

**REPORT ON MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY ON
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION 2017-2021**

Submitted to

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November 2020

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CSEC : Civil Society Education Coalition

DEM : District Education Manager

FBO : Faith Based Organization

IE : Inclusive Education

LGAP: Local Government Accountability and Performance

MIE : Malawi Institute of Education

MoE : Ministry of Education

NGO : Non-Governmental Organization

PEA : Primary Education Advisor

PTA : Parents Teachers Association

SMC : School Management Committee

SNE : Special Needs Education

SCI : Save the Children International

Executive Summary

The Government of Malawi through Ministry of Education (MoE) developed the National Strategy on Inclusive Education with the aim of promoting equitable access to quality education to all learners regardless of differences in their abilities. This was an attempt to make a paradigm shift from focusing only on special needs education but rather take a broader approach of leveling the playground by taking on board all learners to ensure everyone has access to quality of education. The strategy has been in operation since 2017. In respect to this, Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC) contracted Dr. Zikani Kaunda and his team to carry out mid-line evaluation assessing the progress made so far towards implementation of the strategy.

The study which was conducted for 10 days involved meeting different stakeholders on inclusive education where data was collected through in-depth interviews, reviewing enrollment records and classroom observations. Meetings were arranged with Ministry officials at Ministry of Education headquarters, Non-governmental Organization (NGO) officials, District Education Managers (DEMs), Primary school Education Advisors (PEAs), Head Teachers for secondary and Primary Schools, Teachers for secondary and primary schools, Students, and Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) and School Management committee (SMC) members.

The study found out that some progress has been made on the implementation of IE strategy, ranging from capacity building of teachers to some improvement on infrastructure; however, there is still more that needs to be done by government and all players in order to make significant headway in achieving education for all children. This report has been divided into various sections including: s T=he Context of the Evaluation, Objective and Scope of the Mid-Term Evaluation , Evaluation Methodology, Findings and Analysis, challenges, Conclusions and Recommendations.

1.0 Context of the Evaluation

Inclusive Education “Is an education approach which entails that all learners attend and are welcomed by their local schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school.”¹ It entails developing and designing our schools, classrooms, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together”¹.

The following constructs guides a sound inclusive education system:

- **Presence:** Which entails the promotion of visibility of persons (recognition) who are normally at risk of exclusion from activities of peers in a normal learning context without withdrawal to “special classes or integrated segregation”².
- **Acceptance:** Relates to the degree to which communities and societies acknowledge the diversity and rights of those who are different from them to operate in similar educational and social settings²
- **Participation:** Entails involvement of learners with differentiated needs in the quality of their learning experiences
- **Achievement:** The promotion of higher academic progress of those with diverse needs with better socio-emotional interactions in inclusive settings².

Globally, as per the SDG 4, achieving inclusive and quality education for all reiterates the belief that education is one of the most powerful and proven vehicles for accelerating sustainable development². This goal ensures that all girls and boys irrespective of their status complete free primary and secondary education by 2030³. In Malawi, the National Education Policy Priority Area 3 under Quality Teacher Education (Primary and Secondary)

¹ www.inclusinbc.org

² School cultures and structures affecting inclusive education principles: Implications for the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education in Namibia), Haihambo et al (2014)

³ Sustainable Development Goals

underscores the need to mainstream special and inclusive education in all learning cycles and Priority Area 4 highlights the importance of enhancing equitable access to quality and relevant special and inclusive education to ensure that no child is left out in the learning cycle.⁴

Against this background, the role of mainstream schools with an inclusive orientation approach is very critical in contending discriminatory attitudes, which contributes to building a society where all people are allowed to showcase their potential and helps to achieve education for all as per the Malawi Growth and development Strategy II^{5,2}. A number of studies have highlighted the important role played by inclusive education which includes ensuring that children with diverse needs are also given access to quality education thereby contributing to positive education outcomes⁶. Similarly, findings presented by several researchers demonstrate that a greater percentage of children with diverse needs ranging from mental retardation to physical disabilities can ably attend mainstream schools so long as there is an enabling environment to facilitate access of such children².

*"The key challenge is to ensure that the broad vision of Education for All as an inclusive concept is reflected in national government and funding agency policies. Education for All must take account of the need of the poor and the most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers, nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health; and those with special learning needs"*⁷

⁴ The National Education Policy, 2013

⁵ Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II

⁶ Exploring Teachers' Special and Inclusive Education Professional Development Needs in Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe

⁷ United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2003

Worse still, for meaningful inclusion to take place, there should be changes in context, approaches, structures and strategies with a shared vision and conviction that it is the responsibility of regular education systems to educate all students including a paradigm shift to remove physical and social barriers to learning so as to create genuinely inclusive learning environments, communities and societies⁸. In the recent past, the Government of Malawi has made strides towards taking full responsibility over ensuring that it attains “Education for All” which includes learners with diverse needs. This is where it developed the “Inclusive Education Strategy”. However, due to limited funding and availability of data, , non-state actors, individuals and faith-based organisations joined hands with the Government Malawi to share the responsibility of providing education to all learners including those with impairments⁹. According to the Global Partnership for Education summaries, the lack of data extremely undermines countries’ ability to build and implement sound education sector plans which implies that data availability remains a critical issue in many GPE developing country partners¹⁰.

Against this background, the National Strategy on Inclusive Education (NSIE) aims at upholding children’s right to education and achieving quality education for all. It reaffirms GoM’s commitment to improving access to quality education at all levels without leaving out or behind any group of children¹¹. The strategy was developed on the premise that inclusive education is not a new phenomenon in Malawi as there were some activities that were already on the ground which only required to be strengthened and coordinated by the Ministry of Education.

⁸ Haihambo C. K. (2010). Inclusive Education: Challenges of students with disabilities in higher education institutions in Namibia.

⁹ Mkandawire et al, 2016. A comparative assessment of special education situations between Lesotho and Malawi

¹⁰ The Global Partnership for Education,

¹¹ National Strategy on Inclusive Education, 2017-2021

3.0 Objectives and Scope of the Mid-Term Evaluation

3.1 Objectives - The following were the objectives of the Mid-term Evaluation

1. To assess the transformation of the education system in alignment with inclusive education policies and practices.
2. To assess capacity development for inclusive education in Malawi including trend in financing of the sector by relevant stakeholders.
3. To evaluate progress made towards creation of an enabling environment for inclusive education in schools in Malawi.
4. To establish current status on inclusive teaching and learning in schools.
5. To assess the capacity of education institution in early identification and intervention.
6. To assess the level of community participation in the management and governance of inclusive education.
7. To assess the efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the impact made so far.
8. To make recommendations on areas to improve for better implementation of the strategy.

3.2 Scope

The assignment entailed review of literature and collection of primary data aimed at highlighting current successes, barriers, opportunities, drivers and lessons-learnt in the implementation of NSIE strategy and assess its contribution to improved education access for children with diverse needs. The consultant appreciated that the NSIE implementation is at the middle-line now, which was the right time to assess the progress and impact that the project is making, weighing in on the need to ensure that sustainability in implementation of the strategy is achieved.

4.0 Evaluation Methodology

This was a mixed methods study, employing literature review, quantitative and qualitative methods, and was designed as follows:

4.2 Evaluation Design

4.2.1 Document Reviews

A number of relevant education documents in Malawi were reviewed. These documents included the following:

- National Education Policy
- Malawi Growth and Development strategy II & III
- National Strategy on Inclusive Education
- CSEC strategic Plan
- EMIS 2019
- Education Sector Performance Report 2019
- Other relevant literatures on inclusive education

These documents provided a landscape picture of the education sector, in general, and inclusive education, in particular, in Malawi.

4.2.2 Quantitative Data

A quantitative data collection tool was utilized to collect enrollment numbers for each school (see Appendix 1). This tool was administered by a research assistant, and at times self-administered by the respondent depending on his / her availability and preference due to COVID-19. Such respondents included: the head teachers or their designated officers.

4.2.3 In-depth Interviews

Key Informant Interviews were conducted from higher levels of government to partners/stakeholders, Districts (DEMs), Zones (PEAs) Schools (Head teacher, Special

Needs Teachers and school governance and management structures (PTAs, Mother Groups, SMCs). Each level of respondents had a structured data collection guide as given in appendices.

4.2.4 Classroom observation

Another method used for data collection was classroom observation. A research assistant visited a chosen school early in the morning to observe learners as they arrive at school. Interactions being made by all students were being observed and documented on a standard tool as given in the appendix section (see Appendix 9.6). The research assistant further went into a classroom to observe how teachers were delivering lessons and also noted the Teacher-learner, learner – teacher, teacher – teacher, and learner-learner interactions.

4.3 Sampling

Due to resources and time constraints, 4 districts were purposively selected to be part of the evaluation. The selection was to be geographically representative, according to administrative and education divisions divides. One secondary school and one primary school were also purposively selected in each of the districts.

Table 1 below summaries the districts and schools that were sampled.

District	Primary School	Secondary School
Chiradzulu	St Michael Full Primary School	Chiradzulu Secondary School
Lilongwe	Chiwoko Primary School	Mkwichi Day Secondary School

Mzimba North	Katoto Primary School	Ekwendeni Community Day Secondary School
Zomba	Chikamveka Primary School	Likangala Day Secondary School

In addition to the districts, critical stakeholders were sampled for interviews, according to the role they are playing in the IE space. The table below summarizes the stakeholders and the reason for selecting them.

Table 2: Other Stakeholders that were interviewed

Stakeholder	District	Rationale
Ministry of Education -HQ	Lilongwe	Policy holder
Unicef	Lilongwe	Provided funding and technical support for/in drafting the National Strategy on Inclusive Education
Save the Children	Lilongwe	Implementation grant recipient
FEDOMA	Blantyre	Umbrella body for the disabled in Malawi
Livingstonia Synod	Mzimba North	Implementing Partner – North
Blantyre Synod	Blantyre	Implementing Partner - South
National Reading Program	Lilongwe	Implementing Partner

4.4 Evaluation Period

This evaluation was conducted for 15 days in the month of October, 2020.

4.5 Data Management

Quantitative data were analyzed in Ms Excel, using summations and graphical presentations. Content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. Research assistants took detailed notes from the key informant interviews. Codes were generated from the notes which formed the basis for data analysis.

5.0 Findings and Analysis

5.1 Document review

We found out that Inclusive Education in Malawi follows the standard principles of presence of learners with diverse needs, acceptability of such learners by the fellow learners and teachers, participation of such learners into school activities, and equal achievement of learners irrespective of their diversity². With regards to sustainable development goals, SG4 recognize education as a powerful tool to accelerate human development hence emphasizes on the need for each learner irrespective of his/her status to be given opportunity to education³. The National Education Policy also highlights the importance of equal access to education. The study also found out that creation of an enabling environment to pupils with diverse needs has proved that such learners can achieve higher academic progress just like their counterparts⁴.

The document review identified some gaps in the way Malawi Government promotes inclusive education to the extent that the responsibility of championing inclusive education was left to implementing partners and not the Ministry of Education⁵. Lack of data for implementation of sound education plans including plans related to inclusive education undermines the efforts towards ensuring "Education for All" children irrespective of their status¹⁰. The National Strategy on Inclusive Education is better placed to contribute towards positive education outcomes like increased enrollment and reduce drop - out rate of learners with diverse needs including creation of an enabling environment for schools to effectively implement inclusive education¹¹. However, what is missing is the National Policy on Inclusive Education which makes the reinforcement of NSIE implementation hard.

5.2 Access to education

From the sampled schools, there was a total of 8,982 and 3,425 learners in primary and secondary schools respectively. Out of these numbers, the schools had registered 221 (2%) and 110 (3%) learners with special needs in primary and secondary schools respectively. Figures below illustrate the distribution of all students versus special needs in both primary and secondary schools. While some schools were not able to provide enrollment data, especially for special needs students, data started to be available from

2018 to 2020. This highlights two things; first the need to strengthen data management protocols in schools; and second it suggests that the NSIE has had an impact as from its launch in 2017, data is reflecting this with each passing year.

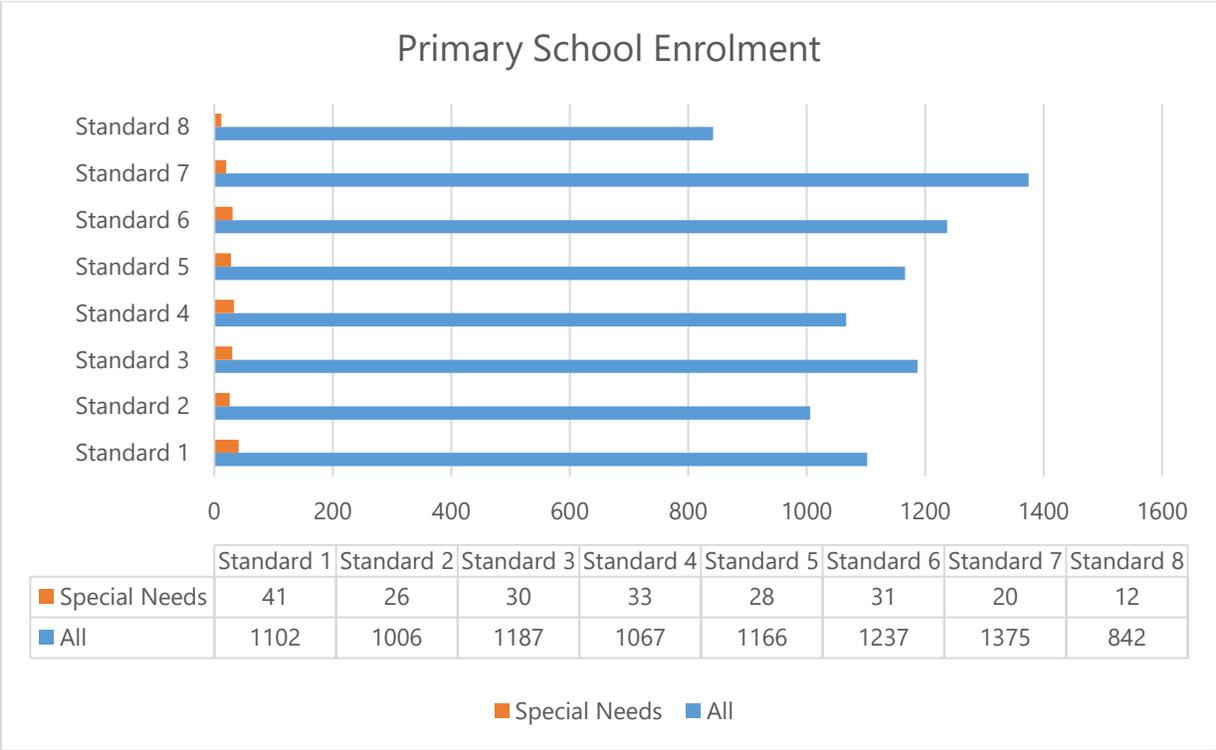


Figure 1: Data on Primary School Enrollment

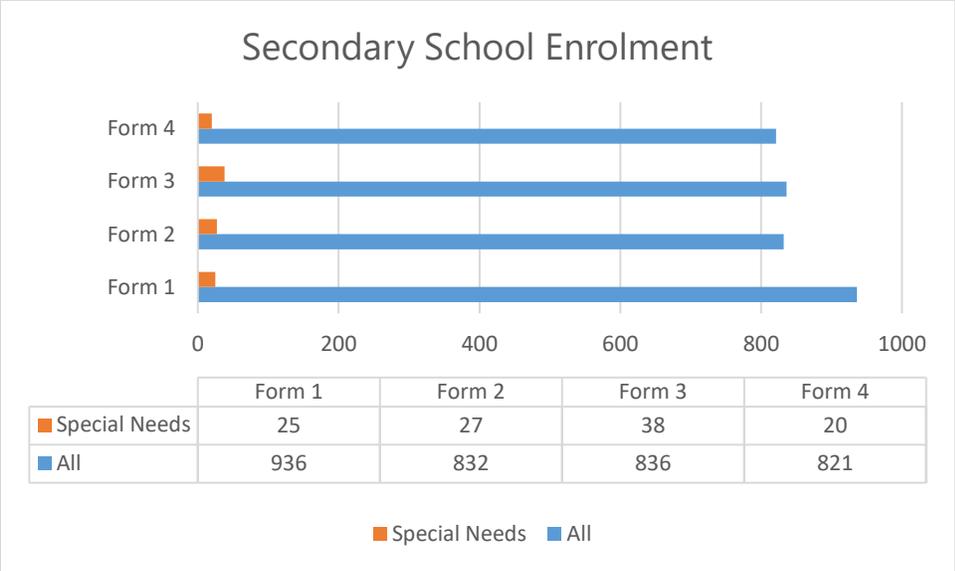


Figure 2: Data on Secondary School Enrolment

Primary schools had a total of 192 teachers, while secondary schools had 194 teachers. Four percent of primary school teachers were experts in IE while secondary schools had 3%. The charts below show the distribution of teachers in primary and secondary schools.

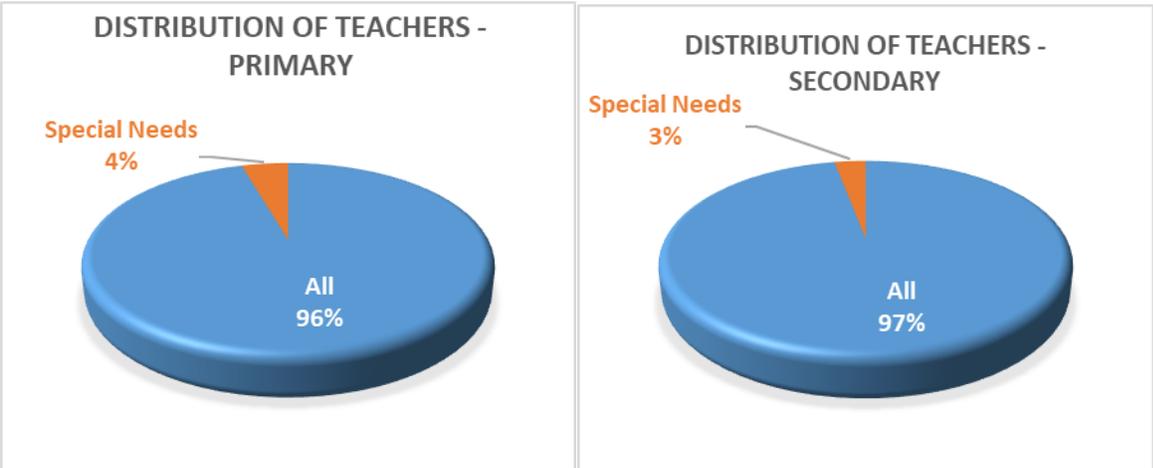


Figure 3: Distribution of teachers at primary and secondary school

From the data presented above, it shows that learners with diverse needs were accommodated in mainstream schools. Also, the data shows that there are few numbers of specialist teachers to ably assist learners with diverse needs.

5.2 Transformation of the Education System

(a) Teachers being trained and oriented on Inclusive Education/ Increased availability of Inclusive Education teachers

Statistics shows that some teachers were trained, total of 177, out of over 5000 primary schools were trained as specialist teachers. Despite the government training these teachers in 2014, there is still a gap in terms of availability of such specialist teachers to handle learners with diverse needs.

From the data that was gathered during this study, the critical role played by specialist teachers in ensuring inclusion and equal access to education cannot be overemphasized as echoed by one head teacher:

"Inclusive Education specialist teachers are instrumental in identifying learners in class with learning difficulties. These efforts make it possible for such learners to be accommodated and access education as everybody else, H1".

The study on inclusive education explains that one of the best practices in inclusive education is the identification of learners with diverse needs and modification of the curriculum to accommodate learners with diverse needs. When inclusive education specialist teacher conducts this, the regular teachers learn from them which makes it possible for some of the regular teachers to adopt and start implementing in classrooms hence having a multiplier effect since specialist teachers are not adequate to cater for the needs of all learners with diverse needs. Nevertheless, there is a feeling that the teachers

should get a thorough well organized basic training elsewhere outside their duty station which can be organised by implementing partners. This feeling affects the effectiveness of implementing the cascading model type of training that is currently being practiced in schools.

(b) Increased enrolment for learners with diverse needs

The paradigm shifts from deterring learners with diverse needs to incorporating all learners regardless of their status has led to some increase in enrolment of learners with diverse needs in mainstream schools. Suffice to say that only 2018 enrolment data was available hence the researchers were not able to show the trend. The increased enrolment has been catalysed by consolidated efforts from implementing partners and school authorities which are being attributed to the awareness that was done to the communities about goodness of providing education opportunities to all learners regardless of their status. As per the respondents from this study, community sensitisation campaigns advocated by school governance structures and implementing partners have resulted to mind set change of parents that pupils/students with diverse needs should also be given equal access to education as their fellow counter-parts.

“We as parents used to exclude learners with diverse needs in school activities, we used to leave them at home because we thought they will never achieve anything meaningful in their life while their counterparts were in school. The sensitisation campaign by implementing partners has enlightened us that disability in whatever form is not inability hence we have taken a bold step of not leaving anyone behind” P2

(C) Infrastructural development

During this study, it was observed that despite that there are some challenges regarding infrastructural development, there are some positive strides that have been made in relation to improvement in infrastructure.

"There is infrastructure development in schools such as construction of ramps to help learners with mobility challenges so that they easily access classrooms and the fixing of translucent roofs has helped to improve lighting for learners with visual impairments, P1".

65% percent of the schools visited during the study had made some improvements in infrastructure. This was highly notable in schools where the Inclusive Education Strategy is being implemented with support from development partners like Save the Children.

"In the past most of the classrooms were not user friendly to some learners as such those learners with mobility challenges were finding it difficult to access classrooms and other facilities like toilets" H3.

There is also an initiative by 30% of the schools that were visited during the study which involved the use of translucent roofs as one way of improving lighting in classrooms so as to improve visibility for those with sight problems. The study found out that there is a significant element of community participation in the construction of school infrastructure through School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parents Teacher Association (PTAs) who were very involved in the identification of the contractor and provision of local resources like sand.

d) Communities taking part in identification and referral of IE learners

The study found out that more communities are taking an integral part in identification and referral of learners.

"Through the help of partners like Save the Children, Blantyre Synod, a number of tools have been developed which helps teachers and the community to identify

learners with diverse needs and provides guidance on how such cases can be managed, P1”.

In the education zones where implementing partners are advancing interventions related to inclusive education, collaborative efforts between such partners and the schools has led to conducting sensitization on identification of learners with diverse needs and devise an appropriate intervention accordingly as highlighted above by one PTA member. The study has also learnt that when students are being enrolled at school, the parents/guardians are asked about the status of their children/wards. This is done as one way of identifying the learners which require special handling so that everybody is taken on board and assisted accordingly. When they are missed at enrolment, teachers identify them during lessons in classrooms and they engage with PTA and parents. During lessons, specialist teachers with the expertise they have, are able to identify such learners. When such learners are identified at school level, they engage the PTA which in turn interface with the guardians depending on the case. This ensures that the teachers and parents work hand in hand in making sure that the learners are assisted accordingly and have the same access to education as their counterparts.

In several cases, mild cases are usually handled by specialist teachers whereas severe cases are referred to other institutions such as hospitals for further management. In this way, we see that there are some positive changes being made in the education system which is ensuring that parents and communities participate in the identification process thereby building ownership and sustainability of the intervention

(e) Establishment of resource centres

Resource rooms

The study revealed that special needs classroom resource centres have been established in some schools. A special needs resource centre is a basically a room which is set aside for inclusive education specialist teachers to meet learners with severe impairments. It's in such rooms that the teachers assist learners individually depending on one's level of capability as retaliated by one of the Head teachers,

"Special needs pupils are given special attention in the resource room depending on the severity of their condition. In the resource room there is a special need education teacher who takes care of them. Inside this room, the learners are taught according to the individual levels of capability, H3."

The research learnt that learners are usually attended to in the morning when classes start and later these learners are released back to their individual classes to join their friends in the normal stream. Unlike in the past where learners with serious diverse needs were automatically excluded from the education system, the resource centres are acting as reformatory centres which provides equal chance of all pupils to access quality education. Resource Centres: During the study we learnt that there are few resource centres that were constructed many years ago mainly by religious organization i.e. Ekwendeni resource centre; NsiyaLudzu resource centre, Salima resource centre; Malingunde resource centre; Montfort etc. These resource centres act a place where learners with very serious learning challenges are accommodated and attended to by special needs teachers. The teachers from these centres also support learners with difficulties that are in main stream schools which are near the resource centres. What the study learnt that such special needs teachers cover quite long distances. However, mobility is a big problem and their services are not adequately felt by the learners and teachers.

(f) Change of teaching methodology to include IE and availability of literature on IE

During the interviews with the teachers, they mentioned that they change the methodology of teaching whenever they identify learners with special needs. The teacher

focuses on learner centred approach which puts much emphasis on the learner as an individual. By so doing, the teacher is supposed to teach in such a way that learning becomes of great meaning to every learner in the classroom. It was also noted that implementing partners working on IE education has invested into development of IE literature which is readily available and accessible by all players in the field. All these efforts contribute to transforming the education system and making it more responsive to all learners irrespective of their status. Despite the teachers making such claims during the interviews, it can be argued that some teachers do not pay attention to some learners with diverse needs going by what was observed during classroom observations. See what was observed in this class **(to be added in the next version)**

5.3 Capacity Development

In general, it was found that there has been progress and encompassing capacity development of inclusive development stakeholders. At all levels, DEMs, PEAs, head teachers, teachers and communities have benefited from a variety of capacity development initiatives. These initiatives have been provided by the MoE, development partners, local NGOs and faith-based organizations, as evidenced by one DEM as follows:

"Catholic Diocese and Local Government Accountability & Performance project have been assisting in orienting teachers on IE as well as community sensitization on the same. Ministry of Education also help in building the capacity of PEAs, school governing bodies i.e. PTAs, SMCs on their roles in inclusive education"

The study established that focus of content for each group differed, according to their role in provision of inclusive education. The figure below summarizes focus areas which were found to be imparted to the different stakeholders.

District (DEM, PEA)	School (Heads and Teachers)	Community (Parents, PTA, Mother Groups)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •IE implementation monitoring and supervision •Resource mobilization •Funds and resource allocation •Inclusive education teaching methodology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •IE implementation •Case identification •Case management •Case referral •Teaching methodology •Funds/resources mobilization •funds/resources allocation •Parents and learner counselling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Case identification •Case management •Case referral •Learner counselling •Funds/ resources mobilization

Figure 4: Role of different actors in capacity building related to inclusive education

What was noted is that lack of funds does affect the district / divisional members of staff to carry out their roles thereby affecting the quality of inclusive education that is delivered to the learners. One such critical role is the supervision / support of teachers on teaching methodology. There is capacity gap between what the teachers are oriented upon and what is actually delivered in class. Follow-up and supervision would make a big difference.

5.4 Trends in financing

From qualitative interviews, it was found that funding for inclusive education varies from district to district. Most of the districts reported that a percentage of the district’s annual education budget is allocated to IE. One district reported that 2% of the annual budget is allocated to IE. This is made possible because of the districts’ IE coordinating unit at division level. Though such is the case, as the chart below illustrates, one district reported fluctuating figures over the last three years.

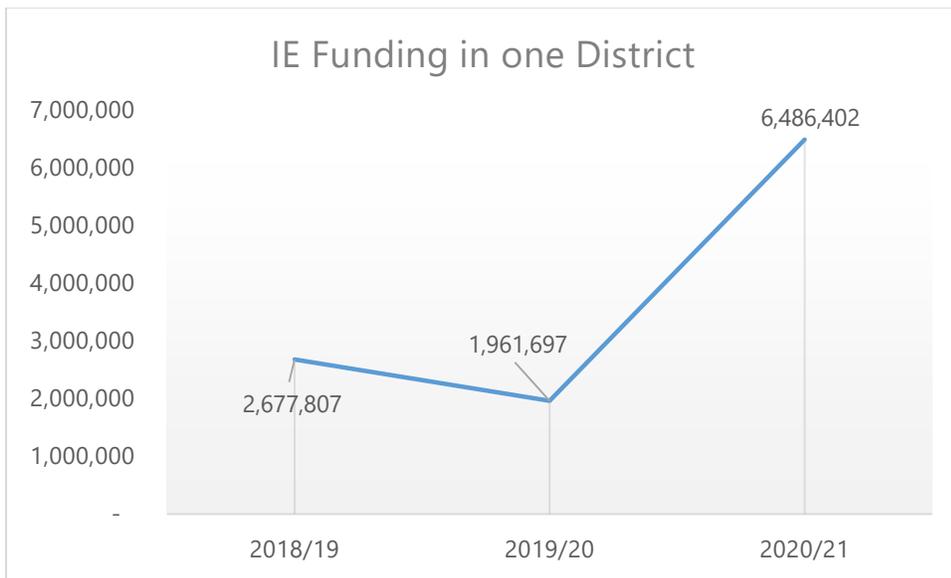


Figure 5: Trends in financing of inclusive education over the past 3 years

There was a sudden jump in funding allocation between 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 which can be attributed to orientation by different education stakeholders on the importance of inclusive education. Mostly, the funding was used for construction of ramps in order to create an enabling environment for learners with mobility challenges. At school level, funding mechanisms are also different, largely in proportionate figures to the budget as well. Most schools reported an allocation of 40% of their funding to learning, access and equity, which may indirectly speak to IE as part of it is used to construction of ramps to improve access for the learners with mobility difficulties. It was also reported that some School Improvement Grant funds are allocated to IE activities. The study found that SMCs played a pivotal role in ensuring that there is an allocation to IE from SIG. One of the SMC members stated "The head teacher calls us and asks the members to help in deciding what type of materials we should prioritize in purchasing in order to serve the learners with special needs".

5.5 Creating an enabling environment for inclusive education in Schools

Since the rolling out of National Strategy for inclusive Education in 2017, a number of players have taken an integral role in creating a conducive environment for learners with diverse needs to thrive and excel in schools as their fellow counterparts. These includes implementing partners, school governance and management structures (Mother groups, SMCs and PTAs), the community in general, as well as government players like the DEM, PEA, specialist teachers and regular teachers. This in a way has promoted inclusion of pupils in the education system including mainstream schools. The study revealed a number of interventions advanced by different players that has contributed to the creation of enabling environment as follows;

a) Change of teaching methodology to include IE

Unlike in the past where the curriculum at Teacher Training Colleges across Malawi did not pay particular attention to learners with diverse needs, there is currently a Module on IE at TCC which outlines how best to ensure that no child is disadvantaged or discriminated against as a result of his/her condition. This module encourages a paradigm shift of separating learners with different challenges and teaching them on their own and promotes inclusivity in the education arena among all learners. In addition, the guidelines for inclusive education were produced and are being used by different players including introduction of inclusive education course at Montfort Teachers College. This is what was stated by one of the head teachers from a primary school:

“Unlike in the past, the teaching methodology by most teachers in mainstream schools has been modified to accommodate pupils with learning difficulties to ensure that no child is left out in the process, H1”

Unfortunately, teachers who graduated sometime back were not oriented on inclusive education concept which presents a gap. Also, as highlighted above, during classroom

observations, there was a slight mismatch between what the head teacher and other teachers mentioned and there was less of modification of teaching methodology.

- b) Improvements in infrastructure to facilitate learning among learners with diverse needs

The study revealed that for the past 3 years, mainstream schools have experienced infrastructural transformation of its structures ranging from construction of ramps to accommodate learners with mobility challenges to construction of translucent roof to improve illumination of classrooms for the sake of pupils/students with poor vision.

“Generally, infrastructure has been reworked to make it accessible by all learners, for example, construction of ramps. Most schools have managed to adopt translucent roofs which help to improve lighting in the classroom e.g. Chiwoko Zone, DM 1”.

- c) Establishment of classroom resource centres

Respondents on this study believe that creation of classroom resources centres in various mainstream schools is a positive step towards creation of an enabling environment which is critical for ensuring inclusive education. It is at these classroom resource centres where learners with critical learning difficulties are managed before referring them to mainstream classroom. This promotes school achievement by learners with diverse needs by ensuring that the learners are prepared and shaped for mainstream classes to ensure that their learning outcomes are not affected in the long run. This is in agreement with the National Education Strategy which underscores the need to ensure inclusivity within

the education sphere without living behind any deserving learner¹². Despite the classroom resource centres being established in many mainstream schools, it was learnt that stocking such classroom resource centres with necessary equipment to enhance learning of pupils/students with critical learning difficulties is not up to standard. It is only during special circumstances that the classroom resource centres are properly stocked i.e. during administration of national examination only.

To understand availability of teaching and learning materials for special needs students, it was found that none of the visited primary schools had any such materials. Secondary schools, though not well stocked, were better. Three out of the four visited secondary schools had some materials, mostly for visual aiding. Two schools had computers and projectors only for magnifying texts, while one school had magnifying glass, telescope, wheel chair and hearing aids.

An emphasis on stocking visual aids is supported by what the study found, in terms of distribution of inabilities among the learners. While no school had totally blind learners, slightly more than half of them (54%) had partial blindness. Figure 6 below illustrates the distribution of inabilities by learners in the schools.

¹² Malawi National Education Policy, 2013

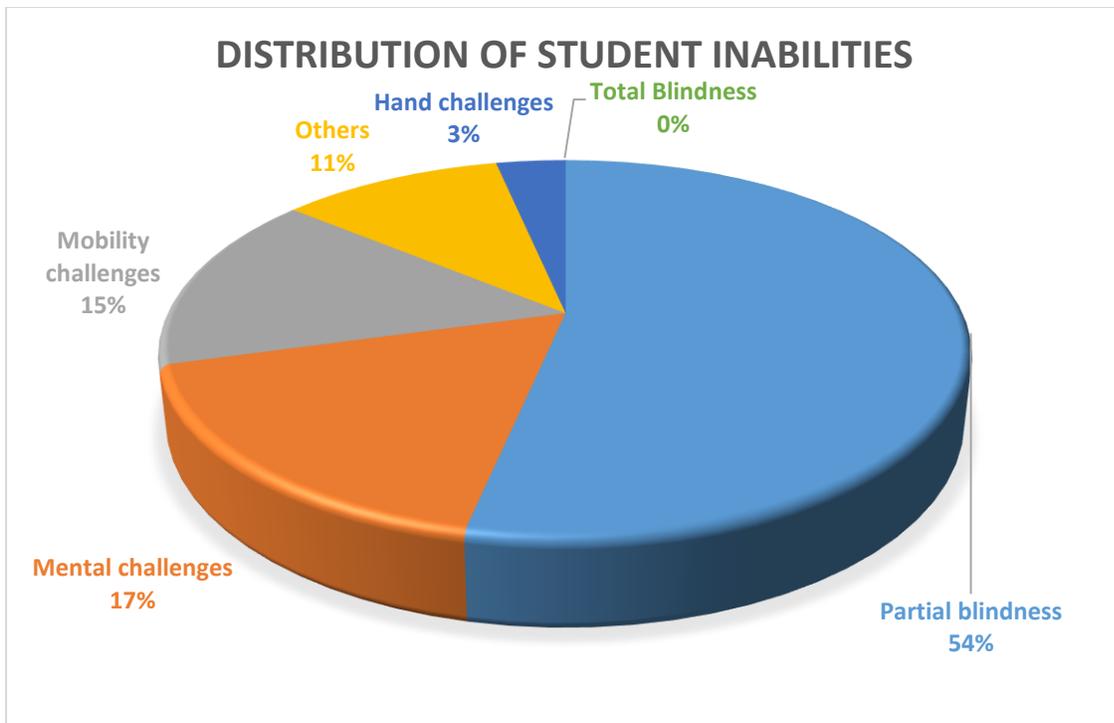


Figure 6: distribution of inabilities among learners

d) Sensitization of learners to accommodate fellow learners with diverse needs o

Of interesting to note was the fact that there have been sensitisation campaigns by teachers on the need for each learner to accommodate pupils/students with diverse needs and refrain from any discriminatory acts or remarks.

“The coming in of partners like save the Children to support inclusive education has contributed to a change in attitude towards the way we handle learners with diverse needs, we have now learnt to accommodate learners with diverse needs and such a spirit is being imparted on students as well, stiffer punishment is being given to any learner insulting a fellow learner with diverse needs” T1.

During our visit to the school, we observed regular students supporting students with diverse needs through by pushing a wheel chair when entering the classroom and no student with diverse needs was walking alone. This is proven to promote a conducive environment for learners with diverse needs to equally thrive in classrooms hence

providing them with an opportunity to excel in their studies. The teachers informed interviewers that any form of discrimination on learners with diverse needs has proved to negatively affect their class performance hence denying them their bonafide right to education as provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi.

e) Orientation of regular teachers (Identification, Case management, Referral)

Critical towards creation of an enabling environment for all learners to thrive in their education is the capacity building of regular teachers on inclusive education. As seen from EMIS data, the Education special needs teachers are not enough which means that they cannot be able to teach all the subjects. This underscores the importance of capacitating regular teachers on identification, management and referral of learners with diverse needs. For example, Chiwoko Primary School in Lilongwe has a teacher compliment of 44. Out of this, only one teacher (2%) is a special needs specialist. The expectation is that this teacher should be supporting all the 18 special needs learners at the school, that are spread in all the classes (Standard 1 – 8), in addition to supporting with identification of special needs learners from a total of 2,332 regular learners enrolled at the school. If the other 43 teachers are capacitated, this may lessen the work load on this one teacher and has potential to make the identification process yield more and meaningful results. Study participants at Chikamveka Primary School indicated that two trainings have taken place targeting regular teachers on the parameters of inclusive education highlighted above. This coupled with integration of IE in the school curricula at TTC provides a positive step towards ensuring that regular teachers are better placed to assist all learners irrespective of their status. Nevertheless, most participants in this study lamented that the training of teachers which was largely facilitated by Save the Children, Livingstonia synod and Blantyre synod took place three years ago hence need for a refresher/new training. The situation is worsened by the transferring of teachers from one school to another, leaving

other schools with no special needs teachers/ or with some knowledge on inclusive education

5.6 Capacity of education institutions in early identification of students with learning disabilities and determining the intervention

On one hand, the study revealed that when enrolling learners, parents/ guardians are asked about the status of their children/wards which forms a basis for a particular school to gather basic information about the learners. There is a "Disability Education Resource Guide (DERG) that was developed under Early Grade Reading Project (EGRA)" which is being utilized in identifying learners with disability in some schools under the National Reading Program (NRP). However, there is need to train / orient the teachers on this guide. This is where special needs teachers become very instrumental so that regular teachers, parents and the school governing bodies can carry out the identification of diverse needs of pupils/students which are not clearly observable and makes recommendations on how to manage the situation. Worse still, school governance structures which include; PTA, mother groups and SMCs are very critical in the identification process through creation of awareness on the need for parents to take part in declaring status of their child and also ensuring that parents are encouraged to ensure that all children (including those with diverse needs) participate in learning. On the other hand, one critical player involved in identification of learners with diverse need is the teacher. In all the districts that the study was conducted, study participants underscored the critical role played by teachers in this arena. More often than not, the communities miss-out learners with diverse needs to the extent that such learners are admitted in schools without any background of diversity.

Much as it is important for all learners to be included in school irrespective of their status, it is of great importance if the magnitude of the diversity is taken note of and correct

measures employed to ensure that such an enabling environment is created for each pupil/student in the learning process irrespective of his/her status.

“Normally pupils with diverse needs are identified by teachers, who eventually report to PTA that engages the parents to take an action depending on the nature of diversity. The PTA then links up with teachers on next course of action which they sometimes refer to their resource center, P4”.

As such, the critical role played by teachers in identification and intervention cannot be overemphasized. The need to equip every pupil/student who can potentially be discriminated with knowledge and skills in the society was emphasized by Mgomozulu in his study on review of NSIE¹³. Last but not least, the capacity of schools in identification and intervention is also demonstrated during student selection from primary to secondary schools – learners of diverse needs are highlighted so that the recipient school is ready and prepared to create an enabling environment for those with diverse needs. In some cases, students with diverse needs i.e. those with albinism are transferred from CDSS to boarding secondary school for proper management. As highlighted in the above paragraph under this section, some schools are unable to identify students early enough due to unavailability of specialist teachers who are very critical in identifying diverse needs which are not easily observable and presented by those having them.

It is important to highlight that in general, enrolment of special needs students has increased in the schools. As can be appreciated from figures 7 and 8 below, this increase has been registered from the year 2017. This speaks to the contribution that the NSIE has had on identification of special needs learners, and including them in the mainstream schools.

¹³ A Review of the National Strategy on Inclusive Education (2017-2021) in Malawi

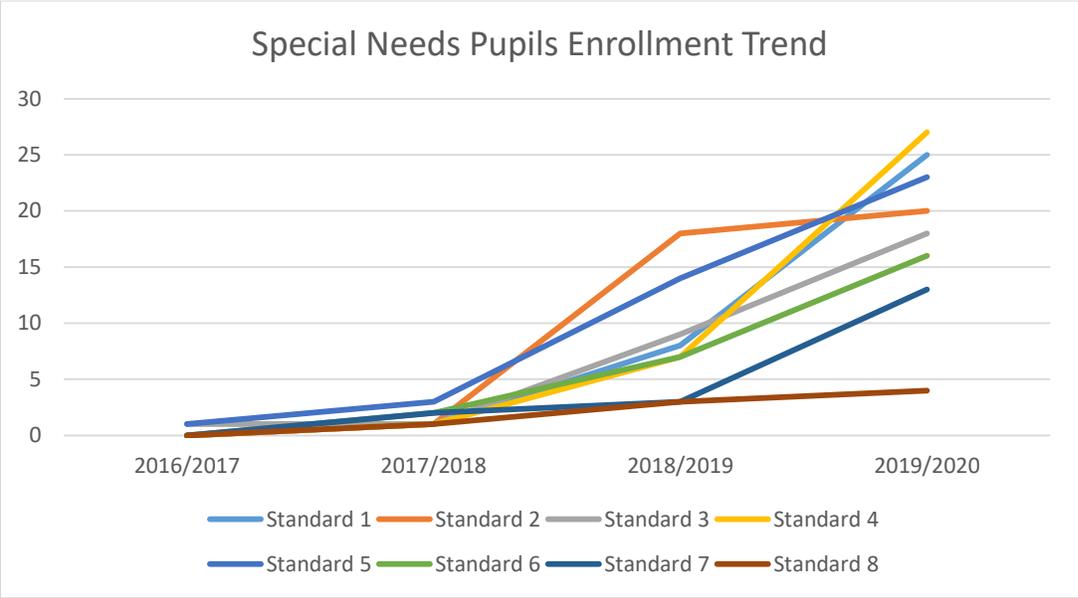


Figure 7: Special needs student enrolment trend for primary schools

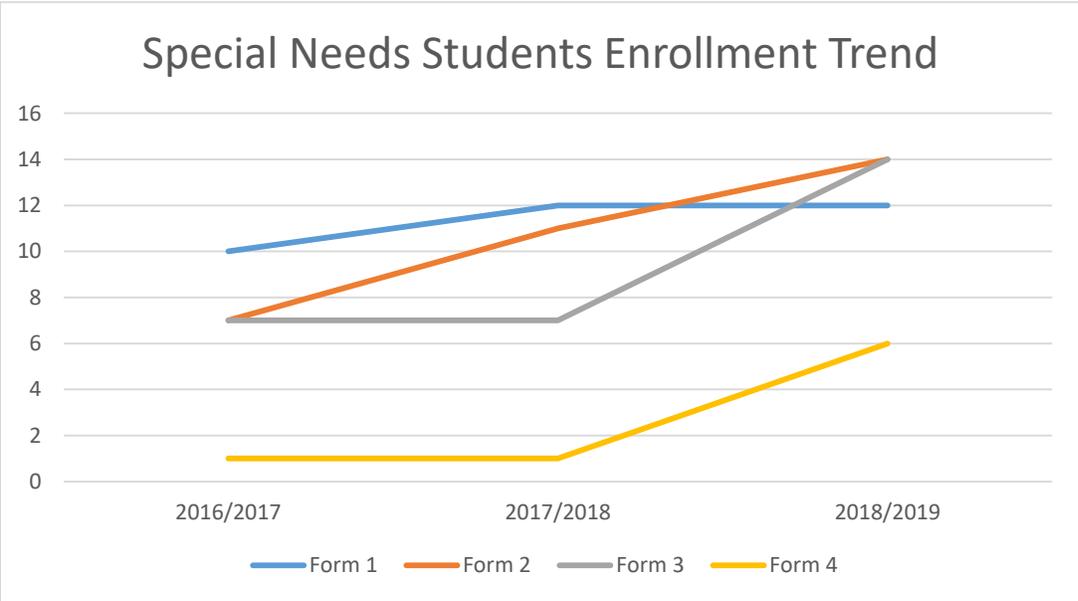


Figure 8: Special needs pupils' enrolment trend for secondary schools

The diagram below, figure 9, demonstrates role of different actors on identification and intervention.

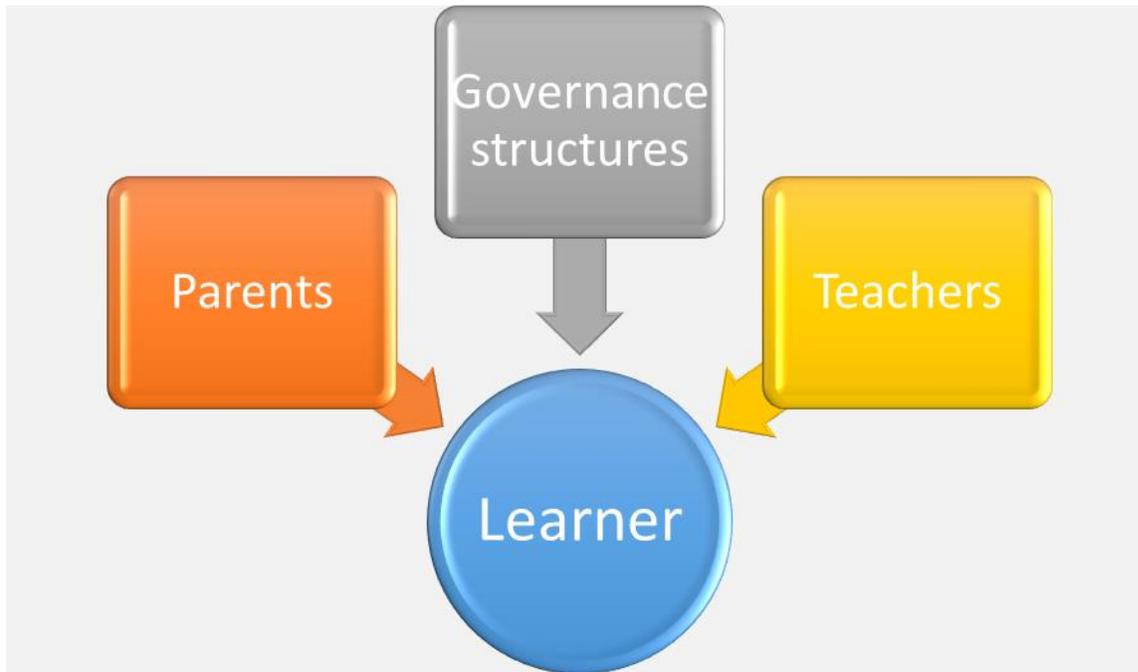


Figure 9: Actors in identification and intervention of learners with diverse needs

5.7 Community participation in the management and governance of inclusive education

Annually, according to one of the study participants, the schools like Chikamveka Primary are given a certain percentage (2%) which is specifically allocated towards implementation of inclusive education which is part of the School Improvement Grant (SIG). The school decides what to do with the funding depending on their priorities. It is the responsibility of the School Management Committee to make such decisions which includes procurement of teaching and learning materials on inclusive education.

In the implementing areas, more especially where there is partner intervention, sensitisation was reinforced. The communities were highly sensitised on the inclusive education concept. The partners, specialist teachers and governing bodies such as PTAs

are the ones that are on the ground providing awareness campaigns to parents on importance of sending every child to school regardless of their challenges; and benefits of early declaration of such children. Study has also revealed that there are some communities that are able to mobilize one another and extend a helping hand towards the needs of the special needs learners.

“Communities participate in assisting on identification of learners with diverse needs including raising funds to support such learners in cases where their parents are not able to support them, DM4.”

6.0 Challenges related to implementation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy

- **Limited funding** – Due to lack of a resource mobilization strategy, there is not enough funding towards implementation of inclusive education strategy. This is at both national and district level budgets, which is compounded by unavailability of well-known mechanism of allocating funds towards IE. Probably when an Inclusive Education Policy is in place, things might improve
- **Unavailability of speciality teachers** – Some schools were found to have no or limited number of specialist teachers to help in implementing inclusive education. The other compounding factor is lack of transport for the few teachers that are available so that they can cover more schools and support more teachers and learners. As such, many schools are unable to identify students who may need special attention early enough. Even though the new TTC curriculum has a module

on Inclusive Education, most teachers who graduated in the past do not have the knowledge and skills in inclusive education.

- **Relocation of trained/oriented teachers** – “Some teachers, after being trained in special needs relocate to other districts thereby negatively affecting capacity building”.
- **Unavailability of national policy on inclusive education**-To date, there is no policy guiding implementation of inclusive education in Malawi which presents compliance issues with the strategy as implementers are not duty bound to stick to the strategy.
- **Poorly stocked resource centers**- Despite some of the mainstream schools having a resource center, teaching and learning materials to facilitate learning of pupils/students with diverse needs is not adequate.
- **Inadequate number of resource centers** – There are few resource centres thereby having very few schools being served by Special needs teachers. The situation is exasperated by lack of reliable transport by those few teachers that are at the resource centre.
- **Sustainability** – Implementation of NSIE is being driven by partners, with minimal government funding being made available which affects ownership and sustainability of NSIE implementation in the long run.

7.0 Conclusion

Almost all the stakeholders that were contacted know that there is a strategy on IE, however, some stakeholders still think it is in draft form. Implementation of the strategy

is happening in selected zones, and mostly being championed by implementing partners like SCI in the central region, Blantyre synod in south Livingstonia synod in the north and Juarez associates under National Reading Program which presents in equality in implementation amongst various districts / zones in the country and sustainability challenges. Orientation of regular teachers on inclusive education is generally happening at school level, but there is less follow-up to support and supervise the implementation of what the teachers learnt due to shortage of specialist teachers in schools who are critical in case identification and management. Funding/resource allocation on inclusive education remains erratic and its high time government and its development partners considers increasing the allocation towards this just cause. There were observable differences in the implementation of the strategy in schools where they were partners and those where there none.

8.0 Recommendations

- Monitoring & Evaluation which should include IE indicators that implementers are supposed to report on as well as controlling officers at all levels within the education sector should be compelled to report on strides made on IE on mainstream basis.
- MoE to strengthen tracking mechanisms for efficiency, effectiveness of partner support.
- There is need for a policy to guide implementation of inclusive education in Malawi
- Inclusive Education should continue to be incorporated in all Teacher Training Colleges and those who graduated earlier on should be targeted with continuous professional development trainings in order to orient and equip them with knowledge

and skills on inclusive education. There is need to increase numbers of itinerant teachers and also provide them with a good mode of transport so that they can train and support more schools, teachers and parents on special needs / inclusive education.

- Inclusive Education should be rolled out nationally and the government of Malawi should take a leading role in the process to the extent that there is need to level the field ground between where there are implementing partners and those without.
- There is need for increased funding/resources towards inclusive education to ensure that the current gains are sustained.

9.0 Appendices

Data collection tools

9.1 Quantitative Data Collection Tool

Section A: Instructions to Interviewer

- Fill in the spaces below with data from each visited school

Section B: Identifiers

District	
Zone	
Name of school	
Name Of Interviewee	
Position of Interviewee	
Contact Number Of Interviewee	

Date Of Interview	
Name of Interviewer	

Section C: School data

1. What is the school enrollment in the following classes?

Class	Girls		Boys		Totals	
	All	Special Needs	All	Special Needs	All	Special Needs
Standard (Form) 1						
Standard (Form) 2						
Standard (Form) 3						
Standard (Form) 4						
Standard 5						
Standard 6						
Standard 7						
Standard 8						
Totals						

2. How has special needs pupils/students enrolment changed over the last four years?

Class	2019/2020		2018/2019		2017/2018		2016/2017	
	Girls	Boys	Boys	Boys	Boys	Boys	Boys	Boys
Standard (Form) 1								
Standard (Form) 2								
Standard (Form) 3								
Standard (Form) 4								
Standard 5								
Standard 6								
Standard 7								
Standard 8								
Totals								

3. How many special needs pupils/students are with the following inabilities?

Inability	Girls	Boys	Total
Total Blindness			
Partial blindness			
Mobility challenges			
Hand challenges			
Mental challenges			
Other:			
Totals			

4. How many teachers does the school have?

Class	# of Teachers
All	
Special Needs	

5. Does the school have all/some teaching and learning materials for special needs pupils/student?

Yes	
No	

6. If yes to 4 above, what materials are available? *(please list them)*

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

7. Are all school facilities/buildings accessible by all (including special needs) pupils/students?

Yes	
No	

8. If no to 6 above, which facilities/buildings do special needs pupils/students find challenging to access, and why?

Facility/ building	Reason for being inaccessible to special needs students

~ thank you ~

9.2 Interview Guide for Ministry of Education, District Education Managers, Primary Education Advisors, Headteachers, Teachers

Section A: Instructions to Interviewer

- You are required to ask all the questions in this guide.
- Note that the questions may not be asked in the order and sequence as put in the guide. Allow the discussion to flow naturally.
- Use probing techniques to get as much important information as possible.

Section B: Identifiers

District	
Name of Interviewee	
Position of Interviewee	
Period on position in the District	

Contact Number of Interviewee	
Date of Interview	
Name of Interviewer	

Section C: Background of inclusive education

- How do you understand inclusive education?

- To what extent has the education system transformed in relation to inclusive education over the years (2017-2020)?

- What are the successes in implementing inclusive education, in this district?

- What are the challenges in implementing inclusive education, in this district?

Section D: Inclusive education in relation to Quality of Learning

1. What do you understand by quality education in relation to inclusive education?

probe:

- a) Identification of pupils with diverse needs*
- b) Availability of capable teaching force*
- c) Availability of teaching and learning materials*
- d) Availability of infrastructure*
- e) School accessibility and achievement by the students*
- f) Parents and community participation in school decisions*

2. To what extent has inclusive education incorporated in each of the following elements of quality education?

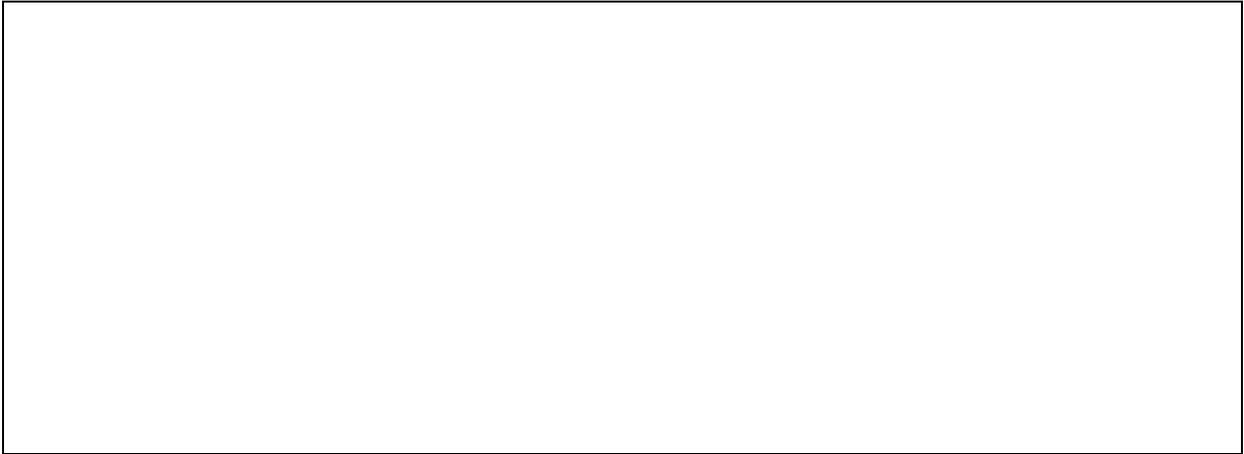
On each, probe:

- *How monitoring is done*
- *When communities identify pupils/students with diverse needs, what actions do they take?*

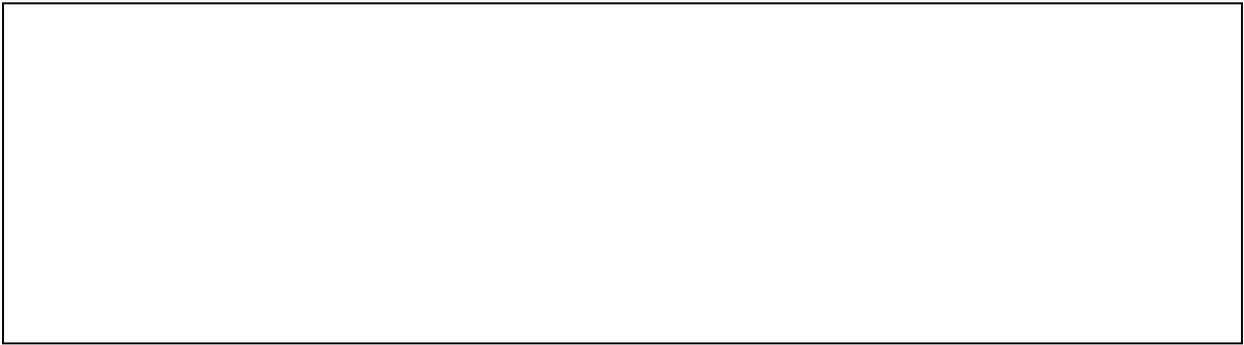
a) Identification of pupils with diverse needs

b) Availability of capable teaching force to deliver on inclusive education

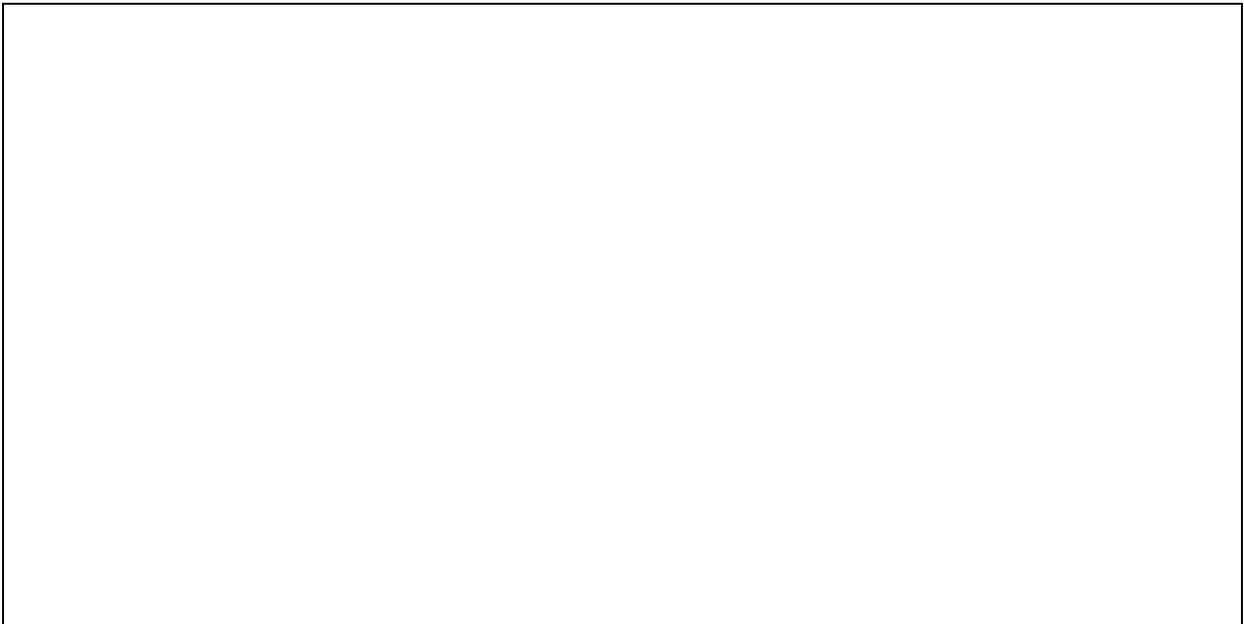
c) Availability of teaching and learning materials for pupils/students with diverse needs



d) Availability of infrastructure for pupils/students with diverse needs



e) School accessibility and achievement by the students/pupils with diverse needs



- f) *Parents and community participation in school decisions affecting special needs pupils/students*

Section E: Trends in financing of Inclusive education and capacity assessment of the institution

- o In your district/zone/school, who are the key players in inclusive education and what are their roles?

- o In terms of funding relation to inclusive education from central government/partners, what has been the trend for the past 3 years (2017-2020)?

Probe if there is any allocation from the School Improvement Grant specifically designated for inclusive education.

- Over the past three years, mention any capacity development initiatives specifically for inclusive education?

- Describe the steps taken by your district/zone/school in early identification and intervention of pupils/students with diverse needs?

~ End of interview, thank you ! ~

9.4 Interview Guide with Parents Teacher Associations (PTAs)

Section A: Instructions to Interviewer

- You are required to ask all the questions in this guide.
- Note that the questions may not be asked in the order and sequence as put in the guide. Allow the discussion to flow naturally.
- Use probing techniques to get as much important information as possible.

Section B: Identifiers

District	
Name of Interviewee	
Position of Interviewee	
Year of service in the Committee	
Contact Number of Interviewee	
Date of Interview	
Name of Interviewer	

Section C: Background of inclusive education

- How do you understand inclusive education?

- What are the successes in implementing inclusive education, at your school?

- What are the challenges in implementing inclusive education, at your school?

Section D: Community participation into Inclusive education

- In what ways are parents and the community involved in school decisions related to pupils/students with diverse needs?

- What actions do parents/ communities do whenever they identify pupils/students with diverse needs ?

- In your opinion, does the school have enough capacity to create an enabling environment for pupils/students with diverse needs?

g) Identification of pupils/students with diverse needs

h) Availability of capable teaching force to deliver on inclusive education

i) Availability of teaching and learning materials for pupils/students with diverse needs

j) Availability of infrastructure suitable for pupils/students with diverse needs

k) School accessibility and achievement by the students

- In terms of funding relation to inclusive education from School Improvement Grants, what has been the trend for the past 3 years (2017-2020)?

--

9.5 Interview guide with Partners/Stakeholders

Section A: Instructions to Interviewer

- Write answers in the spaces provided, in bullet form, capturing the main points from the discussion
- You are required to ask all the questions in this guide.
- Note that the questions may not be asked in the order and sequence as put in the guide. Allow the discussion to flow naturally.
- Use probing techniques to get as much important information as possible.

Section B: Identifiers

Name of Implementing Partner	
Name of Interviewee	
Position of Interviewee	
Period of employment with the partner	
Contact Number of Interviewee	
Date of Interview	
Name of Interviewer	

Section C: Inclusive Education Background

- What does inclusive education mean to you?

- Who are the key players in inclusive education, in Malawi, and what are their roles?

- What was your organization's role in developing Malawi's National Strategy on Inclusive Education?

Probe:

- a) *Provision of financial support*
- b) *Provision of technical support*

- What vision did you have when the national inclusive education strategy was being put in place?

Probe:

- a) *What gaps were there before the strategy, which the strategy aimed at filling?*
- b) *What targets were set in the strategy, to fill the gaps?*

- In general, do you think the country is on track to achieve the inclusive education targets?

- What successes are you seeing in implementing the inclusive education strategy?

Probe:

- a) *How has the education system transformed in alignment with inclusive education policies and practices?*
- b) *How has been the financing trend of the inclusive education sector by relevant stakeholders?*
- c) *What is the current status on inclusive teaching and learning in schools?*
- d) *Are education institutions able to identify special needs students early enough, and be able to intervene?*
- e) *What is the level of community participation in the management and governance of inclusive education?*

- What challenges are you seeing in implementing the inclusive education strategy?

Probe challenges on:

- a) How has the education system transformed in alignment with inclusive education policies and practices?*
- b) financing of the inclusive education sector by relevant stakeholders*
- c) Teaching and learning environment for special needs students?*
- d) education institutions' ability to identify special needs students early enough*
- e) education institutions' ability to intervene when special needs students are identified*
- f) community participation*

- f) What solutions do you suggest, to the above-mentioned challenges?*

--

- Any other recommendations that you can make to ensure successful implementation of the inclusive education strategy?

--

~ thank you ~

9.6 Classroom observation checklist

Section A: Instructions to Interviewer

- Fill in the spaces below with data from each visited school
- Observe and write notes on each of the elements below

Section B: Identifiers

District	
Zone	

Name of school	
Class attended	
Subject being taught	
Name of teacher	
Contact number of teacher	
Date Of observation	
Name of observer	

Section C: Class characteristics

1. Observation time

Observer arrival at school	HH:MM
Observer arrival in classroom	HH:MM
Observer departure from classroom	HH:MM
Observer departure from school	HH:MM

2. How many students were present for the class?

Girls		Boys		Totals	
All	Special Needs	All	Special Needs	All	Special Needs

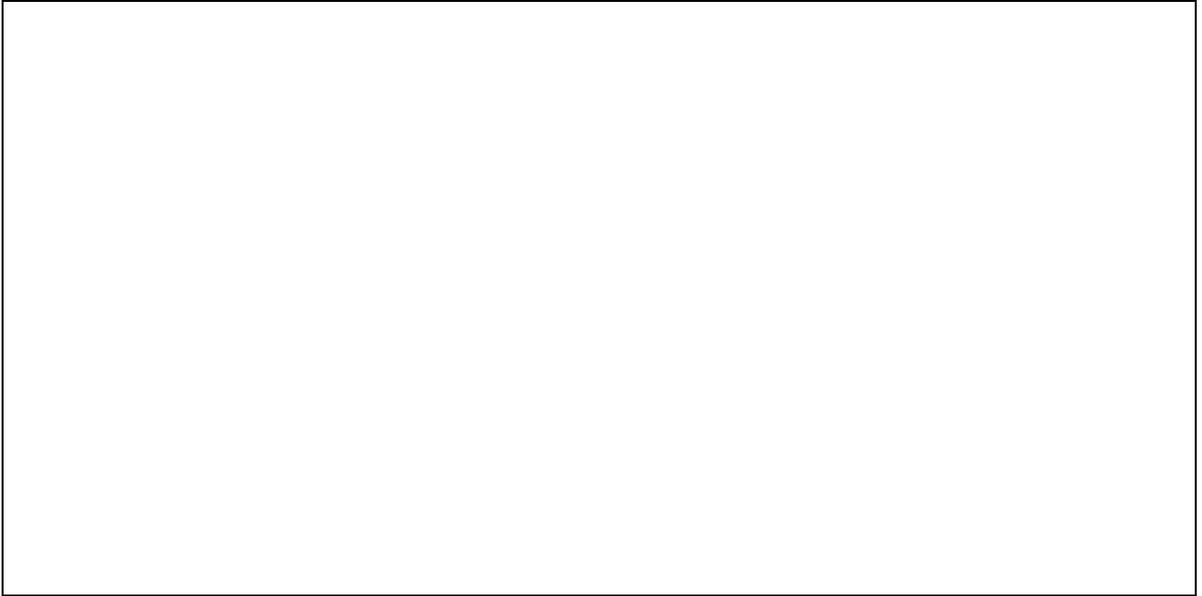
3. How many teachers were present in this class?

Female		Male		Totals	
All	For Special Needs	All	For Special Needs	All	For Special Needs

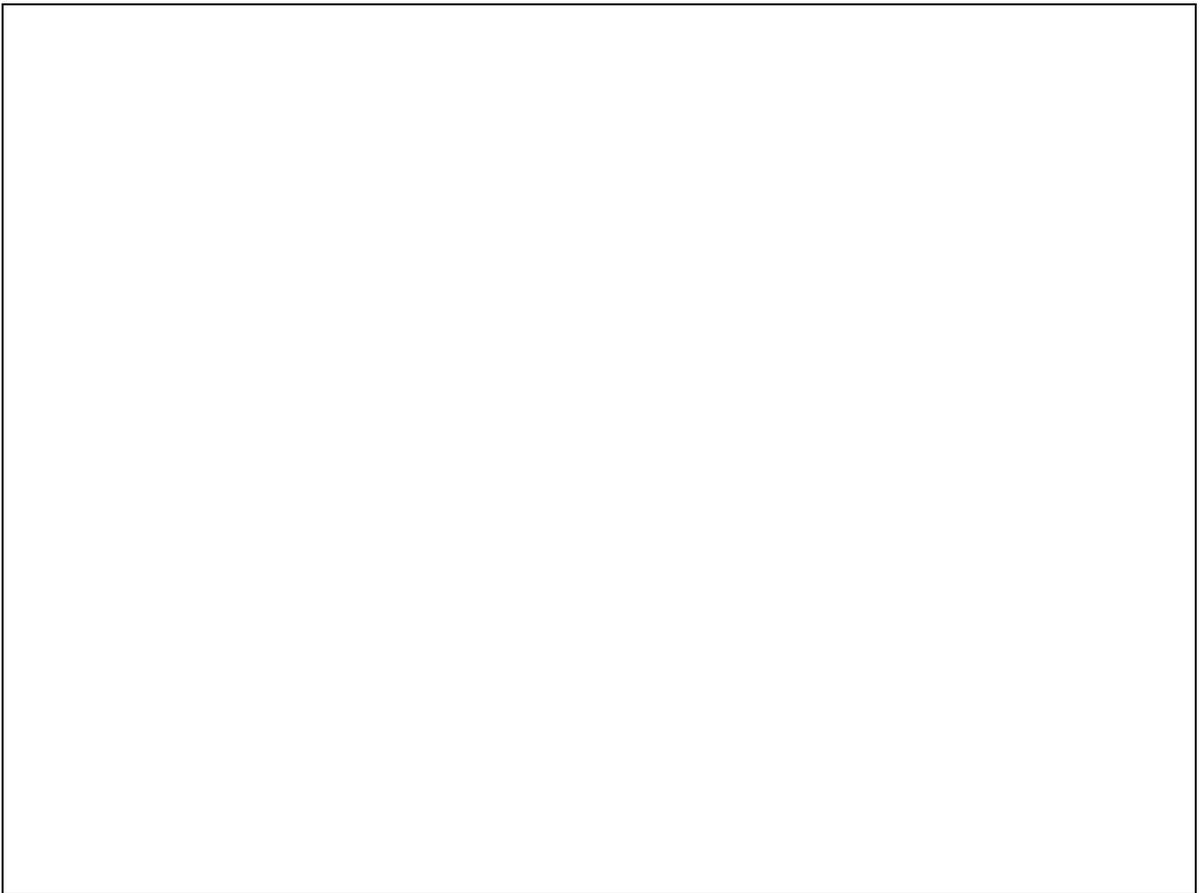
Section D: Observations

1. Observation of special needs students' interactions on school premises?

2. Observation on classroom accessibility by all; e.g ramps available?



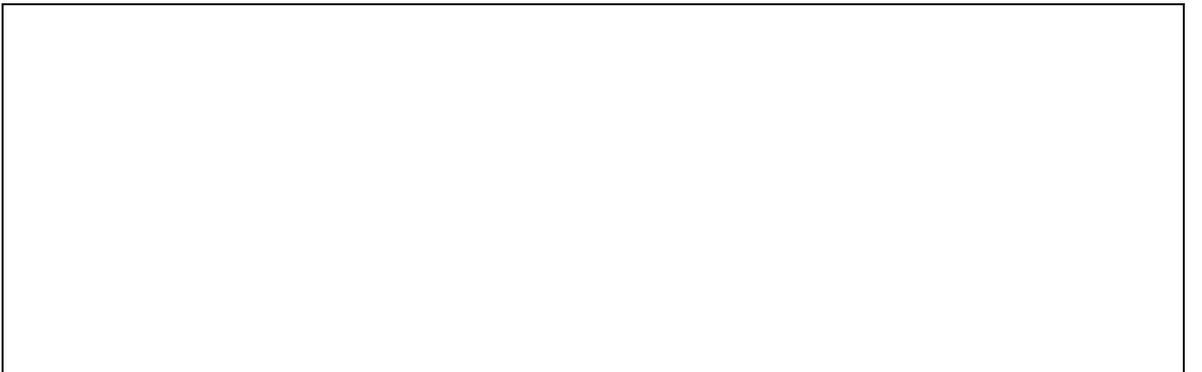
3. Observation on special needs arrival time in class, how they arrived, and who was in their company

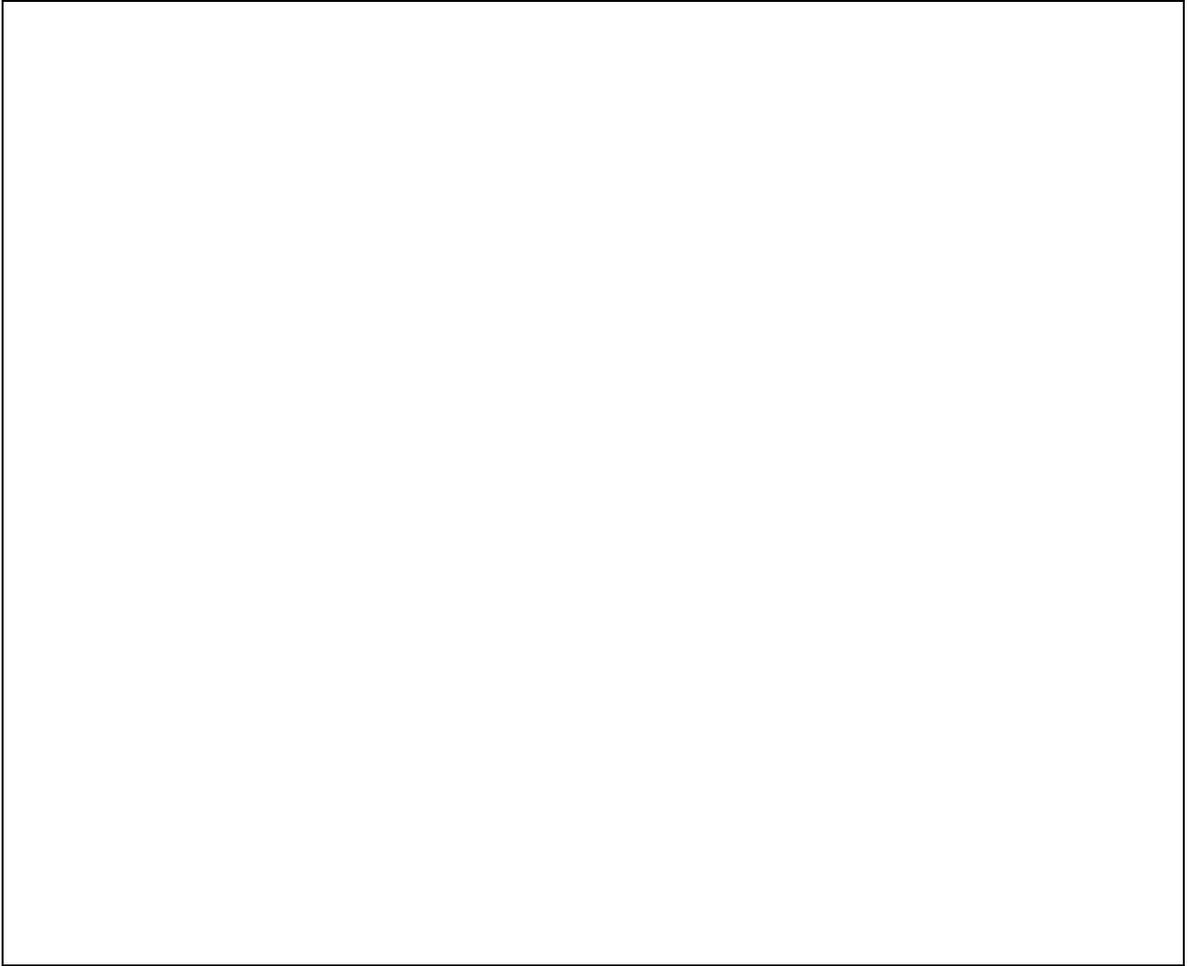


4. Observation on classroom sitting plan

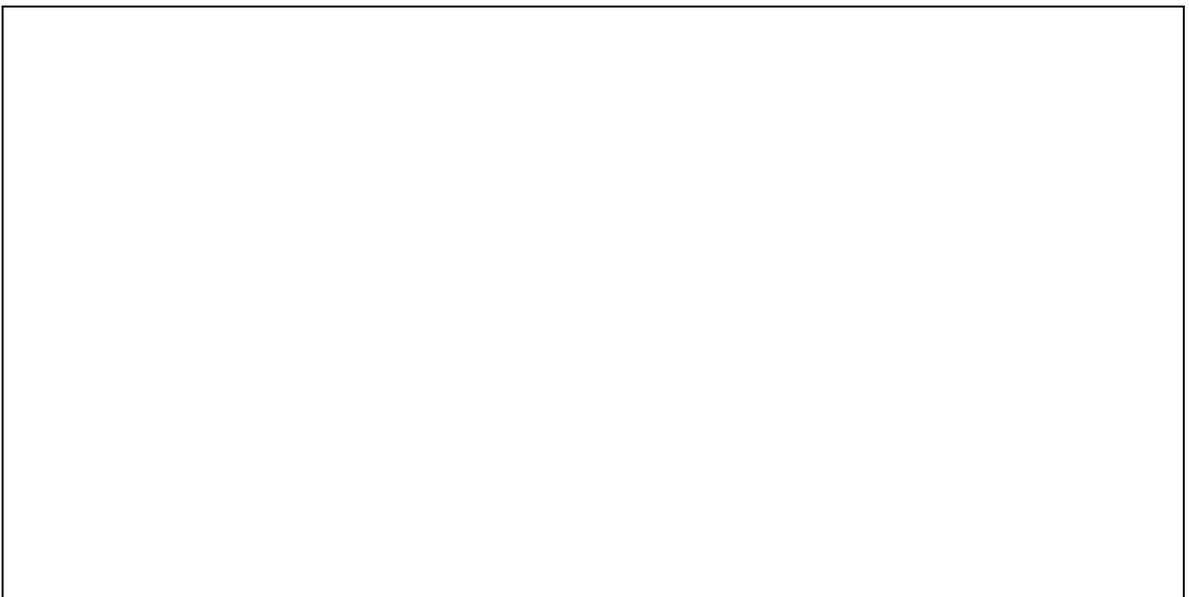


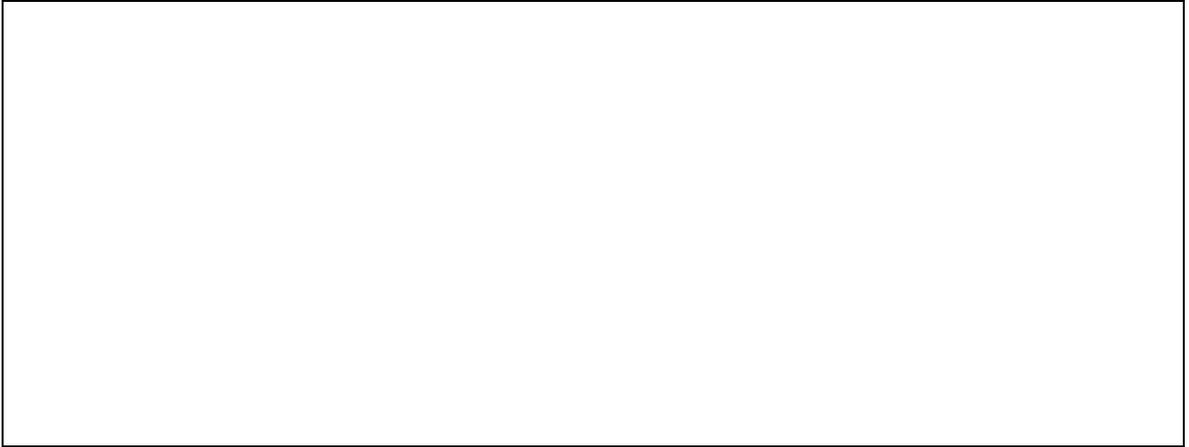
5. Observation on teaching; teacher's techniques and behaviours





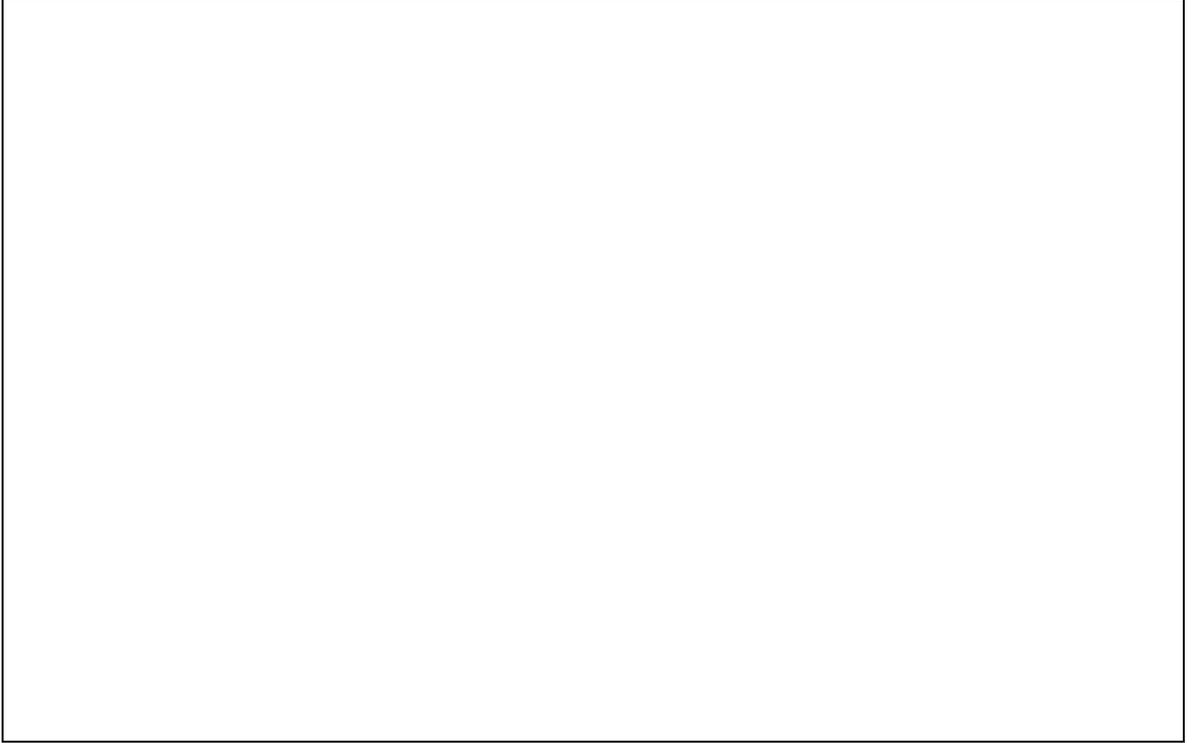
6. Observation on students' activeness in class?





7. Additional notes/ observations





~ thank you ~