilities of special needs education graduates.

The study finding showed that special needs education teachers played significant roles to realize inclusive education. This data further affirm that special needs education teachers are the influential factors in the success of inclusive classroom. Kumar (2020) also pointed out the involvement of a special needs education teacher is critical to the success of inclusive education. The findings confirmed that special needs education teachers are discharged their responsibilities in implementing inclusive education which including implement and raise awareness about the principles and policies of inclusive education, assessing the needs of student with disabilities, resource facilitators, provide intervention, and to advocate students with disabilities who come to school to benefit equally as regular students. Vlachouet .al. (2015) have also conducted a similar study in the area and found that special needs education teachers are identified as a distinct professional group expected to encourage the realization of policy objectives and serve as facilitators of the process of developing and delivering special education support services within secondary education institutions. And Todd (2012) also noted that special needs education teachers have been considered key facilitators in tearing down barriers and developing approaches that accommodate the divergent needs of students with disabilities.

As indicated by the study findings, special needs education teachers were not placed at the right position. This implies that the wrong placement of special needs education teachers leads to create confusion and job dissatisfaction. Ingersoll (2001) stated that teachers who are placed in roles that do not match their skills or interests may experience job dissatisfaction; leading to burnout and higher turnover rates this disruption can negatively affects the continuity of support for students with disabilities. Findings of this study signify that all special needs education teachers are not well equipped with adaptive skills of using assistive technology and specialized rehabilitation services needed for students with special educational needs. Previous researchers (Ashton et al, 2005; Bausch and Hasselbring, 2004; Parette et al., 2006; Smith and Kelley, 2007; Wilcox et al, 2006) concluded that teachers were not confident in using assistive technology due to lack of knowledge and training in this area. Knowledge and skills of using assistive technology essential for general education and special needs education teachers in equal measure.

5.2. The Challenges that Special Needs Education Teachers Encountered in the Course of the Implementation of Inclusive Education in their Respective School

Findings from the study revealed that special needs education teachers are challenging like attitudinal barriers, lack of collaboration between regular teachers and special needs education teachers, new curriculum's textbook isn't printed in Braille for students who are blind; school principals change too quickly, budget inadequacy, lack of sign language interpreter, awareness gap, and the school environment is not convent for students with disabilities. Hence, overcoming these could be SNETS were collaborating with governmental and non-governmental organizations. These indicated that several critical issues that hinder the effectiveness of special needs education teachers. Simui&Waliuya (2008) and (Peters, 2009) found that there were large number of children with disabilities not accessing education in schools, inaccessible infrastructure, negative attitudes by ordinary teachers towards children with disabilities, ordinary teachers lacked skills in sign language and Braille thereby not be able to communicate with pupils with hearing and visual impairments and teaching and learning materials were not suitable for children with disabilities. Bines &Philippa, 2011) & (Peters, 2009 stated that some schools had 2 or 3-storey buildings which were difficult to access by children using wheelchairs. Lack of access to sanitary and ablution facilities were another major barrier to inclusive education

particularly in rural areas. Even facilities such as libraries were not easily accessible to many children with disabilities. These structural barriers complicated the process of implementing inclusive education and the situation was made worse where cultural barriers and negative attitudes toward disability still dominated the education environment. Findings from the study indicated that none of the special needs education teachers had received a job description and most found it difficult and frustrating to establish exactly what was expected of them and impede their ability to fulfill their roles and responsibilities effectively and they feel inadequacy. The findings from the study indicate that the lack of job descriptions for special needs education teachers (SNETs) leads to several significant issues such as role ambiguity, inadequacy, impeded professional development. Those of previous studies e.g. Belias et al. (2014) discussed that employees are dissatisfied when they do not have a clear understanding of their jobs, Addae et.al. (2008) also stated that employees do not perform effectively as expected when they do not have clear information on their roles and the absence of clear job description increases the inaccuracy of job and role satisfaction and employees are forced to perform extra duties outside the job description (El-Hajji, 2011). And Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, & Doyle, 2001; Kyrene, 2000; Mueller, 2002) also highlight the persistency of pleas from teacher aides, teachers and administrators for the need to systematically develop clearly defined job descriptions, and knowledge and skill expectations, for teacher aides that specify the nature and scope of their responsibilities without such job descriptions teachers and other professionals may continue to have difficulty to discharging their responsibilities.

5.3. The Strategies and Support Systems Available that Facilitate Special Needs Education Teachers to Provide Specialized Services Needed to Address the Unmet Requirements of Students with Special Educational Needs

Findings from the study indicated that the schools developed training as a strategy in order to facilitate the work of special needs education teachers. The findings also agree those of previous studies as noted by Al-Zoubi, (2011), the training program had significant effects on both teachers' knowledge of the characteristics and needs of students with learning disabilities and their acceptance of including these students into their classroom, Winter (2007) also states, both pre-service preparation and in-service trainings are critical factors in helping teachers to formulate their beliefs about inclusion as well as affecting their ability to teach students with special needs.

The study findings showed that there is not enough cooperation among special needs education teachers and regular teachers. Ledoux et al. (2012) found that the lack of collaborative effort and staff preparation can negatively impact the implementation of inclusive education and Individualized Education Plans. Hunt et al. (2002) also noted that the lack of collaboration by professionals had been shown to negatively impact on the extent and quality of services provided to students with special needs.

The study findings confirmed that special needs education teachers are not discharge their responsibilities effectively due to a lack of job descriptions. Snyder et al. (2016) showed that without defined job descriptions; special needs education teachers may experience confusion about their specific responsibilities. This ambiguity can lead to inconsistent teaching practices and difficulty in prioritizing tasks, ultimately affecting the quality of education provided to students with special needs.

The study findings revealed that special needs education teachers are not received all necessary resources with an objective to enabling them to discharge their responsibility effectively. This finding were consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Ishartiwi et al and Attr (2012), which found that special needs education teachers challenging in accessing adaptive teaching material at school and face the difficulty to provide teaching materials that are appropriate to the deferent characteristics and individual experiences of each student.

The results of this study verified that special needs education teachers are not incentivized. This finding supported by (Hult et al. 2010) who found that lack of incentives it can as well discourage qualified and talented teachers who are ready to give their service in the profession. Conversely incentives are used in a wide range of industries, as a way to increase worker's motivation and productivity, by linking financial rewards with the output of the individual worker, the organization, or both (Lucifora”&”Origo, 2015).

The study also revealed that not all special needs education teachers are not to access effective job training. This finding supported by (Snyder et al., 2016) noted that lack of enough training can result in ineffective teaching strategies, which may impede student learning and social development and (Baker et al., 2018) also added insufficient training can lead to lower quality of education for students with special needs and teachers may not be equipped with the necessary

skills to implement individualized education plans (IEPs) effectively, which can hinder student progress.

5.4. The Way Forward to Enhance the Role of Special Needs Education Teachers in Promoting and Implementing Inclusive Education in their Respective School

The research results validate that on-going training, collaboration between special needs education teachers and general teachers, adaptive materials; well defined job descriptions for special needs education teachers, salary adjustments, award program, education opportunity, financial Incentives, budgets for special needs education, raise awareness, hire additional special education teachers and sign language interpreters, self motivation, and commitment are the mechanisms that they prefer to increase and strengthen the role of special needs education teachers to promoting inclusive education. These findings indicated several key points regarding the mechanisms preferred by special needs education teachers (SNETs) to enhance their roles and promote inclusive education: Lederer (2000) confirms teacher Collaboration, a strategy or an instructional technique has proved to be fruitful in various classrooms of special needs classrooms. It is more operative in inclusive classrooms as it takes advantage of the talents and skills of the participating teachers, (Friend “&”Bursuck, 2006; Gable & Hendrickson, 2000) added that the roles and responsibilities provided to special needs education teachers are the result of collaborative provisions that enable to learn, communicate and having skill in solving their problems. The study also confirmed that government, non-governmental organizations, school administration, and special needs education teachers, entire school community are responsible to maximizing the contribution of special needs education teachers to implement inclusive education. The federal government of Ethiopia proclaimed a document that all federal minister organizations are obliged by proclamation number 691/2003E.C that it states all ministries have responsible for implementing the issues of persons with disabilities in each ministry organizations.

6. Limitation of the study

The study focused solely on government secondary schools. Including private institutions (schools) or special education centers would have added diversity to the findings and enriched the understanding of the role and challenges of special needs education teachers.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1. Conclusion

The study indicates that special needs education teachers are not fully aware of their roles due to the absence of professional job descriptions which could make it difficult to carry out their duties. In light of the findings that special needs education teachers play vital roles in achieving inclusive education so that their roles will become increasingly significant in the future. According to the study's findings, special needs education teachers are not assigned at the right position within the school system which may make it more difficult for them to carry out their duties and may decrease the effectiveness of implementing inclusive education. Special needs education teachers confront challenges related to inadequate resources, both in terms of materials and personnel, which can make it difficult for them to meet the diverse needs of the student. Regular teachers and special needs education teachers did not collaborate well it would be difficult for special needs education teachers to effectively advocate for their students. The lack of budget allocation for special needs education teachers is a significant challenge to achieving inclusive education and the goal of inclusive education will remain at risk. The absence of a clear job description for special needs education teachers significantly undermines the effectiveness of inclusive education. This can lead to special needs education teachers may struggling to understand their specific duties, and the needs of special needs students will not meet.

6.2. Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were forwarded.

- The schools should foster regular collaboration between regular teachers and special needs education teachers through co-planning sessions, joint professional development, and team teaching initiatives.
- Schools should prioritize budget allocations for special needs education, ensuring that teachers have access to necessary materials, training, and additional personnel.
- Educational institutions should create clear job descriptions for special needs education teachers that clearly outline their roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

- Schools should develop an incentive structure that rewards SNETs for their specialized contributions to inclusive education.
- Schools should allocate adequate resources and accessibility, including funding for adaptive materials, facilities, and improve school infrastructure to ensure accessibility for all students, including those with physical disabilities.
- The educational authorities should address the shortage of trained professionals, such as sign language interpreters and additional SNETs, to ensure that every student with disabilities receives the attention and support they need.

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APPENDIX 1

Addis Ababa University

College of Education and Behavioral studies

Department of Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Date _____

Consent Letter

My name is MeronMinuye. I am a post graduate student of special needs and inclusive education in College of Education and Behavioral Studies at Addis Ababa University. The purpose of this interview guide is to gather information from special needs education teachers.

The objective of this study is to investigate the role and challenges of special needs education teachers in implementing inclusive education in selected two government schools. Therefore, I kindly request your willingness to respond some questions. The participation with this research is purely voluntary and you might not have any immediate benefit. However your response to each question is very essential for the study purpose. If you are willing, I will contact you at a convenient place and conduct the interview. The session of the interview will take a maximum of 1 hour. If it is appropriate, I will use the recorder to record based on your consent. The information you provide me will be secured and thus used only for the research purpose.

I would like to express my respect and thank you for your willingness to participate in the interview.

Interview Guide for special needs education teachers

I. Profile of the interviewee

Sex-----

Age-----

Position-----

Work experience-----

Qualification-----

Educational background-----

Name of the school: _____

II. Questions

Are special needs education teachers aware of their role and responsibility referring their job description?

- 1.1. What is your role in implementing inclusive education?
- 1.2. Are you aware of your role referring to your job description?
- 1.3. Do you have job description? If not, why? And how do you discharge your responsibility without job descriptions?
- 1.4. Do you believe that you have been assigned on the right place to do your work inline with your professional specialization? If not, why?
- 1.5. In your opinion are you well equipped with adaptive skills and specialized rehabilitation services needed for students with special educational needs? If not, why?
- 1.6. Do you have any prior experience working with students who have special educational needs? If yes, what you did to address the unique needs of student with special educational needs?

2. What are the challenges that special needs education teachers encountered in the course of the implementation of inclusive education in their respective school?

- 2.1. Have you faced barriers for the implementation of inclusive education in your school? If yes, what kind of measures have you taken to solve the problems?
- 2.2. In your opinion what are the basic challenges of SNE teachers that they face in practicing inclusive education?

- 2.3. Have you encountered challenges in providing support to general teachers?
- 2.4. Do you have complains regarding the involvement of the school management in practicing inclusive education and facilitating your work? If yes, please elaborate it briefly.
- 3. What are the strategies and support systems available that facilitate special needs education teachers to provide specialized services needed to address the unmet requirements of students with special educational needs?**
 - 3.1. Do you believe that there is preparedness of the school management for the promotion of inclusive education? If yes how?
 - 3.2. Is special needs education as a specific program mainstreamed in the annual action and budget plan of the school? If yes, how?
 - 3.3. Is there the availability of adaptive educational materials and devices needed to making your work effective in addressing the special educational needs of students with disabilities?
 - 3.4. What are the specific strategies or interventions do you apply to support students with special educational needs in your classroom?**
 - 3.5. Could you share an example of a successful intervention or support system you have implemented to address an unmet requirement of a student with special educational needs?
 - 3.6. What resources and assistive technologies do you utilize to enhance learning opportunities for students with special educational needs?
- 4. What should be done on the way forward to enhance the role of special needs education teachers in promoting and implementing inclusive education in their respective school?**
 - 4.1. What mechanisms you prefer to increase the role of special needs education teachers?
 - 4.2. What do you suggest to enhance the collaboration of SNE teachers with general education teachers to ensure the inclusion of students with special educational needs in inclusive class settings?
 - 4.3. How do you envision the future of inclusive education in your school, and what steps forward are necessary to further enhance the role of special needs education teachers in promoting and implementing inclusive practices?

4.4. Who should be responsible for the enhancement of the contribution of SNE Teachers in practicing Inclusive Education?

APPENDIX 2

Addis Ababa University

College of Education and Behavioral studies

Department of Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Date _____

I. Interview Guide for the school principals

Consent Letter

My name is MeronMinuye. I am a post graduate student of special needs and inclusive education in College of Education and Behavioral Studies at Addis Ababa University. The purpose of this interview guide is to gather information from school principal.

The objective of this study is to investigate the role and challenges of special needs education teachers in implementing inclusive education in selected two government schools. Therefore, I kindly request your willingness to respond some questions. The participation with this research is purely voluntary and you might not have any immediate benefit. However your response to each question is very essential for the study purpose. If you are willing, I will contact you at a convenient place and conduct the interview. The session of the interview will take a maximum of 1 hour. If it is appropriate, I will use the recorder to record based on your consent. The information you provide me will be secured and thus used only for the research purpose.

I would like to express my respect and thank you for your willingness to participate in the interview.

II. The Profile of the interviewees

Sex-----

Age-----

Position-----

Work experience-----

Educational background-----

Name of the school

III. Questions

1. Are special needs education teachers aware of their role and responsibility referring their job description?

- 1.1. Is there a specific job description prepared for SNE Teachers? If not why?
- 1.2. If your answer is yes, for question number 1.1, please explain briefly the main Components of your job description.
- 1.3. What is your opinion regarding the quality and the overall feature of the job description prepared and applied for SNE teachers?
- 1.4. **Do you believe that SNE teachers are aware of their responsibility and job description? If no, Why?** They don't have professional job descriptions but I believe they are aware of their responsibilities based on their education status and experiences.
- 1.5. Do you believe that special needs education teachers have a role in your school? If you say yes, what is their role in your school?

2. What are the challenges that special needs education teachers encountered in the course of the implementation of inclusive education in their respective school?

- 2.1. Does the school consider the specialized service of SNE teachers in developing annual action and budget plan of the school? If yes, is there earmarked budget to support and facilitate the engagement of SNE teachers? Please elaborate it briefly.
- 2.2. Are there specific challenges that special needs education teachers have faced while implementing inclusive education? If yes, please elaborate it briefly.
- 2.3. If your answer is yes, for question No 2.2, what kind of measures have been taken by the school management

3. What are the strategies and support systems available that facilitate special needs education teachers to provide specialized services needed to address the unmet requirements of students with special educational needs?

- 3.1. Did the school developed specific action plan to facilitate the service of SNE teachers? If yes, how it has been implemented?
- 3.2. What kind of strategy has been developed to facilitate the work of SNE teachers?

3.3. Do you believe that there is professional collaboration between SNE and General Teachers? If yes, how it will be manifested? If not, why?

3.4. Do you believe that SNE teachers have been receiving all necessary resources with an objective to enabling them to discharge their responsibility effectively?

3.5. Are SNE teachers incentivized to motivate their professional engagement? If yes how?

3.6. Is there the opportunity for SNE teachers to access on-the-job training and update their knowledge and skills? If yes, please elaborate it briefly.

4. What should be done on the way forward to enhance the role of special needs education teachers in promoting and implementing inclusive education in their respective school?

4.1. In what ways do you think that the role of special needs education teachers could be strengthened in their efforts to promote inclusive education?

4.2. In your opinion, what particular programs or initiatives could strengthen the role of special needs education teachers in implementing inclusive education?

4.3. What the school management should do for the improvement of the service of SNE teachers in practicing inclusive education?

APPENDIX 3

Addis Ababa University
College of Education and Behavioral studies
Department of Special Needs and inclusive education

Date _____

I. Focus group discussion guideline for students with special educational needs

Consent Letter

My name is MeronMinuye. I am a post graduate student of special needs and inclusive education in College of Education and Behavioral Studies at Addis Ababa University. The purpose of this focus group discussion is to gather information from school principals and special needs education teachers.

The objective of this study is to investigate the role and challenges of special needs education teachers in implementing inclusive education in selected two government schools. Therefore, I kindly request your willingness to respond some questions. The participation with this research is purely voluntary and you might not have any immediate benefit. However your response to each question is very essential for the study purpose. If you are willing, I will contact you at a convenient place. The discussion will take a maximum of 1 to two hours. The information you provide me will be secured and thus used only for the research purpose.

I would like to express my respect and thank you for your willingness to participate in the interview.

II. Profile of the interviewee

Sex-----

Age-----

Position-----

Experience-----

Qualification-----

Name of the school-----

III. Questions

- 1.1. Are special needs education teachers helping and supporting you in an effective way? If say yes how and in what ways they help you?
- 1.2. Do you believe that special needs education teachers of your school have been discharging its responsibility in terms of implementing inclusive education? Is so how? If no why?
- 1.3. Do you get available and adaptive service from special needs education teachers? If yes pleas describe the services? If no why?
- 1.4. What suggestions do you have for improving the support and services provided by special needs education teachers for students with disabilities?
- 1.5. In what way you suggest the services should be distributed for you in order to address your needs?
- 1.6. How you view the services of special needs education teachers?
- 1.7. What are your needs from special needs education teachers and what couldn't get from them?
- 1.8. Based on your needs what should be done to improve the contribution of special needs education teachers?