

**UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4: EXPLORING  
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA.**

by

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UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4: EXPLORING  
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA.

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## **Abstract**

In Nigeria, students with disabilities including developmental disabilities (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disabilities) account for a rising number of students, or potential students in schools (Adeniyi, Owolabi, & Olojede, 2015). Since the inception of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 4 in the year 2015, many schools seem to be running inclusion practices in Nigeria. Meaningful inclusive practices consist of both academic and social inclusion in the classroom and school community (Sokal& Katz, 2015)

This study used a single case qualitative case study design to explore an inclusive school with two students with developmental disabilities attending inclusive classrooms, drawn from a school of over 712 pupils of early years to Year 6 (Between ages 3-11 years), five mainstream teachers, including mainstream teachers for the two students with developmental disabilities, two learning assistants, two special needs teachers, two peers and two parents of students with developmental disabilities.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the participants via UBC zoom and documents analysis. Themes and subthemes emerged from the data and were analysed using thematic analysis.

The findings suggest the key impact of funding, teacher training, school environment, socio-cultural beliefs etc. play in the success of inclusive education for students with developmental disabilities. Additional findings suggest that students with developmental disabilities experienced meaningful inclusion in the social life of the classroom when they are included in the group and when their individual learning goals were woven into classroom activities and daily classroom routines school while the academic life of the classroom for students with developmental disabilities is in an adapted or restricted role.

### **Lay Summary**

In Nigeria, students with developmental disabilities (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disabilities) account for a rising number of students in Nigerian schools (Adeniyi, Owolabi, & Olojede, 2015). The present study explored how school seek to include students with developmental disabilities in an inclusive classroom and the perceptions and attitudes towards students with developmental disabilities. Key factors identified in this study include the social inclusion and academic inclusion for students with developmental disabilities. A school was used for the study and data was collected from the interviews of participants in the same school. The results from this study can be a starting reference points and influence inclusive practices in Nigeria.

## **Preface**

The University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Board reviewed and approved this study: UBC Ethic Certificate number **H21-01085**. This is a thesis that is independent work of the author, yet unpublished, written by Adetunji Noah Adekunle and was supervised by Dr. Jennifer Katz.

The thesis is titled United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4: Exploring inclusive education of students with developmental disabilities in Lagos state, Nigeria. The research design, data collection and analysis of the data were done by the author with high support from Dr. Jennifer Katz and the committee members.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**ASD-** Autism Spectrum Disorder

**ASD/CID-** Autism Spectrum Disorders with Comorbid Intellectual Disabilities

**CDC** – Centre for Disease Control and Protection

**COVID-19-** Coronavirus Disease of 2019

**CWDD-** Children With Developmental Disabilities

**CWODD-** Children WithOut Developmental Disabilities

**DD-** Developmental Disabilities

**FATC-** Federal Advanced Teachers College

**FCOE-** Federal College of Special Education

**FGN-** Federal Government of Nigeria

**GARS-** Gilliam Autism Rating Scale

**IE-** Inclusive Education

**IEP-** Individual Education Plan

**IPC-** International Primary Curriculum

**MDG-** Millennium Development Goal

**NASET-** National Association of Special Education Teachers

**NGO-** Non-Governmental Organisation

**NLTS-** National Longitudinal Transition Study

**NPE-** National Policy on Education

**OT-** Occupational Therapist

**PTA-** Parents Teachers Association

**PVOs-** Private Voluntary Organisations

**SEELS-** Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study

**SEN-** Special Education Needs

**SDGs-** Sustainable Development Goals

**SWIEBP-** School-Wide Inclusive Education Best Practice

**UDHR-** Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**UPE-** Universal Primary Education

**UN-** United Nations

**UNESCO-** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**UNICEF-** United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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## **Dedication**

Dedicated to all the students with developmental disabilities and my deceased brother, Abidemi Adekunle who had the initial plan to come to study in Canada before he passed away to glory. Brother, I have done it for you.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The educational system in Nigeria has undergone significant educational reform in recent years, including a movement toward the inclusion of students with special needs in the general education classroom in private and public schools (Andrew, 2016). This reform was generated due to an increasing number of students with disabilities across Nigeria, and international educational reform (Eric et al., 2018). Most Nigerian students with disabilities are still attending segregated schools, while a few privileged ones have been attending inclusive schools in general education classrooms with their peers (Eric et al., 2018). Even for those attending inclusive classrooms, meaningful participation in the social and academic life of the learning community goes beyond having a physical presence in the classroom, and many students are not receiving the necessary educational supports to be fully included (Sokal & Katz, 2015).

The defining of inclusive education as both an educational principle and a practical application is one of the most trying tasks of all academic pursuits within the field of education because inclusive education is a broad term encompassing all individuals to one degree or another, efforts to define it, therefore, require both broad strokes and wide applications (Shyman, 2015). Inclusive education can be operationalised as the formation of prospect for students with developmental, neurological, cognitive, learning, behavioural, and sensory disabilities to be taught in general classrooms (Eric et al., 2018). It is a global educational reform approach that aims to incorporate students with different abilities in regular mainstream schools (Ahmed, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2012). In this institutional arrangement, school curricula, organisation, teaching methods and resources are designed to ensure that all students, irrespective of their ability can successfully attain their full potential in the regular classroom activities without segregation (Adeniyi, Owolabi, & Olojede, 2015).

This inclusive agenda was informed by the World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain in 1994, which was signed by 92 countries, including Nigeria. The Salamanca statement provided a definition of inclusive education that promoted opportunities for persons with disabilities in the general education classroom, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. The Salamanca statement asserted that all children irrespective of ability or disability have a fundamental right to be educated along with their peers in their classrooms (UNESCO, 1994). Signatories, including Nigeria to the Salamanca statement, believe inclusive education will remove the social prejudice and alienation that has been hitherto experienced by children with special needs (Eric et al., 2018).

### **Students with Developmental Disabilities**

The Center for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) defines developmental disabilities as a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, and/or behavioural areas. These conditions commence during the developmental phase, may impact day-to-day functioning, and usually last throughout a person's lifetime (Dang, 2010). Hence, children with developmental delays and disabilities are at greater risk of suboptimal health, educational attainment, and wellbeing if attention is not focused on them, than are children without such disabilities (Bolajoko, 2018). People with developmental disabilities (DD) are members of the community who require continuous and extensive support to actively participate in the community and achieve a full quality of life (Specht & Young, 2010). In Nigeria, private educational sectors and non-governmental organisation (NGO) have established different assessment centres to carry out psychoeducational assessment and diagnosis to determine the needs of the students and this is fully funded by the parents of the student with developmental disabilities (Ajuwon, 2012).

Nigeria is touted as “the most populous country in Africa” with a population of over 180 million people (National Population Commission, 2014, p. 1). The population of school children between the ages of 5- 14 was 43.1 million in 2012, and an aggregate number of 10.5 million who were supposed to be enrolled in school were out of school (UNESCO, 2015). This population of students excluded from school represents 25% of its primary age population, and students with disabilities have been noted to make up a significant portion of this excluded population (Ajuwon, 2012). Students with disabilities including developmental disabilities (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disabilities) account for a rising number of students, or potential students in schools in Lagos, Nigeria (Adeniyi, Owolabi, & Olojede, 2015). For example, Olusanya, Wertlieb, and Kuper (2016) found that the number of children with developmental disabilities increased significantly by 71.3% in sub-Saharan Africa between 1990 and 2016. In Nigeria, one out of every 125-150 children, is living with ASD and this amounts to about 600,000 Nigerian children with ASD (Lesi, Charles, Oshodi, & Olagunju, 2014). Nationally, the Nigeria Federal Government Department of Education mandated an individualized education plan for every student with disabilities after the implementation of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action of 1994 (Michael & Oboegbulem, 2013).

As awareness of students with disabilities including developmental disabilities in Nigeria has increased (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2020) and the number of students with developmental disabilities (DD), including students with autism spectrum disorders with comorbid intellectual disabilities (ASD/CID), continues to rise a move toward inclusive education has begun (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2020). To effectively adopt the system of inclusive education in Nigeria, the population of students with developmental disabilities out of school and enrolled in the school cannot be excluded or ignored by policymakers.

## **Nigerian Education System**

Nigeria got independence as a republican country from colonial Britain in 1960 and adopted the English National Curriculum until the launching of her first National Policy on Education in 1977 (Fafunwa, 2018). Since the launching of the National Policy on Education in 1977, Nigeria has witnessed both expansion and structural changes in her educational system, and these changes have come with great influence from the United Nations policies and reforms (Theresa, 2006).

The National Policy on Education was passed in 1977 and revised in 1981. The administration of education in the western states of Nigeria, which consists of Lagos state and six other states serve as a good example of the way in which the different states of Nigeria now function both at primary and secondary education (Fafunwa, 2018). Nigeria now operates the 6-3-3-4 system of education. Students are expected to spend six years at the primary school, and three years at the junior secondary school. At this stage, students can continue to senior secondary school or choose to attend technical school. The senior secondary school (three years) prepares the candidate for university education which is a four-year program of studies. Students with disabilities follow the same educational program as other students, whether in special or regular schools.

Today, Nigeria runs an extensive network of primary schools, secondary schools, and higher educational institutions at private and public level. In the 2015/2016 academic session, the completion rate of students at primary and junior (middle) secondary education in Nigeria stood at 77.1% and 66.7% respectively while the completion rate of students at primary and junior (middle) secondary education in 2017/2018 academic session dropped to 70.8% and 62.5% respectively (UNESCO, 2020). This drop in the number of students in completion of school was

likely due to the invasion of a terrorist group in Nigeria called Boko Haram that kidnapped and killed many students. This resulted in withdrawal of many students by parents from school. In addition, the completion rate at upper secondary education for 2015/2016 and 2017/2018 academic sessions stood at 59.3% and 49.3% respectively. There are many factors that influence these fluctuations in school completion. For example, Outhred, and Turner (2020), found that the north-eastern region of Nigeria suffered from continued attacks by Boko Haram, a terrorist group. Their activities led to over 3 million internally displaced people, disrupted agricultural production and decimated educational infrastructure and activities in the North East zone. UNESCO (2020) found that the out-of-school rate for children of primary, and junior(middle) secondary schools age, (household survey data) stood at 32.2% and 33.8% respectively for the 2015/2016 academic session. During the 2017/2018 academic session, the out-of-school rate for children of primary, and junior (middle) secondary schools age, (household survey data) stood at 28.1% and 27.2% respectively (UNESCO, 2020). For the upper secondary education, the out-of-school rate for students, for 2015/2016 and 2017/2018 academic sessions stood at 50.7% and 40.8% respectively (UNESCO, 2020). In the north-west region of Nigeria, where a significant Muslim population lives, the children that are considered out-of-school include those students that attended non-integrated Qur'anic schools (they do not cover the mainstream curriculum), and those that have never attended any form of school (Outhred & Turner, 2020)

Evidence is consistent that 80% of people with disabilities in the world live in developing countries, including Nigeria, where inadequate nutrition, diseases, accidents, and poverty are common causes of disabilities (World Health Organisation & World Bank, 2011). Reliable data on the population of people with disabilities in Nigeria are lacking; and no valid census has been conducted in the country since after independence from Britain in 1960 (Obiakor & Eleweke, 2014). However, going by World Health Organization and the World Bank (2011) prevalence estimates that disabilities occur in at least

15% of the world's population, it can be assumed that there are at least 22 million people with disabilities in Nigeria (Obiakor & Eleweke, 2014).

Special education in Nigeria has a fairly short history, only becoming a public concern in 1975 (Obiakor & Eleweke, 2014). Before the government stepped in at this time, students with special needs were looked after by different religious or voluntary groups such as the school for the Blind of Gindiri and the Wesley school for the deaf in Lagos (Theresa, 2006). Prior to the coming of missionaries and their efforts to initiate special education services, individuals with disabilities in Nigeria were neglected and, in some instances, rejected (Abang, 2005). After the Nigerian civil war in 1970, the Federal Government of Nigeria embarked upon massive rehabilitation and re-building programs that included setting up special education programs for the benefit of war veterans and other citizens with disabilities (Obiakor et al., 2012), and introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE) to ensure free primary education for every Nigerian child regardless of disabilities (Obiakor & Eleweke, 2014). To show its determination of ensuring the success of the UPE for learners with special needs in the country, the federal government of Nigeria established the Federal College of Special Education (FCOE, Oyo) in 1977 (Obiakor & Eleweke, 2014).

The National Policy on Education that was revised in 1981 contains numerous pledges concerning the provision of appropriate educational and relevant services to citizens with special needs in Nigeria (Obiakor & Eleweke, 2014). According to article 55 of the document, the purpose and objectives of special needs provision specifically include:

- (a) 'to give concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, their physical, mental and emotional disabilities notwithstanding.
- (b) to provide adequate education for all handicapped children and adults in order that they may fully play their roles in the development of the nation; and
- (c) to provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted children to develop at their own pace in the interest of the nation's economic and technological development' (p.382).

To achieve the above goals, the next article in the document highlighted actions that the government would embark upon (Obiakor et al., 2012). These actions were:

1. 'The Federal Ministry of Education will set up a committee to coordinate special needs provision in collaboration with the ministries of Health, Social Welfare and Labour.
2. A census of individuals with disabilities in the country will be conducted in order to adequately plan services to meet their needs.
3. Government will accept the responsibility for the training/provision of qualified personnel in all aspects of special needs provision.
4. Government will provide the necessary facilities to ensure effective integration of most learners with special needs and those who are academically gifted in regular educational institutions.
5. The education of individuals with disabilities will be free up to university level.
6. Vocational institutions will be established, and suitable employment opportunities will be created for individuals with disabilities.
7. Children's clinics will be attached to most hospitals in order to encourage prevention, early detection, and timely initiation of curative/ rehabilitative measures.
8. A committee on special education and a national council for rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities will be established to ensure full implementation of these programs.'

(Obiakor & Eleweke, 2014, p. 382)

Clearly, the promises in the policy document for individuals with disabilities in Nigeria are admirable. However, with the exception of the training of special education teachers, nearly all other promises of the policy document have stayed at the theoretical level (Obiakor et al., 2012). Consequently, services for individuals with disabilities in Nigeria remain insufficient and unsatisfactory (Obiakor & Eleweke, 2014). For instance, the majority of public buildings such as schools, places of employment, libraries, health, and recreation facilities are not accessible to wheelchair users in the country (Hamzat & Dada, 2005).



There have been different activities aimed at improving special education services for children, and people with disabilities in Nigeria. Another blueprint on education of people with disabilities in Nigeria began in 1989 after pressure from parents of people with special needs, activists and concerned citizens (Theresa, 2006). This resulted in the establishment of additional residential primary schools and secondary schools for children with disabilities in most states of the federation which led to the increased attendance of students with disabilities in secondary and higher institutions, and training of special education teachers in selected tertiary institutions in the country (Obiakor & Eleweke, 2014).

### **History of Special Education Provision and Inclusive Education in Nigeria**

Two phases have been documented in the development of provisions for persons with disabilities in Nigeria (Garuba, 2001). The first phase was the charitable/missionary era (1945-1970) during which, provision of services was controlled by non-governmental organisations (NGO) or private voluntary organisations (PVOs) and private individuals (Ayo, 2003). For the period of this era, religious bodies were establishing and sustaining the services and programs for people with disabilities (Garuba, 2001). These religious bodies established special schools and homes for people with special needs. Governmental agencies had limited, if any, involvement in matters concerning persons with disabilities (Adeniyi, Owolabi, & Olojede, 2015); their care was controlled by non-governmental organisations (NGO) or private voluntary organisations (PVOs) and private individuals (Ayo, 2003).

The second phase was the social service period which witnessed the development of government services (Garuba, 2001). Persons with exceptionalities experienced a significant contribution from the government, in terms of financial, values and beliefs as well as inputs from the religious bodies and private individuals (Ayo, 2003). This phase began directly after the civil war of 1970 in Nigeria that devastated the country for about three years, and likewise, saw the beginning of an educational initiative called the “Universal Primary Education (UPE)”. The

UPE is an educational scheme that made every Nigerian child have free primary education between the ages of six and eleven, to gain fundamental skills, knowledge, feelings, thoughts, and actions (FGN Policy of Education, 2004). The 1970s was the era of the oil boom and the subsequent take-over by government of all schools (including special schools) established by religious bodies and individuals (Ayo, 2003),

Since the early 1980s, there has been a high volume of both private and public special schools developed across the nation where students and people with special needs attend school based on their different exceptionalities (Ayo, 2003). There were increases in the establishment of additional residential schools for students with disabilities in most states of the federation by the federal government and non-governmental organisations (Garuba, 2001). This action was due to the increased attendance of students with disabilities in schools who had previously not attended school, which resulted in a rise in the number of advocacy bodies of and for people with disabilities defending the interest of people with exceptionalities (Ayo, 2003). There was also the commencement of training programs for special needs teachers. Several institutions established training programs to support the training of teachers for the students with special needs at different levels of education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2008), including post-baccalaureate diplomas, Bachelor of Education programs with a focus on special education, and a master's program. Finally, the Federal Advanced Teachers College, Special (FATC), was established by the federal government in 1977. The college, now known as the Federal College of Education, Special is the first college of special education in the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa (Garuba, 2001),

## **United Nation's History of Inclusion Movements**

There is abundant historical data that particular types of educational services were provided for an individual with exceptionalities as far back as the eighteenth century (Edmunds, 2018). Often, these services were designed as suitable measures to prevent perceived threats to the education of neuro-typical students (Taylor & Harrington, 2001). However, the early forms and types of special education were not designed for students with disabilities to be included in regular classroom and school (Edmunds, 2018). Since the beginning of the United Nations organisation in the year 1945. The organisation has been an advocate for furthering human rights for all, with “universal respect for and observance of human rights” enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations (United Nations, 2018). Increasingly, parents, legislators, educators, and school boards express the desire to follow an inclusive philosophy whereby all children are effectively welcomed into the general classroom. Adetoro (2014) asserted that this inclusive philosophy was to eliminate social exclusion arising from attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and ability. Hence, inclusive education aggregates to equal opportunities for all learners to learn and succeed in the society and educational community. For example, numerous inclusion movement policies from the United Nations for the past seventy-two (72) years is highlighted as follows.

- 1948: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
- 1952: European Convention of Human Rights.
- 1966: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- 1982: The World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons.
- 1989: Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 1990: Jomtien World Conference on Education for All

- 1993: Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities
- 1994: Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action
- 2000: The World Education Forum, Dakar.
- 2000: UN Millennium Development Goals.
- 2006: UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- 2015: UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations has worked for the rights and progress of persons with disabilities in society and development, working thoroughly with member states, organizations of persons with disabilities and other civil society organizations, academic communities, and the private sector, at local, national and global levels. There has been remarkable progress and achievements over the past decades in this endeavour for the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities as agents of change and beneficiaries of development (United Nations, 2018).

### **Influence of International Policy and Reform on Inclusive Education in Nigerian**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the World Declaration on Education for All (1990), the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disability (1993), the UNESCO Salamanca Statement for Framework for Action (1994), and the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000) seek to promote equal access to appropriate quality education for everyone. The Salamanca Statement documented “the necessity and urgency of delivering teaching and learning for children, youth and adults with special needs within the regular education system” (UNESCO, 1994, p. viii). A closer examination of the Salamanca statement reveals the urgency for a fundamental strategy shift to facilitate effective implementation of an inclusive education practice that will effectively meet the learning needs of

all children, youth and adults, especially those who are exposed to marginalization and exclusion (United Nations, 2018).

The arrival of the democratic government and its' new transformational agenda in 2002 led to further reform in the Nigerian educational system (Andrew, 2016). Inclusive education in Nigeria began to be developed for students with special needs in the National Policy on Education in 2004 (Andrew, 2016). The policy defines 'inclusion.

“as the integration of students with special needs into regular classrooms, and free education for exceptional students at all levels” (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004, p.49).

The Nigerian National Policy of Education (2004) section 8 recognizes that children with disabilities should be integrated with neuro-typical children in a regular education system. The government in implementing this policy proposes this as 'the most credible form of education' as the students with special needs are expected to become integrated into the society (Federal Ministry of Education, 2008).

The inception of United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 and stopped in 2015, and the commencement of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; 2015) advanced the agenda to make the world a better place to live by 2030 (UNESCO, 2015). These goals prohibit any exclusion from educational opportunities for people with and without special needs (UNESCO, 2015). The call within the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” has awakened hope among many for a stronger role of accessible learning and education in global education agendas and policies for people with disabilities (UNESCO, 2015). The enactment of this 2030 agenda has given Nigeria a more precise, and better focus on the journey of moving both the public and private schools towards an

ideal inclusive education where all learners would be able to access learning together in a class environment without leaving any student behind (Michael, & Oboegbulem, 2013). Many workshops and reforms have been pushed forward and implemented to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 4 at the National Assembly, namely, the Senate Committee on SDGs and the House of Representatives Committee on SDGs (United Nations, 2020).

### **Sustainable Development Goal 4 and Students with Developmental Disabilities**

The SDGs issue a framework of sustainability goals and targets that is universally applicable and summarise priority action areas to help society achieve prosperity, environmental security, and justice (United Nations, 2019). This framework has 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are “integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental” (Vasiliki & Nikolaos, 2019). One of the seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is the Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all. SDG 4 is a means for achieving the remaining sixteen (16) Sustainable Development Goals. (United Nations, 2016). The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (2015) highlighted the following expected targets to be achieved by the end of the year 2030:

- 4.1** By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes
- 4.2** By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

- 4.3** By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university
- 4.4** By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
- 4.5** By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.
- 4.6** By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
- 4.7** By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development
- 4.A** Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all.
- 4.B** By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular, least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states.

### **Summary of the Problem**

According to Bolajoko (2018), the global quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities has not significantly improved since 1990, suggesting inadequate global attention to the developmental potential of these children, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Despite the proliferation of literature about the benefits of both academic and social inclusion for students with disabilities, many stakeholders such as teachers, administrators, policy-makers, and parents of students without special needs have not embraced inclusive practices for students with developmental disabilities globally (Magumise & Sefotho, 2018), and this is true in Nigeria as well (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2020). While most educators agree that ideally, all children would be included in our school systems and classrooms, many doubt that possibility, and feel constrained by the actuality of limited resources, increasing student diversity, and lack of training (Eric et al., 2018). Therefore, parents of students with developmental disabilities are mostly advised to place their children or wards in special schools or segregated school settings (Adeniyi, Owolabi, & Olojede, 2015). In a country where the population of students with developmental disabilities seems to be rapidly rising (or being identified more frequently), understanding these attitudinal barriers and other obstacles and challenges faced by these individuals is also gaining importance (Evins, 2015).

To date, limited research has been conducted regarding the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 in Nigeria for students with developmental disabilities and this results in a troubling gap in knowledge regarding the inclusion of individuals with



developmental disabilities in the Nigerian educational system. Previous research in Nigeria has explored inclusion for individuals with physical disabilities and learning disabilities in Nigeria in a general classroom setting (Oluremi, 2015). The lack of understanding and knowledge of possible progress for inclusion of students with developmental disabilities, and concerns regarding appropriate skills, necessary supports, negative attitudes towards inclusion and effective strategies for including students with developmental disabilities are some of the potential reasons that most stakeholders have not fully embraced inclusion in the school setting (Eric et al., 2018). As there are few students with developmental disabilities in inclusive settings, capturing the early experiences of inclusion for all of the stakeholders is critical to inform the wider implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. The complexity of inclusion, with influences from international policy down to the individual qualities of the student, their family, and their socio-cultural context and regional diversity makes case study an ideal methodology for this exploration. Thus, this study is proposed to explore the implementation and effects of Sustainable Development Goal 4 as it relates to the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities in a school setting in Nigeria.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The proposed study will be guided by literature on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 as it relates to students with developmental disabilities in an inclusive setting. I begin by examining the sustainable development goals and benefits of inclusive education, which consider the academic and social benefits for students with and without developmental disabilities; next I review the issues of inclusive education in Nigeria as it relates to the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in general education settings, this explores the factors that influence inclusive education for students with disabilities. In conclusion, I bring out the gaps in the research by exploring how far we have come in the Nigerian system of education in including students with developmental disabilities from the commencement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 4 in the year 2015, Millennium Development Goals in 2000, and Salamanca statement and framework of action in 1994, and state the purpose of the study.

Despite the growing international consensus by the United Nations on inclusion of students with disabilities in the educational setting and society, many students with disabilities around the world continue to face challenges when attempting to enroll in general schools. The recent research conducted by UNICEF in 13 low- and middle-income countries indicates that children with disabilities account for a disproportionate percentage of children out of school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, & UNICEF, 2015). Most nations across the earth have pledged to support inclusion for people with disabilities through the Salamanca framework actions (UNESCO, 2015). There has been considerable growth in the degree to which students with disabilities attend school alongside their typical peers, but this progress has been uneven (Hehir, Grindal, Freeman, et al., 2016). While many countries have passed policies to promote and

implement inclusion, many have been slow to actually shift from a segregated education model. As well, countries that have high rates of students with disabilities in the general education classroom are not necessarily implementing full inclusion as placement alone does not define inclusive education (UNESCO Institute for Statistics & UNICEF, 2015).

### **Outcomes of Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities**

A widespread body of research exploring the rationale of inclusive education for both students with and without disabilities exists in educational literature. As children and youth with disabilities typically participate less than children and youth without disabilities (Katz, 2012), several studies have been published on the benefits of including students in the general education classroom which has resulted in positive benefits for both students with and without disabilities. For example, research has shown that students with and without developmental disabilities who attend a school that engages in inclusive practices have benefited in increased communication (Hehir, Grindal, Freeman, et al., 2016), positive behaviour (Carlson, Hemmings, Wurf, & Reupert, 2012), time on task (Dessementet & Bless, 2013), academic skills (Oh-Young & Filler, 2015), motor skills (Michael & Oboegbulem, 2013) and enhanced awareness and understanding of disabilities (Kramer, Olsen, Mermelstein, Balcells, & Liljenquist, 2012). However, despite these documented benefits, many schools continue to split up their students based on academic ability. This split is particularly true for students having developmental disabilities and severe disabilities (Katz, 2012).

### ***Academic Outcomes of Inclusive Education for Children with Developmental Disabilities (CWDD)***

There are numerous systematic reviews of the scholarly research literature that show that students with special needs who were educated in general education classes academically

outperformed their colleagues who had been educated in self-contained settings (Specht & Young, 2010). This was further confirmed by a study of 757 three- and four-year-old students in the Midwestern United States that found out that both expressive and receptive language skills of students with disabilities benefit significantly from taking the opportunity to attend preschool with students without disabilities (Justice, Logan, Lin, & Kaderavek, 2014). A related study carried out in U.S reflects similar benefits. Hehir, Grindal, and Eidelman (2012) conducted an analysis of nearly 70,000 students in a school system that consists of elementary and secondary arms, and students with developmental disabilities in the United States to investigate influences related with more positive academic achievement. The authors found, after controlling for factors such as family income, school infrastructure, and English language proficiency, that students who spent more time in regular education settings achieved more positively on assessments of language skills and mathematics than did their peers educated in more segregated educational settings. Another related study that focused on teenage students with special needs was carried out too. The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) followed 11, 270 thirteen to sixteen-year-old United States students over ten years (Marder, Wagner, & Sumi, 2003; Newman, Davies, & Marder, 2005). The authors were able to find out that the students with special needs who attended more learning sessions in general education classes experienced better growth on measures of academic skills than matched peers who spent more time in segregated special education programs. The analysis of this study data also discovered that students with disabilities in inclusive settings show-up in school for an average of three more days per month, were eight percentage points less likely to receive a disciplinary referral and were four percentage points more likely to belong to school groups (Marder, Wagner, & Sumi, 2003; Newman, Davies, & Marder, 2005). However, Dessemont and Bless (2013) later

conducted a similar study that discovered that for positive outcomes for the students with disabilities to be seen in their academic achievement, the teachers must employ strategies and teaching techniques that most meet the needs of diverse learners. In other words, simple placement does not result in such gains it is the implementation of instructional techniques that facilitate peer interactions and modeling and differentiate instruction that results in gains in academic achievement (Bossaert, Boer, Frostad, Pijl, & Petry, 2015).

Significant research has demonstrated that inclusive education is particularly helpful for language and literacy skills development among students with DD (Evins, 2015). Dessemontet, Bless, & Morin 2012 conducted a study in Switzerland and identified a group of 68 children who had similar criteria. They had equal age (between seven and eight years old), diagnosed with an intellectual disability and autism, lived at home with their parents, and had related scores on tests of reading and mathematics skills. The main way in which these students differed was that one group of students was included while the other was educated in a special school. The authors then monitored these students for two years and discovered that across the two groups, the students experienced similar growth in their mathematical skills, but included students experienced significantly greater growth in the development of literacy skills than their otherwise similar peers. Buckley, Bird, Sacks, & Archer (2006) in the United Kingdom identified 46 teenagers with DD and did a study on their academic and social outcomes. These students were similar in family characteristics and levels of cognitive abilities at school entry but were sorted into either inclusive or special education schools on the basis of where they lived. Those students who had been included outperformed their segregated peers on measures of academic development. The authors estimated that when compared to the students in segregated

programs, included students were approximately two and a half years ahead on measures of expressive language and more than three years ahead in reading, writing, and literacy skills.

Cole, et al., (2018) conducted a longitudinal study that further contributes to the comparative evidence in favour of inclusion. The authors followed students with developmental disabilities receiving special education service in the State of Indiana from 2013 to 2018. The methodology they used was comparative analyses of academic outcomes conducted between treatment and control group outcomes for student designated as high inclusion, mixed inclusion, and low inclusion. The propensity score matching was used in the creation of treatment and control groups., in which students with developmental disability being taught in the general educational setting for 80% or more of the day were contrasted with other students who were educated less than 80% of the day during 1 year of the 5-year period. These paired students were followed over the 5-year study on state assessments of reading and mathematics. It was observed that students in the “inclusion” group scored significantly better on both mathematics and reading standardized tests than students taught in isolated settings. Agran et al. (2019) resolved, in reviewing contrast studies relating to students with developmental disability between regular educational settings and segregated, self-contained settings, that the regular education classroom encourages better access to the general education curriculum (Soukup, Wehmeyer, Bashinski, & Bovaird, 2007), improved access to content area capability and age-appropriate instructional materials (Kleinart et al., 2015), and enhanced naturalistic peer supports (Carter & Hughes, 2006). In addition, this review discovered that schools with inclusive settings were linked with better quality IEPs (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010a) and better levels of social engagement (Lyons, Cappadocia, & Weiss, 2011).

### ***Social and Emotional Outcomes of Inclusive Education for CWDD***

There is also evidence that participating in inclusive educational settings can produce social and emotional benefits for students with disabilities (Katz, 2012). Such social and emotional benefits can involve developing and maintaining positive peer relationships, which can have important effects for a child's learning and psychological development. Research has shown that the students with special needs often struggle to develop peer relationships (Bossaert, Boer, Frostad, Pijl, & Petry, 2015). In Austria, a study examined more than 1,100 Austrian elementary and high school students and the result of the study found that, when compared to typical students, students with special needs had fewer friendships or social interactions, lower levels of perceived peer acceptance, and diminished self-perception of social participation (Schwab, 2015). In a study carried out in Canada, the authors found that students who were educated primarily in a general education classroom were more accepted by their classmates, had better social relationships, were less lonely, and exhibited fewer behavioural problems than similar children who were educated in segregated classroom settings (Wiener & Tardif, 2004). A similar study was carried out in regular primary education in the Netherlands by Marloes, Sip, Han, and Els (2010). The authors address the social participation of young students (Grades One to Three) with special needs in regular Dutch primary schools. More specifically, the focus lies on four key themes related to social participation: friendships/relationships, contacts/interactions, students' social self-perception, and acceptance by classmates. The outcomes of the study revealed that the majority of students with special needs have a satisfactory degree of social participation. However, compared with students without special needs, a relatively large portion of the students with special needs experience difficulties in their social participation. In general, students with special needs have a significantly lower number of friends and are

members of a cohesive subgroup less often than their typical peers. In addition, students with special needs have fewer interactions with classmates, have more interactions with the teacher, and are less accepted than students without special needs. The social self-perception of both groups of students does not differ. A comparison between students with different categories of disability regarding the four themes of social participation revealed no significant differences.

The opportunity to interact with and learn from peers without disabilities has been shown to correlate with measures of self-esteem, social skills, positive affective and behavioural outcomes, and academic achievement for students with developmental disabilities (Dymond et al., 2006, Kurth et al., 2015; Morningstar et al., 2015). Research on students from United States utilizing data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) and Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study (SEELS) studies also shows that spending time in inclusive settings is linked with better social skills for students with disabilities (Marder et al., 2006; Newman & Davies-Mercier, 2005; Sumi, Marder, & Wagner, 2005). NLTS data suggest that students who spent three-quarters of their day or beyond in regular classrooms were four percentage points more likely to belong to school or community groups than students who spent less time in regular classes. The students with inclusion practices were also eight percentage points less likely to receive disciplinary action at school than students who spent less time in regular classes (Marder et al., 2003). The authors analysing SEELS data found that students with disabilities in general classroom settings express more independence and self-sufficiency (Newman, & Davies-Mercier, 2005; Sumi et al., 2005). For example, 34 percent of students with disabilities who were included in regular classrooms testified that they were likely to do things on their own “frequently” or “repeatedly,” contrasted to 22 percent of students with disabilities who were taught in special education classes (Newman & Davies-Mercier, 2005).



Perceptions of people with DD tend to correlate with the amount of experiences that one has had with an individual that has DD. The more experiences one has had then the more likely that his or her perception will be a positive one and vice versa. Casale-Giannola and Kamens (2006) conducted a study on college students' perceptions of people with DD by focusing on a 21-year-old female named Jacqueline that took her first college course, which was a speech communications course. The finding was that Jacqueline's communication skills and confidence improved, and the other college students enjoyed having Jacqueline around them during the class and leisure time. Other students in the class began to value coming for their lectures more because they saw how important it was to Jacqueline. The students also said they saw Jacqueline as the same as everyone else with the same abilities.

In a longitudinal study that aims to determine the factors that predict the developmental gains in an inclusive classroom (Sucuo, Bakkalo, Demir, and Atalan, 2019). A 3-year project in Turkey involving 117 pre-school children with developmental disabilities (CWDD) and Children without developmental disabilities (CWODD) who attended 53 inclusive classrooms in 13 public preschools with average age of 51.88 months and 51.64 months for CWDD and children without developmental disabilities (CWODD) respectively. A comparison of pre- and post- treatment measures found a significant increase in the developmental gains in student-teacher relationship, reduction in problem behaviour and increase in social interaction from CWDD to their peers with typical development in language, socioemotional and psychomotor domain. It can be said that these findings for the benefits of placing the CWDD in the preschool classroom where they can interact with their more able peers might be very promising. However, some studies focusing on inclusive practices have emphasised that access to the general education environments are not enough to support development of the CWDD (Carta & Kong, 2007). Therefore, it is accepted

that successful inclusion needs planning, training, and support not only for CWDD but also for teachers who work with the children who have a variety of skills and abilities.

### **Outcomes of Inclusion for Students without Disabilities (CWODD)**

Similarly, research has demonstrated that the impacts on typically developing students of being educated in an inclusive classroom are either neutral or positive. Attending inclusive classrooms can provide a range of academic and social benefits for CWODD including higher achievement in mathematics and literacy, more positive relationships, and improved rates of high school graduation (Kirjavainen, Pulkkinen, & Jahnukainen, 2016). Nevertheless, numerous parents and educators have worries that the inclusion of students with disabilities might come at the expense of their students without disabilities (Barrio, Miller, Ojeme, & Tamakloe, 2019). Despite these concerns, research has proved them unfounded.

### ***Academic Outcomes of Inclusive Education for CWODD***

Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, and Kaplan (2007) evaluated 26 studies conducted in the United States, Canada, Ireland, and Australia. The results of these studies found that the vast majority (81 percent) of study discoveries indicated that the students without disabilities either experienced no effects (58 percent of studies) or experienced positive effects (23 percent of studies) on their academic development as a result of being educated alongside students with disabilities (Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, & Kaplan, 2007). Similarly, a study by Farrell et al. (2007) of primary and secondary school students in England found no significantly meaningful connection between the proportion of students with disabilities and the academic achievement of the student without disabilities. A follow up of three studies by Ruijs and Peetsma (2009) reported positive outcomes on the academic achievement for student without disabilities in an inclusive classroom. The authors observed that teachers utilized teaching strategies and

methodologies which met the needs of diverse learners in the class. A similar study by Friesen, Hickey, and Krauth (2010) with students in 4th and 7th grade in British Columbia arrived at a related outcome. The authors noted that the number of students in any of the grades with learning and behavioural disabilities was not connected with the numeracy and reading exam scores of the students without disabilities. Additional research focused on the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities or other developmental disabilities yields similar findings. In a study issued in 2013, the authors statistically matched more than four hundred (400) elementary students without disabilities in fifty (50) classrooms in Switzerland. Twenty (20) of the classrooms consist of a student with an intellectual disability, and thirty (30) of the classrooms did not have a student with intellectual disability. The researchers then tracked these students for one year and discovered that having a student with intellectual disability in their class had no effect on the development of mathematics or literacy skills for the students without disabilities (Dessementet & Bless, 2013).

Critics of inclusive education have raised concerns that disruptive behaviour from students with developmental disabilities may redirect teachers' attention away from fostering the academic and social growth of all students (Sucuo et al., 2019). Although the majority of the research reviewed herein shows that inclusion yields neutral or positive effects on the academic achievement of students without disabilities, there is some evidence that the inclusion of multiple students with diagnosed developmental disabilities within a single classroom can present distinctive challenges for teachers. Drawing on data from a large longitudinal study of young children in the United States, researchers have found evidence that having multiple classmates with an DD can have a small negative impact on the reading and mathematics skills (Fletcher, 2010) and school behaviour and approaches to learning skills (Gottfried, 2014) of students

without disabilities. The authors highlight that these potential small negative effects on students without disabilities were driven by those classrooms in which two or more students with severe emotional and behavioural disabilities were present and suggest that having one classmate with a disability should not worsen outcomes for students without disabilities. This finding, however, is unique in the literature, and pertains only to CWDD who also have comorbid severe behaviour disorders. The presence of more than one student with disabilities who don't have extreme behavioural challenges has not been shown to have similar effects (Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, and Kaplan, 2007).

### ***Social and Emotional Outcomes of Inclusive Education for CWDD***

Research has demonstrated a positive impact on the social attitudes and beliefs of students without disabilities as they attend class along with students with disabilities (Specht & Young, 2010). A literature review summarizes the benefits of inclusion for students without special needs: growth in social cognition (increased tolerance of others, more effective communication with all peers); reduced fear of human differences, accompanied by increased comfort and awareness (less fear of people who look or behave differently); improvements in self-concept (increased self-esteem, perceived status, and sense of belonging); development of personal moral and ethical principles (less prejudice, higher responsiveness to the needs of others); and warm and caring friendships (Kurth, Lyon, & Shogren, 2015). Bunch and Valeo (2004) conducted comprehensive interviews with dozens of Canadian students without disabilities and found that students in an inclusive school had more relationships with students with disabilities and were more likely to support inclusion when equated to students in non-inclusive schools. Few of the students in non-inclusive schools were friends of students with disabilities, while all of the elementary students in the inclusive schools were friends of students

with disabilities. The authors suggest the difference is due to simple routine contact between students with and without disabilities in the inclusive schools, so, the authors theorized that students are more expected to agree to the situation with which they are accustomed; if inclusion is the norm, they are likely to support it, and if separate placement is the norm; they are likely to accept it. They also found less peer abuse (social rejection, teasing and insults) of students with disabilities in inclusive schools, possibly because students in inclusive schools were more likely to stand up for their colleagues with disabilities. Georgiadi et al. (2012) conducted a study examining children ages 9 to 10 in Greece. The authors asserted that students attending inclusive schools selected significantly fewer negative adjectives to describe children with intellectual disabilities when compared to students without disabilities in non-inclusive settings. In another study, researchers examined 80 elementary school students without disabilities in Italy and discovered that those who had contact with students with developmental disabilities held more positive and less prejudicial views about people with developmental disabilities when compared to students who had not had such contact (Consiglio, Guarnera, & Magnano, 2015).

In all the studies, it was noted that the distinctions between school settings were much greater than differences between inclusive and non-inclusive classrooms within those schools. In other words, the overall quality of instruction in a school plays a more significant part in shaping the achievement of the student without disabilities than whether or not that student was taught alongside children with a disability (Dessementet & Bless, 2013).

### **Barriers to Inclusive Education**

Research has delineated several barriers to inclusion. Forlin (2001) discovered a lack of knowledge, skills and attitudes as the most significant impediments to inclusive education practices. As such, student funding formulas, teacher in-service education, and educational

approaches in schools often reflect a school philosophy other than inclusion (Sokal & Katz, 2015). Furthermore, several students and teacher-related variables have been significantly and consistently linked with specific teacher attitudes toward inclusion in Nigeria (Adeniyi, Owolabi, & Olojede, 2015). The student grade level and severity of disability have been found to influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusion (Carlson, Hemmings, Wurf, & Reupert, 2012). Specifically, Adeniyi, Owolabi, and Olojede (2015) asserted that students with disabilities were viewed more favourably in lower grade levels than in higher grade levels in the Nigerian education system, and children with less severe disabilities were viewed more favourably than those with more severe disabilities.

Of course, in efforts to implement inclusive education the decision of parents to enrol their children in regular schools is vital for successful implementation of inclusive education (Mann, Cuskelly, and Moni, 2015). This presupposes that parent will be armed with relevant information, which will assure them that regular schools have the capacity to support the education of children with disabilities (Maxwell, William, Elvis, Oyewole, & Eric, 2019). Cultural factors, too, may have significant influence on the attitudes of the parents with and without disabilities. In Nigeria, diverse tribes and ethnic groups are likely to have cared for individuals with disabilities including people with developmental disabilities in different ways. For example, as described in Sango (2017), the Muslim, Hausa tribe in the northern part of Nigeria viewed any form of disability as the consequence of god's will manifested in individuals and so they believed that they should be cared for and treated with kindness by the community. Yoruba tribes from the western part of Nigeria similarly included the belief that 'Obatala' (god) created all people and so the disabled should be looked after by society. Other tribes, such as the Igbos from the eastern part of Nigeria, would have ascribed DD and other disabilities to these

origins in negative ways (i.e., as punishment), and parents would have resorted to traditional healers and/or “native doctors”. These traditional healers would often administer potentially harmful treatments and practises which are still ongoing in many parts of Nigeria today (Gerety, 2013). In these groups, the stigma of disability, especially developmental disabilities, can be extreme as they believe that the gods curse someone with any form of disability, or the individual’s parents were involved in some activities contrary to the belief system (Etieyibo & Omiegbe, 2016). The lack of education regarding disability awareness therefore forms a significant barrier to inclusive education, as parents of CWODD may be unwilling to have their children educated in schools with CWDD. While advocacy of implementation of inclusive education seems to be gaining ground in Nigeria, it is not yet clear if policymakers recognise parents as important stakeholders who are expected to contribute towards successful practices in schools (Adeniyi, Owolabi, & Olojede, 2015).

In the rural areas in Nigeria, most special educational and rehabilitation centres are often located too far from where a person with a disability lives (World Health Organisation, & World Bank, 2011). Most parents of people with disabilities and their children in the rural areas tend to face more challenges than their counterparts in urban areas because they lack knowledge of the true causes of disabilities (World Health Organisation, & World Bank, 2011). There are false beliefs about the causes of disability that it is due to breaking laws, ancestral violations of societal norms and family sins or adultery (DSPD, 2016, p. 5). Disability has also been attributed to the breaking of social taboos for instance, having sexual intercourse during pregnancy (Rohwerder, 2018). Despite these challenges, Okon (2018) found that many people with disabilities in the village have started shops, craft workshops and farming activities; others are involved in street vending, tailoring, and carpentry, as they are not in school.

## **Inclusive Education in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

As a result of the adoption of international framework agreements such as the Salamanca Statement, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Sustainable Development Goal 4, many countries, including Nigeria, across the globe are reforming their education systems to enable all students to have equitable access to education (Ainscow, & Sandill 2010; Oluremi, 2015). However, the barriers encountered in running inclusive practices by Nigerian schools are similar to most developing countries (Adeniyi, Owolabi, & Olojede, 2015).

In developing countries such as Nigeria, it appears the public awareness campaign to promote inclusive education to stakeholders of education in both public and private school is yielding reluctant reactions as a few schools both in private and public are beginning to embrace the implementation of inclusive education even with limited resources (Egaga & Aderibigbe 2015). Literature on inclusive education practices for students with physical disabilities in Nigeria is increasing in recent times (Oluremi, 2015). For example, a study by Eric et al. (2018) explored parental attitudes, knowledge and perceived social norms influencing implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. The authors analysed the quantitative data from the survey questionnaire from students, parents, and teachers. A total of 708 parents completed the survey in two states in Nigeria. The results of their study indicated a very low knowledge about inclusive education among the stakeholders in Nigeria because most of the schools are examination oriented and do not give room for accommodation and modifications of examinations for students with exceptionalities. Hence, stakeholders and parents of students without disabilities might be concerned about the assumed negative effects of inclusion on the standard of the examination and fear the learning experiences of their children might be watered



down (Brydgs & Mkandawire, 2018).

In another study, Olufemi and Samuel (2009) adopted a descriptive survey research design, with 60 teachers as participants from selected secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study was on the attitude of teachers towards the inclusion of children with special needs in general education classrooms. Four hypotheses were postulated, and questionnaires administered. A t-test method of analysis was the main statistical method used to test the generated hypotheses. The findings revealed that the female teachers had a more positive attitude towards the inclusion of students with special needs than their male counterparts. Furthermore, the results revealed that significant difference exists between married and single teachers in their attitude towards students with special needs, and that professionally qualified teachers tend to have a more favourable attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special needs than non-professionally qualified teachers. The authors of the study recommended that teachers should attend seminars and conferences to improve their knowledge about ways of practicing and accepting inclusion for a better tomorrow for children with special needs in Nigeria.

Egaga and Aderibigbe (2015) identified eight problems that have hampered Nigeria in accomplishing the tenets of inclusive education in 21<sup>st</sup> century: (a) Inadequate plans for the identification and assessment of people with disabilities; (b) Lack of adequate guidance services for the parents on availability of facilities for children with disabilities; (c) Uneven distribution of special needs centers and facilities within the Nigerian demography, most facilities are located in the urban centers; (d) Begging for alms is a social norm associated with people with disabilities. Hence, the begging is becoming a major way of livelihood for people with developmental disabilities (e) The often-negative attitude of people within the Nigerian society to children with disabilities due to myths and cultural beliefs associated with interacting with

people living with disabilities; (f) insufficient and minimal training for school administrators; (g) lack of availability of funding towards educational programs hindering the progress of inclusive education practice.

The question then arises, “how realistic is the adoption of inclusive education in an unaccommodating and hostile environment, even when the general education curriculum is still undergoing relative constraints towards children with disabilities?” Nigeria is a country fraught with many challenges. Even though the national policy of education (2004) indicates that children and youth in general have a right to education that will give them the requisite knowledge and skills needed to survive and succeed within the society, this policy is still not replicated in real life situations such as schools and the immediate community (Egaga & Aderibigbe, 2015). Since people living with disabilities constitute part of this policy and have a right to basic education, the fundamental financial, educational, and human resources to actualize these policies should be provided for. The complexity and diversity of Nigeria requires more advocacy from parents, educators, and school principals disseminating information on the needs of students with disabilities and availability of various resources and academic models of learning. (Ainscow, & Sandill 2010; Oluremi, 2015). Advocating for inclusive education in Nigeria requires more exposure to inclusive education for regular teachers to the nature and demands of students with disabilities. Garuba (2003) postulated that educators need a broader understanding on intricacies of inclusive education and how this approach would enhance the social, affective, and cognitive domains of learning of these students.

### **Research on Students with DD in Nigeria**

As noted earlier most of the research on inclusive practices of students with disabilities in Nigeria have been on including students with physical disabilities such as mobility disability,

hearing and visual impairments. In addition, the research that has been conducted in this area is limited by its heavy reliance on quantitative methods (Pestana, 2015). Authors of the studies have mentioned these gaps as one of the limitations of their studies. This presents an opportunity for qualitative methodology, which allows researchers to study complex phenomena in context (Baxter & Jack, 2015), and supports the use of multiple sources of data, including semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

Numerous reports from United Nations on the progress of education for all in sub-Saharan countries have been on the generality of the education of male and female students. The reports have no information on the progress of whether and how students with disabilities have been included in the educational setting and society. This also supports the need for this study, to investigate how far we have gone as one of the countries in the sub-Saharan since the inception of Sustainable Development Goal 4 in 2015, given the goals are to be completed by 2030, and we are now a third of the way there (Sustainable Development Goal Report, 2019).

### **Theoretical Framework**

As discussed in the introduction to this issue (i.e., inclusive education, developmental disabilities, sustainable developmental goal 4), it is important to note that most of the Northern America theoretical frameworks on inclusive education may not be relevant to the concepts of inclusive education in Nigeria because of the cultural background and beliefs towards inclusive education and students with developmental disabilities. In this sense, inclusion is not basically about putting students with and without disabilities together in the general classroom, it is about starting with a different epistemological view or about starting with the aims or the outcomes of the educational enterprise which are culturally bound (Hassanein, 2015) as well as politically driven. Within the Nigeria context, the understanding of inclusion, and the social and political

structures through which it is delivered, must be seen against the background of the historical antecedents that have shaped the development of post-civil war education policy. The theoretical framework, within which separate educational facilities for students with disabilities in Nigeria were designed, focused on the medical model of disability (Adetoro, 2014). This approach locates the source of the deficits within the individual, justifies social inequalities because of biological inequalities, and directly influenced the official sanctioning of the institution of special education in Nigeria. The medical model is considered by many dis/ability activists to be an outdated model that should no longer be accepted as a viable model in intervening with the challenges of persons with disabilities in the society (Bogart et al., 2020). However, this deficit view, and the societal culture that developed around it, still impact on current attitudes towards disability and difference. This model stands in contrast to the social model of disability that emphasizes the importance of removing difficulties that individuals with intellectual developmental disability faces (Mitra, 2006).

Every cultural community provides developmental pathways for children within some eco-cultural context (Worthman, 2010). It is often difficult, however, for individuals with developmental disabilities to adapt to this socio eco-cultural development pathway (Weisner & Skinner, 2007). Potentially, there is a negative socio eco-cultural awareness to developmental disabilities in Nigeria because of the eco-cultural channels in which events occur in the country. According to Worthman (2010), the most crucial impacts in shaping development and developmental outcomes in humans are the cultural pathways in which event occur. The understanding of this socio eco-cultural environment may prove to be indispensable to developing an effective roadmap and forming interrelatedness in concepts to this study with regard to individuals with developmental disabilities and Nigeria. The conceptualization,

assessment, and categorization of developmental disabilities vary among countries even as it is understood that the conditions that give rise to mental retardation or intellectual developmental disabilities are universal. As a result, the response that is received at local and national level will vary according to countries, cultures, and economies (Switzky & Greenspan, 2006). At the very least, all persons have a desire to meet their basic needs of life and to feel a sense of self-esteem and self-worth (Miller-Smedema, Catalano & Ebener, 2010). However, most parents in Nigeria often are unable to articulate the progress of their children with developmental disabilities. This is because they have little understanding about developmental disabilities and most are still holding onto their own belief about developmental disabilities.

On one hand, it is important to understand that the socio-cultural stigma that is invariably attached to developmental disabilities in Nigeria can be overwhelming to the family and the individual as society seems to be less attentive and less concerned in issues that relate to this group of people (Andrew, 2016; Ayo, 2003; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002). On the other hand, this sociocultural attachment seems to widen the circle of theoretical considerations, research questions, methods, and practices when this problem is being discussed (Kral, Garcia, Aber, Masood, Dutta, & Todd, 2011). That notwithstanding, as the theoretical framework evolves and develops in this study. The focus on the cultural consideration and belief in Nigerian context will become easier for me to generate a theme from the findings that align to Nigerian context and culture.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This review has documented the international movement towards inclusion since 1945, the history of inclusive education in Nigeria as well as a rationale of inclusive education for students with and without disabilities. However, we still do not have a good understanding of

how the inclusive education practices in public and private schools are supporting students with developmental disabilities in Nigeria. Studying the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities in a model school that embraces inclusion will give insight on what the inclusion of student with DD looks like in Nigeria and the necessary, attitudes, skills, and beliefs that make inclusion work in the school. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide in-depth empirical data related to an inclusive school and explore the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities using case study methodology with qualitative document analysis and semi-structured interviews in a micro culture group that practices inclusive education.

## **Chapter 3: Method**

### **Researcher Background**

As an aspiring researcher, I was born and grew up in Nigeria as well as had my primary, secondary, and higher education in Nigeria before coming to Canada for my graduate studies. I know well the educational terrains, cultural biases and educational policies in Nigeria. My understanding of the Nigerian educational system and politics around it will afford me the ability to bring an indigenous lens to this study. Likewise, I am a trained special education teacher with a strong background in working with different children with exceptionalities from ages 5-18 years in different educational settings. This has led to my desire to develop the practices that support inclusive education for students with developmental disabilities. However, I wish to make this collaborative working relationship with mainstream teachers more impactful in the learning of the students with exceptionalities, which has led me to do a Master program in Special Education with emphasis in Inclusive Education.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of the research questions in this study is to gain insight and explore the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities in Lagos state, Nigeria using a case study methodology. These questions are:

*How does an inclusive school seek to include students with developmental disabilities meaningfully in the academic and social learning in a general classroom in Nigeria?*

*In what ways do stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes influence inclusive education in an inclusive classroom for a student with developmental disabilities in Nigeria?*

The aims of this study are not to impose any theoretical framework of inclusive educational practices on the educational system in Nigeria but to further contribute to a shared understanding of the inclusive education of students with developmental disabilities in Lagos state, Nigeria – a starting point of empirical data of inclusive practices for including students with developmental disabilities in a country with complex cultural backgrounds and attitudes towards people with disabilities.

## **Participants**

### ***Participant Selection Process***

Due to the prevailing pandemic (COVID-19) going on in the world, a purposeful sampling was used to select a case for this study among the top schools that run inclusive education in Lagos state, Nigeria. The selected case (i.e., the school) revolved around the selected school's stakeholders using criterion-based sampling. The school for this study demonstrated the following inclusion criteria: (a) the school is registered to be an inclusive school that accepts all students regardless of their disabilities in Nigeria; (b) inclusion of students with a diagnosis of developmental disabilities; (c) a Special Education/Inclusive Education Policy is in place; (d) professionals such as Special Education Teacher, Speech and Language therapist and other professionals are working in the school; and (d) has inclusive classrooms – meaning the students spend the majority of their school day in the same classroom as their same-age peers.

When I obtained approval from the University of British Columbia's Behavioural Research Ethics Board to carry out my research. I contacted the National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET), a national board for professionals in the field of Special Education in Nigeria. The NASSET is not a participant in this study but acted as a gatekeeper to assist in participant selection and in gaining access to the site.

The NASSET provided me with five schools they believe are running inclusive



education with contact information for their respective administrators. Then, I contacted the five different school administrators through emails and phone calls by telling them my desire to carry out a study at their schools. Fortunately, two schools among the five-school replied to my email to express their interest in participating in the study. I therefore sent an email to the two school administrators to complete the School-Wide Inclusive Education Best Practice (SWIEBP) indicators rating scale to ascertain if the schools have met the criteria for an inclusive practice. As Morningstar et al. (2016) acknowledged there is a need to explore the way and experiences of individual with special needs under inclusive models. Thus, to select a case (i.e., a school) for this study, I used critical case sampling. According to Stake (2005), it is very vital to decide on the case selection in which (you) feel (you) can learn the most. This necessitated me in considering the years of running inclusive practices in each school, and professionals available to support students with developmental disabilities in the two schools. It was from their feedback that I decided on choosing one school. The critical sampling gave the opportunity to select a case where the school believes the students with developmental disabilities:

- participate daily in classroom routine
- hold valued roles in the mainstream classroom
- engage in social interactions and academic learning that are connected to the grade level curriculum.

The School Administrator received and completed the School-Wide Inclusive Education Best Practice Indicators Rating Scale (New Hampshire Department of Education, n.d.) through the UBC Qualtrics. This Self -Rating Survey is a set of

inclusive education best-practice indicators that can be used as a framework to guide inclusive programming and school improvement. It was adapted from the Best Practices guide authored by Jorgensen, McSheehan, and Sonnenmeier (2012), and from the Kentucky Alternate Assessment Portfolio Teacher's Guide (2004). The SWIEBP rating scale is divided into twelve areas that impact effective inclusive education for students with disabilities. This is a self-rating scale that allows school staff to rate the degree that their school currently practices specific indicators of inclusion, using the following Likert scale:

- 1-No evidence
- 2- Minimal evidence
- 3- Some evidence
- 4- Adequate evidence
- 5-Exemplary evidence

Thirty-two of the statements on the scale were selected prior to sending out the scales to be completed by the two deputies in the selected school for the study. The thirty-two statements were chosen because they were related to this study's definition of inclusive classroom.

**Participants Selected.** The participants recruited for this study came from the selected case, i.e. the school. After getting the approval from the school principal to carry out the study, I sent out letters of invitation to the teaching staff to indicate their interest to participate in this study. I then selected teachers who had past or current experience including students with developmental disabilities. Teachers then sent home letters to their students seeking parental consent for the study. Off the five students with

developmental disabilities, two consented to participate. All five teachers participated, however, only the students in the classrooms with the two students with DD who had consented participated. Special education teachers and learning assistants associated with these two students, and their parents, also consented to participate. Parental or guardian consent for students within a particular age to participate in a research study is highly needed, but equally important is the student's assent to participate in a research study (Phelan & Kinsella, 2013). So, both the parents' consent and student's assent were obtained before the interview was conducted. There were 5 mainstream teachers, 2 learning assistants, and 2 special needs teachers among the whole school staff that participated in the study.

Inclusion criteria for selecting the students with developmental disabilities were as follows: (a) diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental disabilities, as verified by a standardized assessment instrument, e.g., Gilliam Autism Rating Scale (GARS); and (b) the student is said to be a full-time member in a general education classroom. The critical case sampling permitted me to select the best possible case where a student with developmental disabilities is considered, to be included in the social and academic life of the classroom and the school community that appears to value and demonstrate inclusion. The selection of the best case available allowed me to understand the degree of progress made in the school, and what local educators and other stakeholders in the school community consider to be inclusive education.

**Privacy.** To safeguard the confidentiality of the participants of the study, all stakeholders' names (including the name of the school, name of the parents and teachers) were given pseudonyms or will remain anonymous in this written report. During my data collection

through interviews via zoom, administration of School-Wide Inclusive Education Best Practice Indicators Rating Scale, and document analysis I used codes instead of names on all data (e.g., interviews). All data (e.g., interview and transcripts) were stored in my supervisor's research lab on a personal, locked laptop, encrypted, password protected and backed up on a protected USB drive.

**Participant's Profile.** The case in this study revolves around a school that is claimed to be running an inclusive education model and has students with developmental disabilities. According to Yin (2014, p.16), defined case study research as the study of a phenomenon 'within real-world context'. Thus, the context of this case is similarly as crucial, and involves the regular students of the classroom and school community. Therefore, each participant interviewed was given a pseudonym and is described below.

**Shola.** This participant is an agile boy who has autism spectrum disorder with limited receptive and expressive communication as stated on the Individual Education Plan. He was attending primary six, terminal class for primary school in Nigeria, in an inclusive classroom at the time of this study. In his Individual Education plan shared by the teacher, Shola has challenges in reading, communication, attention span and concentration. He was prompted most times to be expressive in his communication and supported in re-directing him to the interviewer by the father during the interview.

**Kemi.** This participant is an energetic girl with autism spectrum disorder. Her diagnosis was stated in her IEP and confirmed by both the teacher and the parents. She was in primary 4 at the time of this study and attending an inclusive classroom. Kemi has challenges in reading, fine motor skills, nonverbal behaviour, and attention span. She communicates with short sentences and phrases.

***Bose and Dayo.*** These participants, at the time of this study, were students in Kemi and Shola's class respectively. Bose had known Kemi since when they were in pre-school while Dayo knew Shola since primary 4 and they have been friends as had their parents.

***Adeboye.*** This participant is the mainstream teacher of Shola and was teaching primary six at the time of this study. Adeboye had over 2 decades of teaching experience in both primary and secondary schools and he reported teaching several students with disabilities ranging from student with autism, down syndrome, dyslexia, dyscalculia, and other related disabilities. He holds a Master of Education in Educational Psychology.

***Cecilia.*** This participant is a classroom teacher and was teaching primary 4 class that Kemi was attending. At the time of this study, Cecilia has taught for over 10 years with an opportunity to have taught more than 15 students with different disabilities. She holds a Bachelor of Education in early childhood education.

***Vivian.*** This participant is a classroom teacher whose student with developmental disabilities declined to participate in this study. However, Vivian indicated her interest to participate in the study. Her teaching experience is over 15 years and has taught over 25 students with developmental disabilities. She specifically reported that she had taught higher number of students with autism spectrum disorder than any other students with different disabilities.

***Esther.*** This participant is a classroom teacher in primary 5. As at the time of this study, she has no student with disability. However, Esther has taught many students with developmental disabilities. She had over 18 years of teaching experience and indicated interest in participating in this study.

***Nneka.*** This participant is an early years classroom teacher. She teaches early years 2 class. The children in this class are within the ages 4 -5 years old and she had over 9 years of

teaching experience as at the time of the study and holds a Bachelor of Education in Montessori Education/English.

**Dino.** This participant is a learning assistant, who had previously worked in the Special Education unit as a learning assistant before going to mainstream classroom. She had been working as a learning assistant in Kemi's class.

**Bayo.** This participant is a learning assistant in the mainstream classroom. He had over 10 years teaching assistant experience in different school settings. Bayo is a learning assistant in Shola's classroom as at the time of this study, and he knows a lot about Shola's learning, behaviour, and progress cognitively.

**PP01.** This is one of the parents of the student with developmental disabilities. The parents gave their consent and assent for their daughter, Kemi to participate in this study. Kemi's father is the current assistant chairman of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) in the school, and he has been part of the executives of the PTA for the past 3 years with different portfolios. According to him, PP01 has influenced the school management to recruit more special education teachers and donated in-cash to the school for support in provision of infrastructure for students with developmental disabilities. The father is a senior engineer in one of the leading oil and gas companies in Nigeria.

**PP02.** Shola's parents gave their consent and assent for their son with developmental disabilities to participate in this study. Shola's mother is the public relations officer of the PTA of the school while the father is a popular politician in Nigeria. Shola's mother reported that she is active in the school activities as she or husband attends every school's event and report to the school board if they found any unacceptable behaviour by the school staff. The mother stated that she joined the executive of the PTA so that she can influence any decision regarding

students with disabilities.

***Shade.*** This participant is a special education teacher in the school. She had over 10 years' experience working with students with special needs. Shade supports the mainstream teachers in key stage 1 (Year 1-3) as at the time of this study. She currently holds a Bachelor of Education in Special Education.

***Tobi.*** This participant is a special education teacher with a background as a class teacher for over 5 years in the classroom before being a special education teacher. She had been a special education teacher for over 3 years as at the time of this study. Tobi had a Master of Education in Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## **Setting**

The study was done in an elementary school in Nigeria deemed a model of inclusive education by NASET. This study took place between May to middle of July 2021. The case, i.e., the school is in the western part of Nigeria, and it is supported by different multinational companies, especially Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC). At the time of this study, the elementary school has a population of 722 students from early years to primary six. The school has 65 students on the special needs register with different disabilities. The school for this study can be considered as a privileged school because necessary resources are being provided for the teachers, teachers' salaries are paid promptly, and expatriate teachers are part of the teaching staff.

## **Research Design**

### ***Methodology***

A qualitative case study methodology was used to explore how two students with developmental disabilities engage in learning in a Nigerian inclusive classroom and

school community. I used a case study for this research because it helps the study of complex events in its real-world context, in particular when it is not possible to control the behaviour of the participants and the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context overlap (Yin, 2014). Therefore, the case in this study is a school that has students with developmental disabilities who are registered as full members of the class.

Analytical generalisation can be used in case study research, which allows for comparison of findings and expanded theory (Yin, 2014). Hence, this study may lead to further progress in theory or interventions that support the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities in inclusive classrooms in Nigeria.

### ***Propositions***

Yin (2014) asserts that each proposition directs attention to something that should be examined within the scope of study by collaborating with one another, capturing what you are really interested in addressing, and reflecting important theoretical issues. A lot of propositions emerge from the literature review, and this played a considerable role in deciding the scope of this research, dedicated group for data collection, and supported the development of a conceptual framework for the research of study (Yin, 2014). Based on the literature review, the following propositions emerged:

1. The physical and instructional characteristics of the learning activity influence the school in including students with disabilities, such as Universal Design for Learning (Dymond et al., 2006, Kurth et al., 2015; Morningstar et al., 2015) individualized and specialized supports and materials (Morningstar et al., 2015), and adaptations to the curriculum, instructional methods, and learning activities (Kurth et al., 2015). This study identified factors in the



- learning activities that promote inclusive practises of a student with developmental disabilities.
2. Teachers are the key players in any educational system; not only do they work most closely with individual students, but they are also responsible for providing inclusive environments at the classroom and school community level (Rina, Ajay, Ishwar, & Ashwini, 2013). Therefore, Teacher's self-determination is the fundamental premise toward achieving effective quality outcome and support services for individuals with developmental disabilities (Evins, 2015). For the purpose of this study, self-determination is the combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal directed, self-regulated, and autonomous behavior such as making decisions for himself or herself regarding their lives (Wehmeyer, 2004). In implementing support services for an individual with developmental disability, self-determination intervention becomes the big consideration when developing a robust plan for students with developmental disabilities (Evins, 2015).
  3. Inclusive education practice should demonstrate both academic and social inclusion in the classroom and school community (Katz, 2012). The academic inclusion of student with disabilities includes engaging in the learning activities that are connected to the grade level curriculum and cognitively challenging (Katz, 2013) while the social inclusion should include holding valued social roles in the classroom (Katz et al., 2012). The present study explored the understanding of engaging students with developmental

disabilities in activities and roles in both academic and social inclusion in an inclusive classroom.

4. The decision of parents of students with developmental disabilities to enrol their children/wards in regular schools is vital for successful implementation of inclusive education (Mann, Cuskelly, and Moni, 2015). This study will identify and explore factors and activities that promote inclusive practices in the school for students with developmental disabilities by the stakeholders.
5. Knowledge, skills, and attitudes as the most significant impediments to inclusive education practices (Adeniyi, Owolabi, & Olojede, 2015). This study will note barriers to inclusive education for the school to include a student with developmental disabilities.

### **Unit of Analysis**

The case or unit of analysis is the school that is including students with developmental disabilities in an inclusive classroom. Yin (2014) and Stake (2005) assert ‘binding the case’ is critical to help determine the scope of my data collection by placing boundaries on the case. This study was constrained by context and definition (Miles & Huberman, 2014) because it will help to tighten the connections between the research questions and propositions (Yin, 2014). Inclusion of students with developmental disabilities will be bound only to include instances when the student with disabilities is ‘doing what everyone else is doing’ in the class.

### **Data Collection**

According to Yin (2014), Case study relies on multiple sources of data which are used to triangulate or corroborate the data. These multiple sources of data were

collected from interviews for the nominated teachers, learning assistant, special needs teacher and peers, administering School Wide Inclusive Education Best Practice Indicators Rating Scale for the school principal/administrator and school documents in this study. Both on-line programs (e.g., UBC zoom) and phone calls were used in collecting data from multiple sources.

### ***Interviews***

I conducted semi-structured individual interviews with two parents of students with autism spectrum disorder, five classroom teachers, two learning assistants, two students with autism spectrum disorder and a peer in each of Kemi and Shola's classrooms. It was important that the peers in the class who were interviewed had a relationship with the student with disabilities, so that their interview makes a rich contribution (Sokal & Katz, 2015). Thus, I attempted to engage in a semi-structured interview with one student in Kemi's class as well as one student in Shola's class. However, Kemi and Shola were interviewed in the presence of their parents through zoom, using Kemi's and Shola's communication book, familiar pictures, and symbols to aid the communication and response.

During the interview with Kemi via zoom platform, I engaged her in social interaction before I asked the guided semi -structured questions by asking her to sing her favourite nursery rhymes. She used her iPad and pressed the button on 'little, little, little star' and she sang along as the song played. Although Kemi enjoyed interacting with me and it seemed she enjoyed the interaction, this cannot be a reliable indicator that Kemi will demonstrate this in her classroom. To understand Kemi's viewpoint on engaging in social interaction, the father set up a session space

with iPad focusing on Kemi during role play session with her siblings in the room for 5 minutes. I therefore observed Kemi while she participated in social activities with her siblings, and I took fieldnotes.

The use of interviews as a source of data offers insight from the participants' perspectives. Semi-structured interviews promote a smooth, flexible discussion driven by open-ended questions (Hermanowicz, 2002). The guided questions used during the semi-structured interviews are included in Appendix C.

### ***Document Analysis***

Similar to interviews and focus groups, written material can provide insight into participants' experiences of a phenomenon (Danica, & Anneliese, 2012). I reviewed publicly available documents to verify the information to be gathered from the school principal/administrator and classroom teachers. Such documents as attendance records of the student with developmental disabilities, school effectiveness data/improvement plan, SEN policy & inclusive educational policy, and non-technical literature, such as reports and internal correspondence, was a secondary source of empirical data for this case study. For example, data on the context within which the participant operates (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). The attendance records, reports of IEP meetings and diaries of Shola and Kemi were presented to me. There were some scrapbooks and files containing school newsletter clippings, pictures, letters, flyers, program schedules, and similar documents on inclusive practices given to me and requested to be deleted from my email box after use. The document data collected were bounded by relevance to the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities.

## **Data Analysis**

The aim of the data analysis was to identify emergent themes from participant interview and document analysis data. The data analysis entailed assessing, classifying, and recombining evidence using thematic analysis by organising the coded data into themes (Yin, 2014). The dataset comprised of the documents analysis, interviews from teachers, parents, and students, and these were transcribed and divided into dataset for analysis. Focus-group analysis involved thematic analysis, but the main focus was on the nature of social interaction within each group (Halkier, 2010). Additionally, when analysing the emerging themes, the focus was predominantly on a group as a whole, rather than on individuals within them (Krueger, 1994). This dataset was evaluated using a procedure drawn by Braun and Clarke (2013), which follows thereof:

### **Stage One – Familiarization of the data**

- a. An initial reading of the transcripts of the interviews was done and anything that was overtly substantial or remarkable was noted.

### **Stage Two – Generating codes**

- b. On the second reading of the transcript, numerous ideas or phrases were noted, and key quotations in the text were highlighted.
- c. The initial codes were identified in the second reading were reviewed and reduced by combining similar or duplicate codes.

### **Stage Three – Constructing themes**

- d. Codes were sorted and combined to form potential themes and sub-themes.
- e. Themes were refined by collapsing them together, breaking them apart, or

removing those which do not have enough data to be supported, and a list of candidate themes was created.

#### Stage Four – Reviewing themes

- f. A list of candidate themes created were examined alongside the dataset, to make sure they fit with the coded data, entire dataset and in relation to the research questions.
- g. The themes were re-organised and refined again until themes across the data set fit into a thematic map.
- h. At this stage of analysis, all transcripts were re-read to capture any data that had not yet been coded or to re-code for data that did not fit.

#### Stage Five – Define Themes

- i. Analysis at this stage is more interpretative, and a detailed narrative was scripted as started to make sense of the relationships in the data and the themes.

#### Stage Six – Production of the Final Report

- j. This is the final stage where written report was completed and included all the detailed narrative from stage five.

### ***Stage One***

I familiarised myself with the data I have collected from the interviews.

When I completed the interview with the participants, I immediately transcribed using a verbatim account of all verbal utterances and uploaded to NVivo 12; a qualitative data analysis software application. I engaged in a ‘repeated reading’ of the transcripts, and during my reading, I was in search for meanings, patterns and anything that was

significant as some researchers have argued it should be seen as “a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology”, and recognised as an interpretative act, where meanings are created (Bird, 2005, p. 227). The data extracted was directly related to my proposition from the literature review and the research questions of this study.

### *Stage Two*

Once I had familiarised myself with the collected data, and I had generated an initial list of ideas about what was in the data and what was interesting about them. I then involved in the production of initial codes from the data. I used a manual coding function in NVivo 12, which allowed for verbatim, and interpretative description of each portion of data to be recorded as a code. I coded the data by writing notes on the texts I was analysing using highlighters to indicate potential patterns to identify segments of data.

When the initial coding procedure was completed, transcripts were re-read, and their codes were re-examined, and similar or identical codes were merged. For example, ‘training’ was combined into ‘trainings for teachers’. By the completion of the process of stage two, a total of 404 initial codes occurred. The followings were the breakdown of the data set:

- The interviews with the mainstream teacher recorded 133 codes
- The interviews with the Special Education Teacher recorded 67 codes
- The interviews with Learning Assistant recorded 60 codes
- The interviews with parents of students with Developmental Disabilities recorded 68 codes.

- The interviews of students with Developmental Disabilities recorded 33 codes.
- The interviews of peers recorded 43 codes.

**Member Checking.** After the first interviews with the participants and the analysis completed, member checking interviews were conducted. In this study, I was not checking for the validity of the interpretation of the data whether it was ‘true’ or not, but to create an avenue for the participants to join in the analysis process (Smith & McGannon, 2018). The participants agreed that the summaries with little deletions by the participants reflected their views, feelings, and experiences, and the member check interview transcript both generated new codes. Yin (2014) asserted that researchers use many sources of evidence to increase the validity of the study. This describes validity as the trustworthiness of the data and claim the quality of evidence needs to be apparent throughout this study (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016).

When the member checking interviews were completed and codes were amended, a total of 412 codes were recorded. The following are the data set:

- 57 codes recorded in data from interviews with the Special Needs Teacher.
- 74 codes recorded in data set from the interviews with the learning assistant.
- 135 codes recorded in data set from the interview with the mainstream teacher.
- 70 codes recorded in data set from the interviews with the parent of students with developmental disabilities
- 33 codes recorded in data set from the interviews with students with developmental disabilities.
- 43 codes recorded in data set from the interviews with peers.

The cross-checking of the data by the participant was completed and the participants



were satisfied with the data interpretation and the next stage began.

### ***Stage Three***

This phase of the analysis is to construct the themes from the codes. The codes were sorted out and combined to form potential themes and sub-themes. This involved analysing the relationships between various codes and organising them according to preliminary themes. For example, as the codes were analysed and categorized, some codes were removed or combined. The removed codes were those that were either miscoded or the data extract had multiple codes with the same meaning. The codes with similar meanings were combined; for example, 'classmates supporting Kemi' was combined into the code 'peers helping Kemi'. At the end of this process, a total of 362 codes existed. Across each data set were:

- 39 codes recorded in data set from interviews with the peers and were sorted into 7 groups.
- 63 codes recorded in data set from interviews with the learning assistant and were sorted into 9 groups.
- 28 codes recorded in data set from interviews with students with developmental disabilities and were sorted into 7 groups.
- 65 codes recorded in data set from interviews with parent of student with developmental disabilities and were sorted into 9 groups.
- 54 codes recorded in data set from interviews with special education teacher and were sorted into 9 groups
- 113 codes recorded in data set from interviews with mainstream teacher and were sorted into 14 groups.

Subsequently, the codes and code groups were analyzed to make sure similarity and connections occurred between the codes, and a central organising theme was steady throughout the group. (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). For example, the stage three process was able to result in a list of themes and sub-themes for each data extract. By the end of the stage three, the following potential themes existed:

- 6 potential themes including miscellaneous codes existed in data from interviews with the five mainstream teachers.
- 5 potential themes including miscellaneous codes existed in data from interviews with two learning assistants.
- 6 potential themes including miscellaneous codes existed in data from interviews with two special needs teachers.
- 4 potential themes including miscellaneous codes existed in data from two peers.
- 2 potential themes including miscellaneous codes existed in data from two students with developmental disabilities
- 5 potential themes including miscellaneous codes existed in data from two parents of students with developmental disabilities.
- 3 potential themes including miscellaneous codes existed in data from the school documents regarding inclusive practice.

At the end of this stage the collection of candidate themes, and sub-themes were completed. However, these themes are miscellaneous to house the codes-possibly temporarily, and stage four began to devise set of candidate themes and it involved the refinement of these themes.

#### ***Stage Four***

In this stage, I began to review the candidate themes in each set of data. Terry et al. (2017) asserted that the review of the themes is to ensure they fit with the coded data across the entire data set. Therefore, I read all collated extracts for each theme and thought whether they seemed to form a consistent pattern. It became evident that some candidate themes were not really themes because there were not enough data to support them, or the data were too diverse. So, I collapsed them into each other. For example, I found out that the candidate themes from codes with mainstream teachers have themes that did not fit within the data extracts-in which case I reworked the theme and created a new theme, finding a home for those extracts that did not work in an already existing themes and some were discarded from the analysis. Once I was satisfied with the candidate themes adequately captured the contours of the coded data and ensured their meanings answered the research questions and propositions it was time to move to the next stage.

#### ***Stage Five***

This stage began with a satisfactory thematic map of my data (see Table1 for the final refinements of the thematic map). At this point, I defined and further refined the themes for a detailed and interpretative narrative for each theme (see Chapter 4: Results) in reference to the research questions, ensuring the themes were connected but did not intersect (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry et al., 2017). The following final thematic maps existed:

- 3 final themes and 5 subthemes existed in the data from interviews with the mainstream teacher.

- 2 final themes and 3 subthemes existed in the data from interviews with the special needs teachers.
- 3 final themes and 4 subthemes existed in the data from interviews with learning assistant.
- 1 final theme and 3 subthemes existed in the data from interviews with students with developmental disabilities.
- 2 themes and 4 subthemes existed in the data from interviews with peer.
- 1 theme and 3 subthemes existed in the data from interviews with parents of students with developmental disabilities.
- 2 themes and 2 subthemes existed in the data from inclusive practice documents of the school

The eventual final themes and subthemes resulted from refinement of the initial themes as shown below.

**Table 1**

*List of Themes and Subthemes*

Data Source	Themes and Sub-themes
Mainstream Teacher	Theme 1. Inclusive practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 1.1: Differentiated learning</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 1.2: Social construct</i></li> </ul> Theme 2: Class climate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 2.1: Teacher attitude</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 2.2: Team learning</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 2.3: Collaborative decision making</i></li> </ul> Theme 3: Educational programs
Special Needs Teacher	Theme 1. Individual Plan Vs Inclusive Education Theme 2: Special Needs Teacher as a Guide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 2.1: Working with class teacher</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 2.2: Working with parents</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 2.3: Working with other professionals</i></li> </ul>

Learning Assistant	Theme 1. Supporting Collaborative practices Theme 2. Sense of Belonging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 2.1: Academic Responsibility</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 2.2: Social Responsibility</i></li> </ul> Theme 3. The Learning Assistant-Team Player <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 3.1: Role in the team</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 3.2: Supporting the Mainstream Teacher</i></li> </ul>
Data Source	Theme and Sub-themes
Students with Developmental disabilities	Theme 1. Member of Class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 1.1: Learning together</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 1.2: student engagement</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 1.3: Choice and creativity</i></li> </ul>
Peers	Theme 1: Valuing diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 1.1: Empathy</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 1.2: Contributions in the class</i></li> </ul> Theme 2: Developing Self-Concept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 1:1: Awareness of strengths and challenges</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 1.2: Supporting Growth and learning</i></li> </ul>
Parent of students with developmental disabilities	Theme 1: The stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 1.1: Respecting diversity</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 1.2: Communication and school environment</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 1.3: Sense of Cultural responsibility</i></li> </ul>
Document analysis	Theme 1. Equal opportunity Theme 2. School principles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 2.1: Admission policy</i></li> <li>• <i>Sub-theme 2.2: Budgeting and funding</i></li> </ul>

### ***Stage Six***

This stage is where written report was completed and included in all the detailed narrative from stage five (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry et al., 2017). This production of report has been included in Chapter 4: Result of this study. This study is a qualitative case study methodology, and the analysis of the data collected is interpretative. Thus, it can have different meanings for different people. For this reason, this research study was guided with criteria for evaluation that confirmed the validity and reliability of the research (Mandal, 2018).

## **Chapter 4: Results**

The purpose of this study was to explore inclusive education of students with developmental disabilities in Lagos state, Nigeria after the inception of the United Nations Sustainable Developmental Goal 4 in the year 2015. This chapter discusses and concentrates on the result of the data analysis from the seven data sets (i.e., the interview with the mainstream teachers, the interviews with the special needs teachers, the interview with the learning assistants, interviews with Kemi and Shola's peers, interviews with Kemi and Shola, interviews from the parents of students with developmental disabilities, and document analysis).

The present study evaluated the following research questions: (1) How does an inclusive school seek to include students with developmental disabilities meaningfully in the academic and social learning in a general classroom in Nigeria; and (2) In what ways do stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes influence inclusive education in an inclusive classroom for a student with developmental disabilities in Nigeria?

In this study, I have adopted the definition of inclusive education from the Salamanca inclusive education statement of 1994. The Salamanca statement provided a definition of inclusive education that promoted opportunities for persons with disabilities in the general education classroom, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. In the context of this study, I will describe how Kemi and Shola, both students with developmental disabilities, have at times been included meaningfully in an inclusive classroom and school community from the different sources of data. The reports from the data collection and analysis of how Kemi and Shola have been meaningfully included in the general classroom will give detailed narrative of what are considered as examples and non-examples of meaningful inclusion in an academic

and social learning in a general classroom in Nigeria.

### **Mainstream Teacher**

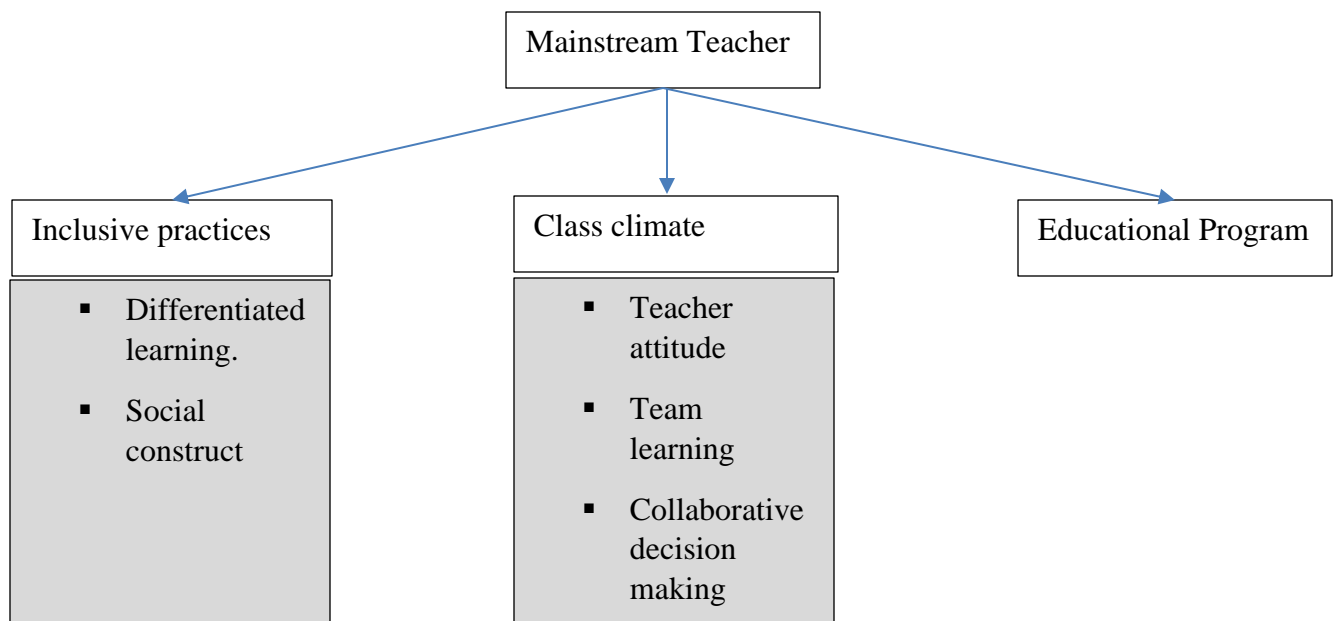


Figure 1: Thematic framework for the interview responses (mainstream teacher)

Three themes emerged from the interviews with mainstream teachers: Inclusive practices, class climate, and educational programs.

### ***Inclusive Practices***

This is one of the themes that was generated from the responses of interviews with the mainstream teachers. Adeboye described inclusion as “Every Child Matters.” He feels having Shola in his classroom with other students has made him be more creative and make learning accessible for everyone in the class and not just Shola but every student in the classroom. Adeboye believes that the path of making everyone included in the classroom starts from a differentiated lesson plan to the lesson delivery and differentiated assessment. Adeboye talked about inclusion as being dynamic, dependent on the child and the resources available to support the child at that time.

This theme has the following subthemes: (1) Differentiated learning, (2) Social construct.

**Differentiated Learning.** This subtheme focuses on the idea that different learners with different ways of learning are present in the classroom. This learning environment encourages and creates a classroom atmosphere where every learner can access the curriculum based on a differentiated instruction and teaching methodology. For example, Adeboye explained that regardless of the diagnosis of a student with disabilities, Adeboye looks at each student in his class according to their strength and weaknesses. He does not rely on the label of the child with disabilities; However, the label or diagnosis of the disability is a guide, and he works with the student as he sees them. He further stressed that even the ‘normal students’ in the class have some difficulties that have not been diagnosed and require support in their learning and social inclusion. “Some students struggle with presentations in front of the class, and they can show me this through recorded video, or written task depending on the student’s strength” he said.

Cecilia, Kemi’s class teacher, stressed the point of giving choices or alternatives in the learning to capture different learning modalities. Cecilia described that in her class, she also has one student with giftedness apart from Kemi with developmental disabilities. So, Kemi is provided with choices of tasks and learning environment she prefers to learn. Kemi selects from the learning choices or moves to a different learning environment that will be helpful for her to access learning. If she moves to a different learning environment, Kemi will be supported by a facilitator that comes from the learning support unit in the school to give support for Kemi in the mainstream



classroom. However, Cecilia will provide a similar or modified task that Kemi will be able to access.

Esther shared her experience teaching students with developmental disabilities in the past. She explained, “I have used First and Then cards, structured teaching, and chunking approaches to help the student to complete his task and wouldn’t be overwhelming for the student.”

Vivian, with a longer experience in handling students with developmental disabilities in the current school shared that she starts differentiating from the point of the lesson plan. In other words, she has a differentiated lesson plan that has different learning activities with differentiated instructions on her lesson plan. The school uses International Primary Curriculum (IPC) which uses themes in the subject approach. This has helped her to integrate the curriculum and repeat the learning several times across different themes to bring about mastery. She reported that this approach has really helped most of the students with developmental disabilities she has worked with in the past. Iris, Wendelien, Ruben, & Piet (2019) added that teachers’ beliefs about differentiating the lesson delivery and curriculum and implementation provide a significant improvement in the learning for students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom situation, and these teachers appeared to understand this.

**Social Construct.** This subtheme speaks to the social atmosphere of the class and how students with and without disabilities have been socially included in an inclusive community. Cecilia talked about the school policy on social inclusion and what you are expected to do as a teacher. She explained that in the school policy, every student in the class must participate socially together and she tries to encourage a class climate that

makes every student feel welcomed and socialised. Kemi is given a role in the class when the class will be presenting a play or drama at the assembly or any children events such as fun day, children day, and Independence Day. For example, Cecilia reported how Kemi joined her peers in presenting a drama on the importance of food to our body at the school assembly. Kemi did the role of food tasting and mentioning classes of food we eat with support on the stage by a facilitator.

Nneka explained how she makes students agree on the social construct in the class. Students in her class at the beginning of school formulate a social construct agreement on how they want to be treated and addressed in the class. This is a class meeting involving everyone in the class. This social agreement becomes a contract in the class, and it is binding on everyone.

### ***Class Climate***

This is the second theme created from the data of interviews with the mainstream teachers. For example, Adeboye explained how Shola loves coming to the mainstream classroom. Shola participates in some lessons in the mainstream classroom and some lessons in the learning support unit with the special needs teacher and speech and language therapist. Adeboye reported that Shola is always very happy when he is in his class because the positive classroom behaviour climate and peers attitudes towards Shola makes him want to come to the class. His picture is pasted on the wall in the class like any other students in the class, he engages in pair games and role play during the Internal Primary Curriculum subjects and takes some roles in the class.

The teacher, with his/her pedagogical and classroom management practices, provides the basis for good behavioural climate and the students are responsible for their

own behaviour to maintain good behavioural climate (Lisa, Vesa, Hannu, & Susanne, 2021). This theme was composed of three subthemes: (1) Teacher attitude, (2) Team learning and (3) Collaborative decision making.

**Teacher Attitude.** Teachers are key to successful inclusion, and as such they are important partners in the change process (Sokal & Katz, 2015). The teachers' attitudes toward including student with developmental disabilities varied across the educational settings or classrooms.

Adeboye explained that understanding and willingness to teach Shola has an indirect way of inspiring him to do more for Shola by creating learning opportunities in different ways for Shola to participate. For example, Adeboye said there were several situations when he has gone to Shola's house to do extra coaching on a topic that have been taught in the class that seemed difficulty for Shola to understand. He also stressed that with his effort, he has modelled for Shola's parents how to teach him at home on a one-on-one.

Nneka reported that she has a strong willingness to implement inclusive practices, though sometimes the student's level of severity of the disabilities causes her to be discouraged due to insufficient time, training, skills and resources necessary for inclusion. Nneka gave a scenario that happened in the past when she had a student with autism in her class many years ago. This student's level of disability was very profound. Most times in the class, the student was throwing tantrums and hitting other students in the class during the student's behavioural crisis. Nneka said this made her unable to focus on the other students in the class during the crisis, and this affected her teaching and learning in the class due to time lost.

Esther reported that she always felt burned out at the end of the day when she had a student with autism in her class. This has led to her having a negative attitude towards inclusion but not the students with disabilities themselves.

**Team Learning.** Cecilia reported that she practices team learning among her students in the class. She makes sure Kemi is always within a group that can help her to follow the instructions. Kemi's friend, Bose is always in the team with Kemi when they are doing team learning. This approach has assisted Kemi to contribute well to the team as well as to take a vital role in the team. Team learning has been very helpful in including Kemi in IPC subjects that involved role play and team presentation. Cecilia stated that the class did a theme on 'Our Culture' in IPC Social studies. Kemi's team made a presentation and fashion show where Kemi was very active in the presentation. The team wore different cultural attires of different tribes in Nigeria. Kemi loved this presentation because she was very active in her team.

Adeboye reported there are times, Shola wasn't able to access the learning in the class. In this case, he explained that Shola will be taken to the learning support unit where a different task will be given to him. For example, in French lessons, Shola is pulled-out from the class to go to the learning support unit because they believe he couldn't be introduced to two different languages at the same time, and he is still struggling in speaking English fluently.

**Collaborative Decision Making.** In the context of these inclusive classrooms, classroom teachers sharing initiative and working together with other professionals to support the student with developmental disabilities was considered a vital part of the success of including students with developmental disabilities in the school community.

Cecilia noted that from the admitting of a student with a developmental disability to the school and class placement, to the planning stage of lesson and differentiated instruction and delivery to the student, involved the collaborative efforts of other professionals in making joint decisions on the level of support needed in term of resources and approaches to include the students with developmental disabilities in the classroom and school community. For example, Cecilia shared that she held meetings to co-construct the weekly lesson plans with other professionals like the Speech and Language therapist, Special Needs Teacher, and subject coordinators to develop a robust lesson plan that was inclusive in nature. Everyone shared ideas that supported growth and learning in the students.

Vivian talked about how the weekly sharing plan meeting had been impactful in her lesson delivery and improved learning of the student with disabilities in her class. She said her initial lesson plan before the shared planning meeting became more inclusive and robust after the meeting. The team members have inspired her through sharing good examples of inclusive practices and this had led to new ideas for her and impactful learning in the class. Adeboye stated that Shola had difficulty in handwriting at the beginning of the session as he found it so difficult to put a space between two words. Adeboye said he tried so many strategies with Shola to improve in putting space between words in a sentence and letter formation. However, Shola was overwhelmed and frustrated. Then, Shola did not like coming to the class. When asked what he did to solve this issue, Adeboye replied:

I firstly contacted the parents to have a meeting in regard to the situation.

Thereafter, I contacted the Learning Support Unit to give advice on the best way

to handle the issue. The occupational therapist was contacted and made recommendations on how we should handle his handwriting. I got into a little bit more of different activities and Shola used computer to type his work. I was told to introduce rewarding system anytime he has completed the handwriting or typing. All these ideas worked well, and Shola began to come to class regularly.

### ***Educational Program***

This theme focused on the educational programs of Shola and Kemi. These programs were modified educational programs that were designed for both Kemi and Shola. According to the school's Special Education Policy on Individual Educational Plans shared by the school special needs coordinator, every student that has been identified and diagnosed, must have access to special educational services with an individual educational plan. In Shola's individual educational plan, there were two goals extracted from the teacher's general classroom program: (a) learning core subjects – i.e., mathematics, English language, social studies and science in the mainstream classroom (b) increase participation in the social inclusion in the mainstream classroom. Both Kemi and Shola's individual education plans were designed and developed with support from different professionals according to the students' needs. Adeboye stated during the interview that Shola's individual education plan was developed by the team that consisted of himself as the Shola's teacher, the assigned special needs teacher to support Shola in the class, a learning assistant and a speech and language therapist to guide in using the proper communication language to Shola in the class. It was mentioned that there were supports in term of training for both Shola's mainstream teacher and learning assistant by the special needs teacher and speech and language therapist. This was mostly

done monthly and feedback on the progress was promptly communicated to the school-based team. However, the report from the teachers and learning support unit team did not indicate if the school team receives training or professional service from the external consultant when the need arises.

These two components in Shola's IEP were not fully implemented during the study due to the fact that learning started last year via virtual programs from last year February to this year due to COVID-19. Shola's program became mostly a segregated program to allow him to move at his own pace. Shola has learning goals and activities that he participates in the class, although Adeboye did not consider Shola to have participated more in most of the lesson taken in the class. Adeboye noted that the lessons are mostly re-taught on one-on-one basis in the Learning Support Unit with the special needs teacher. For example:

Adeboye: I mean Shola spent most of his learning time at the base; the learning support unit.

Researcher: Can you give a rough percentage of his day in the mainstream classroom.

Adeboye: It depends on the day. However, in an ideal situation, Shola spent about 40% of his learning time in the mainstream classroom and the remaining time at the base, the learning support unit.

Researcher: why did you think this happens?

Adeboye: Shola is at the terminal class of the primary school, and this is an examination class where topics of the core subjects are most difficult for Shola to comprehend due to curricular complexity and learning expectations expected to

be attained by the students and achieved by the teachers before the student can enrol for placement examination to secondary school.

Cecilia likewise had a similar experience working with Kemi in the classroom.

Kemi is placed on an individual education plan that covers her cognitive and social inclusion goals. Cecilia explained:

Kemi has a difficulty in reading with nonverbal behaviour of screaming unexpectedly. This has made me unable to manage her in my class. Most time, I asked the learning assistant in the class to take her to the learning support unit where they have a sensory room for her to relax and calm down. This most times take some hours and make her to learn on one-on-one or carry-over the learning targets for that day to the next day or week depending on how she has responded.

I got the sense from the mainstream teacher, learning assistant and even the parents that Kemi is only included with peers for subjects like Art, ICT, P.E and Music, while the other subjects are taught at the learning support unit by the special needs teacher.

### **Special Needs Teacher**

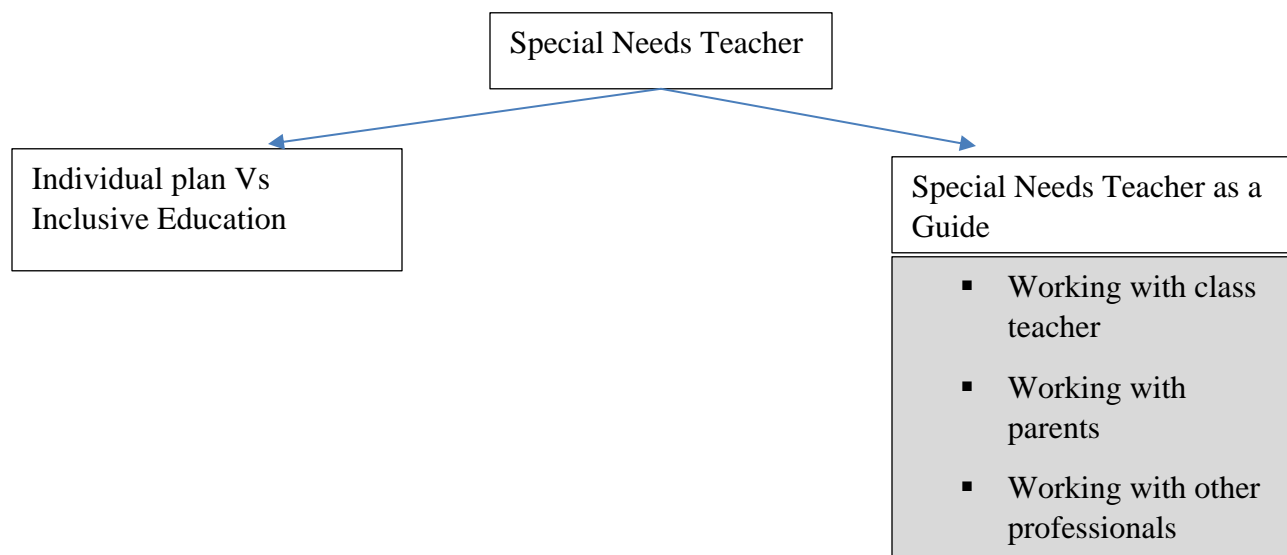


Figure 2: Thematic framework for the interview responses (Special Needs Teacher)



Two themes emerged from interviews with the special needs teachers: Individual plan versus inclusive education, and special needs teacher as guide.

### ***Individual Plan vs Inclusive Education***

The first theme from the interviews with the special needs teachers focuses on the experience of the special needs teacher working with mainstream teachers and other professionals in an inclusive school. The school selected for this study claims to run an inclusive school where all children are within the school community. The school special needs policy explained:

The school provides teaching and learning which enables all pupils to gain access to a broad, balanced and appropriately differentiated curriculum.

In the school, Adeboye, Cecilia and other mainstream teachers confirmed and reported that any students identified and diagnosed with DD are to be placed on an IEP. However, the special needs teacher explained:

We have twenty-four (24) diagnosed students with varied disabilities on our special needs register of a school population around seven hundred (700) students. We have the base, the learning support unit which is located within the school community. The learning support unit has four rooms, six special needs teachers, nine learning assistants, and a speech and language therapist. The school's respectful approach to inclusion ensures there is a balance of learning time in the learning support unit for one-to-one and small grouping learning, alongside mainstream provisions tailored to individual needs.

### ***Special Needs Teacher as a Guide***

This theme focuses on the special needs teacher's role in guiding the mainstream teacher through training on how the students with developmental disabilities can learn in an inclusive

classroom. Shade talked about being there for Kemi, by providing the necessary teaching resources, encouragement and coaching for Kemi's mainstream teacher as well as the learning assistant. Shade had a weekly shared learning meeting with Cecilia on creating an inclusive lesson plan and stating when she will come to the class to give support for both Cecilia and Kemi in the class. Shade created a structured workstation for Kemi in the mainstream classroom and provided resources weekly. She is also there to guide the mainstream teacher in managing any tantrum or non-verbal behaviour exhibited from Kemi in the classroom or outside the classroom. She has developed a lot of applied behavioural interventions. "For example, I have developed social story for Kemi to manage herself when she is overwhelmed or upset in the class." Sometimes, Shade comes to the class to stay with Kemi especially when they are going out for excursions or doing outdoor learning. As a guide, the special needs teacher plays a vital role being an intermediary between the mainstream teacher and the parents. Shade set-up IEP meetings at the end of the term with every stakeholder being present, and she guided them when necessary, concerning Kemi's social and academic learning.

**Working with Classroom Teachers.** This subtheme speaks to the role of the classroom teacher with guidance from the special needs teacher. The classroom teacher who is commonly called the mainstream teacher in the school guides the student with developmental disabilities and the regular students as they learn together in an inclusive school community. Shade and Tobi, the two special needs teachers supporting Kemi and Shola respectively, noted that there is a positive and cordial working relationship with their teachers. They explained that the working relationship started from the point of developing lesson plans. The classroom teachers get them involved in the lesson planning and the special needs teacher makes recommendations when necessarily. The classroom teachers are very opened minded and have a willingness to learn and

try any strategies recommended by the special needs teacher.

**Working with Parents.** The special needs teachers work well with the school stakeholders, but they also consider their roles in supporting the parents especially parents that are still young or in denial of the disabilities. The special needs teachers give training on different topics that will be helpful for the parents of students with disabilities. The special needs teachers explained their relationship is really positive as the parents have a strong trust in the special needs teachers and call them when they need counselling or any help for their children. The parents continuously come for IEP meetings or drop-in meetings with the special needs teacher as well as the mainstream teacher when the need arises. Sometimes, the parents share opinions or ideas on how the school can support the students in the school. The relationships have been a positive partnership with the parents. When COVID-19 closed the school in March 2020, special needs teachers needed to work closely with parents in providing the necessary real-life opportunities to use and develop the skills they had learned in school. The special needs teacher offered workshops, supplied resources, and organised virtual meetings with families to ensure no student's learning stood still.

**Working with Other Professionals.** Shade and Tobi do not only work with the mainstream teacher, learning assistant and parents, but they also work with other external professionals like occupational therapists, doctors and nurses that give support for the students with developmental disabilities in the school. Both special needs teachers commented that the hospital situated in the residential area where the school is located helps to facilitate the additional support from the outside to give external support that are essential for the students with multiple physical and cognitive needs. The relationships with the external professionals have been cordial and mutual. For example, the occupational therapist (OT) designs a program

on fine motor skills for Kemi to improve her handwriting and pencil grip. The occupational therapist provided different pencil size. E.g., Jumbo pencil, different pencil grips sizes and cutting exercises. This program is followed by the learning assistant and monitored by the special needs teachers with a weekly progress report to the OT.

### **Learning Assistant**

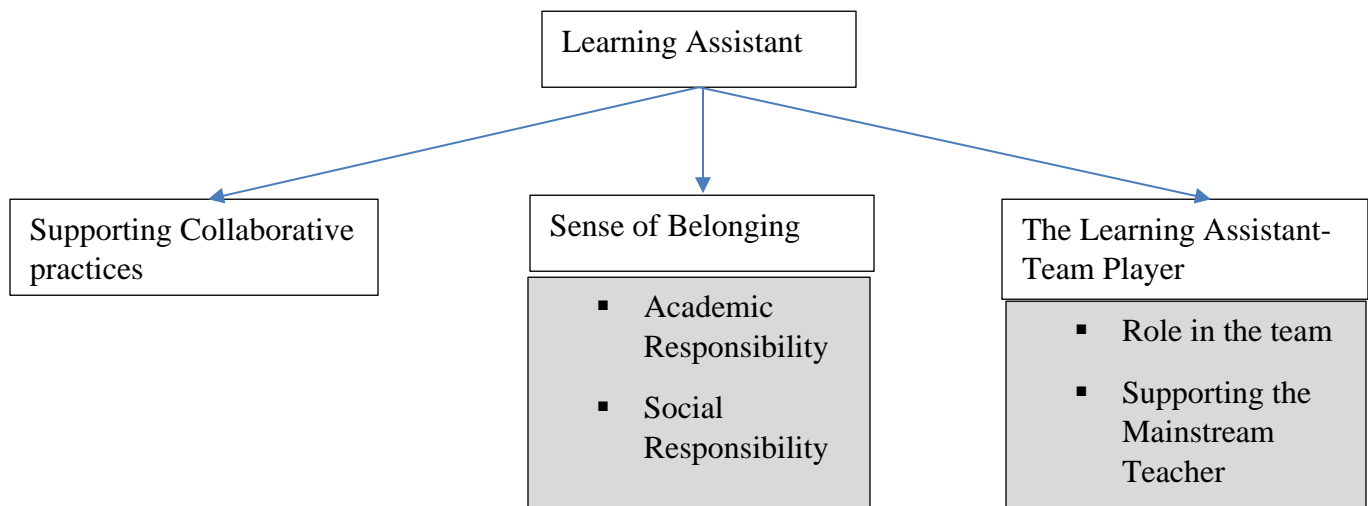


Figure 3: Thematic framework for the interview responses (Learning Assistant)

Three themes emerged from interviews with learning assistants: Supporting collaborative practices, sense of belonging, and the learning assistant as a team player.

### ***Supporting Collaborative Practices***

This theme focuses on the roles the learning assistant plays in supporting the students and classroom teacher in the class. One learning assistant (Bayo) reported that responsibilities for teaching and outcomes in the class have been shared between him and the classroom teacher in supporting the students. He joined in the planning of the lesson plan and the implementation of instruction. Bayo further explained that the collaborative practices with the teacher involved regular communication with each other and the parents of students with developmental

disabilities regarding the progress of the students and problem solving.

### ***Sense of Belonging***

Including and engaging students with developmental disabilities involves experiencing a sense of belonging and being a valued member of the class (Katz & Porath, 2011). The creation of an environment in which students feel that they are accepted is therefore critical to their inclusion and the development of a sense of belonging in a specific school context (Rose & Shevlin, 2017). For example, Dino (learning assistant) explained that Kemi comes to the class every morning to join in the morning circle time before heading to the learning support unit if she couldn't access the learning in the mainstream class. Bayo also shared a similar view as regards to sense of belonging in his class. He explained that Shola comes to the class with a happy mood and most times does not like to go back to the learning support unit because of his friends in the mainstream classroom. Shola is the stationery monitor, and he loves to share these stationeries to his peers in the class. The other students in Shola's class always want him to be in the mainstream class.

Bayo and Dino appreciate being trained by the specialist in the learning support unit and sometimes the members of the school-based team. They both asserted that they mostly work with the students with developmental disabilities under the guidance of the special needs teacher and classroom teacher. However, I wondered if this has made an impact to foster meaningful participation of students with developmental disabilities because I couldn't observe this in a real-life classroom setting. This theme includes the following subthemes: (1) Academic Responsibility (2) Social Responsibility.

**Academic Responsibility.** Dino spoke about the expectations that students will take responsibility about the ownership of their learning. For example, she explained that each student

regardless of the disability has a personal cupboard where the student keeps his books and stationery. Bayo further described how students take responsibility for their learning:

“Class time schedule, writing materials/stationery and textbooks are given to the students in the classroom by the class teacher. For example, when the school resumed for academic session in September 2020, the students regardless of the disabilities came to the classroom to collect the resource allocation to each student”.

The students’ individual actions towards their academics have an impact on how they progress in the learning goals and attainment. This can also be a boost to the facilitator and teachers working with the students. For example, Shola is consistent in coming to school regularly, although Bayo did not consider him to be in class for the whole day:

Bayo: I mean Shola comes to school regularly, but he does not do most of his learning with us.

Researcher: what part of the day does Shola stay in the mainstream class?

Bayo: It depends on the activity they have on the timetable for that day. In most cases, Shola comes to the classroom in the morning and leave after the long break which is 11:30am.

The discussion with the learning assistants suggested that academic responsibility of the students serve as a motivation in supporting the students with disabilities. Regular attendance to school and attitude towards learning inspired the learning assistant to give a maximum support for the student in an inclusive classroom.

**Social Responsibility.** Jose and Javier (2017) asserted that students express respect and caring as form of social responsibility to one another, thereby fostering cooperation that promote inclusion, support, and help. Dino describes how students in Kemi’s class look out for Kemi. The

way the class teacher has created the cooperative learning among the students made the student to be very helpful to one another. Dino explained, “The way the unit was created, in teams, groups... they were a close-knit group... and they did everything together especially during IPC lessons and playtime during recess time.” Kemi is always in Bose’s group discussion and taking a role in the presentation or role play. Dino shared that during recess time, Bose and her friends look out for the safety of Kemi and play with her. They love to push Kemi on the swing and take turns in pushing her.

### ***The Learning Assistant as a Team Player***

Not only does the learning assistant work with the class teacher, but they also have a great influence on the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities in the school community. This theme addresses the learning assistant as a team player in working with classroom teachers, school-based teams, special needs teachers and other professionals that support the student with a developmental disability in the classroom, with respect to Kemi and Shola’s inclusion in the mainstream classroom and school community. This theme has the following subthemes: (1) Role in the team (2) Supporting the mainstream teacher.

**Role in the team.** It is clear that students with developmental disabilities require support in the class especially when they are placed in an inclusive classroom and in most cases, they are being supported in the class by a learning assistant (Kipfer, 2015). Dino explained how her role in the team has influenced Kemi’s inclusion and participation in the classroom and during playtime on the playground. Dino’s philosophy and belief on inclusion is that every child must have access to the learning in the class at their own level. She treats everyone equally in the class and believes everyone has abilities and disabilities. Dino explained:

I believe in inclusion and try as much as possible to embrace it in my approach in

supporting the students in the class and out of class. In the class, I support all the students in the class, particularly focused on Kemi to build her self-confidence and make sure participate meaningfully in the group discussion. During playtime, I followed Kemi to the playground with her friends. I tried to make sure Kemi is not alone on the playground and makes her to get engage during play with her friend. I also joined in the play with Kemi and her friends.

The learning assistant participates in working with parent of students with developmental disabilities in some cases. Dino shared that “early this year, I went to support Kemi at her home because she could not come to school because of the shut-down of school due to COVID-19.”

Bayo believes that Shola should be in the mainstream class for the rest of the day because there is no separate world created for him in the real world. Therefore, allowing Shola to go to the learning support unit to spend most of his learning time does not add any value to Shola’s social and academic inclusion. Bayo further stressed that he has been to the learning support unit to check on Shola and in most cases, he has visited Shola would like to follow him to the mainstream class.

**Supporting the Mainstream Teacher.** As a learning assistant, Dino and Bayo provide resource support for the mainstream teacher by creating teaching resources that will enhance the learning, engaging on one-to-one learning when required with the students and try to fade out prompts for the students. Dino explained that she has a positive relationship with the class teacher, and they sometimes disagree on a particular situation. She explained further:

Researcher: can you share with me on what you disagree on?

Dino: The current disagreement we had was when the parent of Kemi prefers to engage me on the discussion about her daughter. Cecilia felt slighted and angry that she has been



ignored.

Researcher: How did you know about the reason for the disagreement and how did you resolve it?

Dino: I didn't know initially but suspected her behaviour towards me. So, I confronted her, and she was very open enough to express her aggrieves to me. We resolved it by developing better ways parents of students in our class communicates to us. And the result has been effective.

### **Students with Developmental Disabilities (Shola and Kemi)**

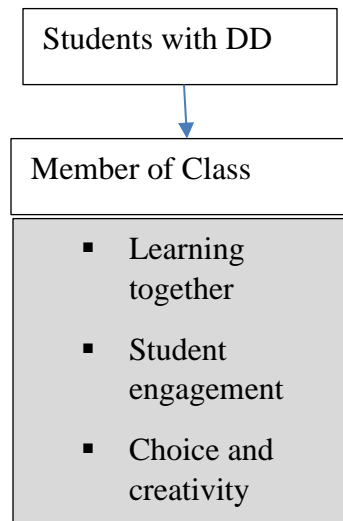


Figure 4: Thematic framework for the interview responses (Students with DD)

#### ***Member of Class***

Being included as a member of the class involves experiencing a sense of belonging and taking a role in the class. Hence, to experience meaningful participation in the classroom as a student with developmental disabilities, one must first be considered a valued member of the classroom (Smith & Patton, 2014). Shola's classroom teacher considered Shola a member of the class because 'he has friends in the mainstream classroom, and he makes contributions in the class during class presentations or discussions'. Also, Shola mentioned that he likes going to the

classroom because he will meet his friend, Dayo in the class and they will “play together”.

Being socially accepted by classmates and receiving natural supports from peers have also been noted as key indicators of successful inclusion (Blecker & Boakes, 2010). This theme contains the following subthemes: (1) Learning together, (2) Student engagement and (3) Choice and creativity.

**Learning Together.** The peers and students with developmental disabilities that participated in the interviews of this study spoke about their experience on how they have learned with each other in the class and on the playground. Kemi described that she is part of a learning group during the IPC lesson. If the team wants to do something, she will be included in the group work. For example, she showed me a group painting they did during the children’s day through the zoom. She was able to describe the area she painted in the project. Also, Shola described how his friend, Dayo taught him how to do hula hoops on the playground. He said it is always fun when other students play with him on the swing by pushing him.

**Student Engagement.** Student engagement is used to refer to students’ degree of involvement, correctness, and commitment to school as well as their motivation to learn (Beatrice, 2018). In the class, it is very important for student with developmental disabilities to be meaningfully engaged in the learning and as well as make contributions in the class. For example, Kemi talked about the painting they made in the class by her team for the children’s day, on how she brought water-colour and cardboard paper to school for the team to use so that her team will produce a good job. Kemi explained that “I come to school very early in the morning with my bicycle to start the painting before everyone comes to school”.

Shola explained that he makes contributions in the class, and “everyone claps for me, and I am so happy”. Sometimes, Shola said his friends motivate him when he is shy to come out to

present in the class. The students begin to hail him, “Go Shola, Go Shola, Go Shola...” The class teacher also felt that cheering from Shola’s friends really helps him to do the tasks and his contributions in the class are always appreciated by the other students in the class.

**Choice and Creativity.** Both the peers and students with developmental disabilities I interviewed discussed the opportunity of choices available for the student to make. Kemi described the classroom teacher as providing choice boards for learning tasks and rewards. During the morning circle time, Shola’s classroom teacher asserted that there were various choices of learning tasks that students can choose from. Shola enjoys the drumming and dancing time. He drums most time as well as dances during the circle time. There are other options of reading a story to the students, changing the agenda for the day, reciting the national anthem and praying for the students. The classroom teacher explained that the students get to choose from the various choices. Kemi talked about having choices within specific classroom activities. As she explained; during the afternoon session, the class has silent reading on the schedule. However, there are other options of craft and art, and roles to be done in the class such as sharpening the pencil, cleaning the table, and arranging the classroom bookshelf. And then when they start to have the opportunity to choose from the choices, she chooses either sharpening of the pencil or someone reading to her at the calming area.

Choice making has a significant and positive effect on reducing challenging behavior in students with disabilities, particularly when students are trained in making choices before the intervention (Nicole & William, 2018). For example, Kemi described the effect of rewards choice board for her. When she has completed a particular task, her teacher gives her choices of tokens for her to select from. On the token board, there are tablet, trampoline, calming area, art and craft, blowing bubbles and balloons. I asked Kemi which token is her favourite. She told me:

“I like to use the tablet and watch Thomas show or play games”. I then asked her, how she felt when she was given the token. She said, “I feel so happy and always want to come to the mainstream classroom.”

### **Peers- Bose and Dayo.**

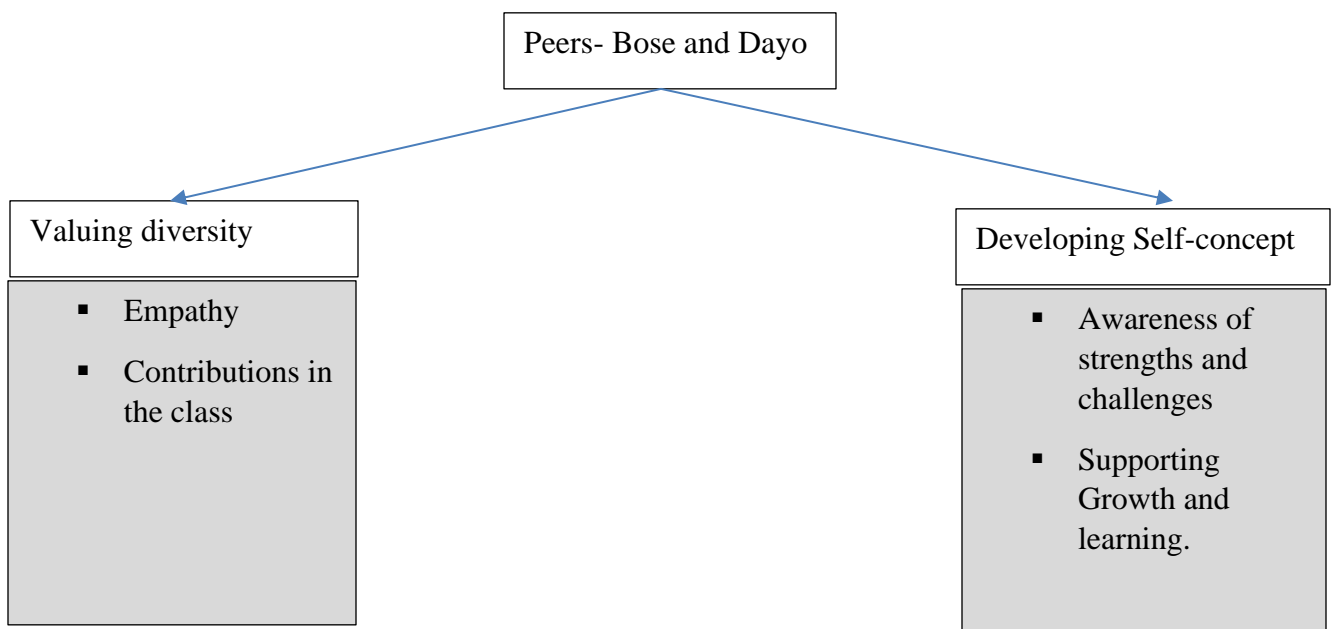


Figure 5: Thematic framework for the interview responses (peers)

Two themes emerged from interviews with classmates of the students with DD: Valuing diversity and developing self-concept.

### ***Valuing Diversity***

The first theme I will discuss focuses on the sensitivity towards the exceptionality needs and cultural diversity that existed in the class. Inclusion is often considered successful in the school community by ‘welcoming diversity’ among the students in the classroom. Cecilia, the mainstream teacher for Kemi talked about how the class learning climate allow students to be safe, respected, and valued for what they have to contribute to the class discussion. For example, Kemi mentioned that her pictures with other students pictures are displayed on the wall of the

class with their different cultural background attire. Sometimes, she speaks her mother language in the class when she wants to express herself better in the class. The teacher then “interprets what I have said to everyone in the class”. This theme will be divided into subthemes namely: (1) Empathy, and (2) Contributions in the class.

**Empathy.** The students that participated in the interviews talked about the experience with the students with developmental disabilities and how other students in the classroom behave towards the students. To implement inclusive education successfully, teachers and peers need to show support, recognition, and empathy to students with special needs (Yin-kum, Shui-fong, Wilbert, & Zoe, 2017). Bose explained that anytime of the day Kemi comes to the mainstream classroom for lessons, she is always very happy and willing to support her in participating in the group learning or role play. Bose confirmed that everybody in the class has accepted Kemi in the class but “I am her favourite friend, give her support in the class and defend her among our friends”. Dayo described instances when Shola wanted to play with everyone on the playground and he was not in the school that day. Dayo mentioned that another student in the class paired-up with Shola and they had fun on the playground. When he came back to school his classmates shared the experience.

**Contributions in the Class.** In order to be socially included in the school community and to be engaged in the learning as well as contributing in the class, students need to feel accepted by teachers and peers, and have opportunities to interact with both (Katz, 2013). Bose talked about how Kemi contributes to the class, In a recent lesson they did in IPC theme “Who am I”. Kemi was able to tell everyone that she is a student from a family of 3 and she has been diagnosed to have autism. Bose said, “her presentation of that day made our teacher to give us a project to research on ‘autism’.” Dayo noted that “everyone participates in the class discussion

and assembly presentations, and everyone seems to get along and accept everyone differences. Our teacher always tells us that everyone's contributions, opinion and ideas are welcomed in the class. No answer is stupid and no laughing to other student's answer".

### ***Developing Self-Concept***

Sokal and Katz (2017) showed the diverse outcomes of training, such as better attitudes, reduced concerns, improved self-concept, and greater knowledge. Students spoke about their awareness of their teachers engaging in different training and bringing in facilitators from other classrooms to teach them on being aware of themselves and people around them. This theme is divided into two subthemes: (1) Awareness of strengths and challenges, (2) Supporting Growth and learning.

**Awareness of Strengths and Challenges.** In both mainstream classes, Dayo and Bose spoke about the awareness of disability in the school. This has helped the students to be aware of the students' strengths and challenges. For instance, Dayo stated that the school celebrated the world autism awareness day on April 2. The whole school participated by different classes presenting at the school assembly on the topic 'Autism'. Bose described her experiences in the class that help her to understand everybody in the class. She explained that her teacher has taught them about a behaviour traffic light signal. The green light shows their strengths, the yellow light is what they are working on, and red light is their challenges. Everyone's profile is placed on the class wall, and she is able to identify everyone strengths and challenges.

Bose talked about how them learning together has helped in understanding the strengths and weakness of the students in her class. She explained that her teacher placed them in a team, and they discuss together. She observed that the team consists of different student with one difficulty or the other. "We brainstorm together, and we helped one another. Some students are

good in drawing, while the others are either good in public speaking or writing.”

When the classroom climate and activities are designed so that students can respect diversity and access learning in the class, it creates a classroom environment that will accept students’ strengths and challenges, including Shola and Kemi, and give the room to be included and engaged in the activities in their own unique way.

**Supporting Growth and Learning.** The mainstream teachers create a culture in the classroom that enhances growth and learning that makes each child go at their own pace. However, summative assessments are modified for students with disabilities. Dayo spoke about examinations in the school and how supports are given to the students with disabilities in the class.

Researcher: So, how are student with disabilities doing their examination?

Dayo: They give them more time and the examination is not as hard like our own.

Researcher: Do they have their examination in your classroom.?

Dayo: Hmmm.... Not in most cases, sometimes it is done outside our classroom. But I do not know which classrooms.

In this class, everyone is valued and celebrated. An activity to support this is done when each child creates a display titled “T”. Bose explained:

We have a hall of fame wall in my classroom with every student name written on the wall. It does not matter your strengths or weaknesses. I am best legible handwriting, some people are best in numeracy, other can be best in literacy or P.E. Someone must be best in some areas or skills.

## Parent of Students with Developmental Disabilities (PP01 and PPO2)

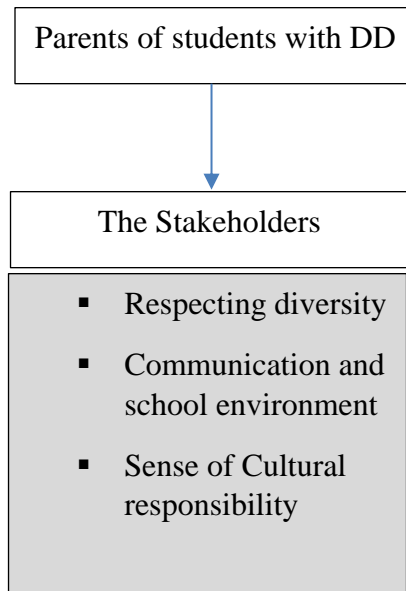


Figure 6 Thematic framework for the interview responses (parents of students with DD)

### *The Stakeholders*

This theme focuses on the stakeholders in a school community and how they have embraced inclusive practices in an inclusive school community. The stakeholders of the school are teachers, parents, and students. PPO1, the parents of Kemi talked about how relevant the roles of stakeholders in making inclusion of students with developmental disability is for it to be successful. However, every class is unique and the way the inclusion will be adopted in each class may vary. This theme includes the following subthemes: (1) Respecting diversity, (2) Communication and school environment, (3) Sense of cultural responsibility.

**Respecting Diversity.** This subtheme speaks to the idea that all members of the stakeholders in a school community need to develop a positive self-concept, respect for others, and create a learning atmosphere that embraces diverse learners and families. From my interview with PPO1, it is clear that regular students, mainstream teachers and other parents of students



with disabilities are important members of an inclusive classroom, and their buying into the vision of inclusion, play a vital role for the success of inclusive education for students with developmental disabilities. For example, PPO1 explained that parents of regular students complained bitterly about inclusive practice in the school at the Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A) meetings. They complain that teachers focus so much on the student with DD in the class at the expense of their own children, and this has resulted in a drop in learning for the regular students. The parents also asserted that the standard of teaching has dropped because of the students with disabilities have become the focus of the school.

PP02 also shared his experience on how a parent of a regular student wanted to remove his child from the class because of his own son.

Researcher: So, was the child remove from the class?

PP02: It was a big challenge initially, but the school management resolved the issue and the child was finally taken to another class. Though, the school management said it wasn't because of my child.

Researcher: Do you see any respect to parents of student with disabilities in the school

PP02: It is not fully as such because it varies, some parents do, and some parents do not.

While it cannot be fully depicting that respect for diversity is going on among the stakeholders, it is also cannot be exonerated that there are still more room for improvements as regards to respect for diversity among stakeholders.

**Communication and School Environment.** This subtheme highlights the role of communication within stakeholders, and the school environment play in supporting the success of inclusive practices in the school community. For example, PPO1 explained that “the school has an opened-door policy where parents can come at anytime to express or ask questions about

their children”. There is always a weekly progress report about their children from both the mainstream teachers and special needs teachers. PPO2 described the school environment to be less supportive for students with special needs. However, he shared an interesting experience in the school:

There is no slope for students with special needs to walk down in the school. Most times, Kemi is going to her mainstream classroom, she can only take the stairs, and it was so difficult for her to climb the stair to get to her class. This makes Kemi to yell and shout on people around her because she is afraid of height.

PP02 went on to say that in the mainstream classroom, the decoration on walls and object hanging on the ceiling as form of decorating the classroom is too much for the students to bear and this has resulted to sensory issues for the students.

**Sense of Cultural Responsibility.** The third subtheme constructed from the data from interviews with the parents of students with developmental disabilities is sense of cultural responsibility. Cultural beliefs in Africa reflect beliefs, attitudes, and treatment of people with disability (Bunning, Gona, Newton, & Hartley, 2017). For example, PP01 explained how some parents of regular students in the school community behaves towards parents of students with disabilities. A parent in the school approached him in one of the PTA meetings in the school attributing his daughter’s disability to the consequences of his grandparents flouting cultural norms or breaking taboos. A woman once laughed at Kemi’s mother when they were in a party, and this has made her family not to go for any party with Kemi. Some people have also perceived that a person with disability is under the control of supernatural factors such as a demon or a ghost.

When I asked PPO1 on how the school management and teachers have helped to reduce

the impact of cultural beliefs towards students with disabilities. He said a lot of awareness programs have been done among parents and students in the school. Each parent in the school has the expectations to be emotionally sensitive to the diversity of cultural background of other parents in the school.

### **Document Analysis**

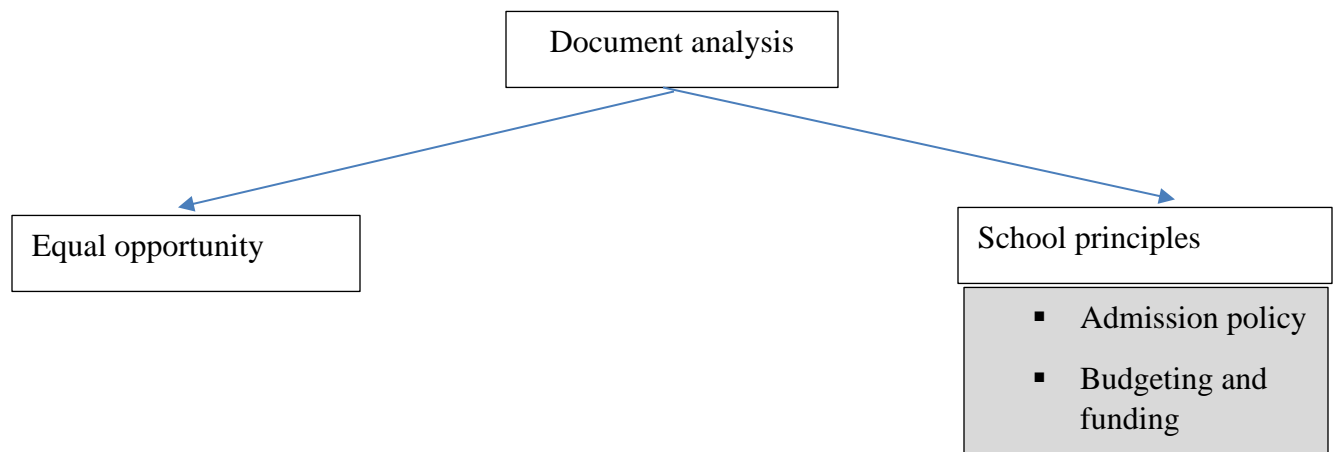


Figure 7. Thematic framework for the document analysis

### ***Equal Opportunity***

The school policy on special education needs/Inclusive education reiterates the emphasis on equal opportunity for every student in the school. For example, the policy aims to enable all students to gain access to a broad, balanced and appropriately differentiated curriculum, which aim to ensure all students are supported in order that they may work confidently towards reaching their full potential. Thus, when we speak of equal opportunities, we refer to the confluence of and respect for differences (Marta, Luis, & Lina, 2020). It is therefore essential for the education system to offer equal opportunities to all students, no matter what the differences between them are. The school special education needs policy also makes provision for statutory requirements that all teachers in school must attain. For example, teachers must plan lessons that

consider a wide range of students' abilities, and this lesson must be planned to ensure that there are no barriers to every student achieving. However, I cannot ascertain if this is what happened in the class because there was no class observation in this study.

### ***School Principles***

This theme speaks to the process of admitting the students to the school and the provisions available for supporting inclusion in the school. The school policy on special education acknowledges the individual diverse needs of the students, and views the special needs provision as an ongoing, and developing process. This theme includes the following subthemes:

(1) Admission policy, and (2) Budgeting and funding

**Admission Policy.** The school admission policy states that every student regardless of any disabilities is admitted into the school. For example, one of the parents of students with DD, PPO1 agreed to the fact that every student is admitted into the school. PP01 reported that when he came to the school for admission for his daughter, he was very apprehensive that his daughter might be rejected or not given admission. He was given a form to fill, and his daughter was placed into the class the next week.

The admission form gives you the opportunity to describe your child as well as any diagnosis that have been done on the child. Copy of school records about the child previous school are requested and necessary documentations are done.

**Budgeting and Funding.** The school policy states that there is 5% of the annual budget to fund inclusive education in the school. This covers the teacher's training, teaching resources provisions and recruitment of the service of experts when necessary. The availability of financial resources and decisions regarding amounts and ways in which funding for inclusive education is allocated, are influenced by the priorities and lobbying efforts of those with power within school

communities (Jessica, Amy, & Bianca, 2020). For example, PP02 is one of the executives of the Parents Teacher Association (P.T.A), and he has used his influence in the school management by allocating funds to the inclusive education budgetary funds. However, the school budget on the funding of inclusive practices in the school has been very low and this has affected the trainings of the mainstream teachers, recruitment of specialists in the field of special education and the provision of teaching resources. PP01 explained:

Due to COVID-19, there has been a big cut on the funds to support inclusive education in the school. However, the school parents forum of students with disabilities are pushing for a review of this cut. This academic year, funding has been seen as unsatisfactory in terms of meeting the needs of the students with disabilities, recruitment of school staff, and this insufficiency has presented barriers to inclusive education in the school.

The school funding model changes overtime and this has impacted on the level of support for students with disabilities within the school. These rapid changes in the funding model are based on the allocations available for the academic session.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

This study investigated the implementation of inclusive education for students with DD in a model school in Nigeria. The following research questions were investigated: (1) How does an inclusive school seek to include students with developmental disabilities meaningfully in the academic and social learning in a general classroom in Nigeria; and (2) In what ways do stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes influence inclusive education in an inclusive classroom for a student with developmental disabilities in Nigeria? Results clearly indicate progress toward social inclusion, however, academic inclusion remains a distant goal influenced by understandings of inclusion and cultural beliefs.

The study was intended to extend the findings on inclusive practices in Nigeria in the following important ways: (1) it sought to explore the social and academic practices and their outcomes for students with developmental disabilities; and (2) it explores the ways in which the cultural beliefs of the stakeholders in the school community play a role in the inclusive education of student with developmental disabilities. This study is unique in three ways: it focuses on students with developmental disabilities, it explored activity factors that facilitated meaningful inclusion, and it connects these findings to socio-cultural factors specific to Nigeria. For example, elements of differentiated lesson plans, student choice in how the students with DD could participate in learning activities, and flexible grouping projects or differentiated learning activities that could facilitate learning and make learning accessible for students with developmental disabilities were discussed. At the same time, cultural factors that influenced policy, funding, and attitudes were considered in

interaction with the evidence of efforts made toward inclusive education.

**Question 1: How does an inclusive school seek to include students with developmental disabilities meaningfully in the academic and social learning in a general classroom in Nigeria?**

Schools aiming to implement inclusive practices benefit from supporting key personnel, such as learning assistants, co-teachers, and other clinicians to become more competent and widely available to support all students, including those with developmental disabilities (Kurt, Lyon, & Shogren, 2015). To varying degrees, mainstream classroom teachers, special education teachers, and learning assistants in this study all expressed a desire to implement inclusive education. All of the stakeholders expressed value regarding the social inclusion of students with DD, and significant efforts were being made to ensure students with and without disabilities had opportunities to interact, form friendships, and develop a value for diversity. For instance, Kemi's teacher used cooperative learning to connect Kemi with her peers, and Shola's learning assistant facilitated him joining in games at play times. The findings from this study suggest that being in the regular classroom with neurotypical students has helped in the social life of the students with developmental disabilities. For example, Shola and Kemi stated that they enjoyed going to the regular classroom because of their friends and the social activities in the mainstream classroom. Their peers, too, expressed pleasure in being a part of the social interactions with Shola and Kemi. This supports the argument made by Rossetti and Keenan (2018) that meaningful connections, shared humour, and collaborative work are ingredients of true friendship between students with and without disabilities. The findings from the study also confirmed that development of friendships of the peers with the students with DD go beyond the classroom because the parents of Shola and Kemi, and the parents of their friends in the

classroom had also become friends. This is significant given the social isolation often experienced by parents of children with DD, especially in cultures where these disabilities are believed to be shameful or a punishment (Shapiro, 1988; Thwala, Ntinda, & Hlanze, 2015).

Inclusion is not just about physically placing a student with exceptionalities in a classroom, nor is it solely about social connection, it is about fostering understanding of the learner's learning profile and celebrating the diversity of each learner, so that every student can learn and grow socially and academically in a positive class climate (Katz, Porath, Bendu, & Epp, 2012). The results of this study suggest that the academic inclusion of students with DD in the case study school is minimal compared with the social inclusion, despite some sporadic attempts to adapt curriculum and instruction.

Teacher training may have played some role in the design of instruction; however, this was often overwhelmed by beliefs about academic inclusion and learning. For instance, Shola and Kemi occasionally experienced meaningful participation when the classroom teacher had been trained to support this student in the classroom and necessary supports from other professionals were available in the school to meet the academic and social needs of the student. Adeboye, the classroom teacher of Shola who had significant training and background spoke about inclusion practices in his classroom, and how he has included Shola in the academic and social environment of the classroom with support from the facilitator and special needs teacher. However, he then contradicted this when he spoke of the value of the learning center and stated that Shola spent more than half of his day outside of the mainstream classroom. Thus, his ability to include Shola was not maximized because of his beliefs, and the school structures surrounding individualized instruction rather than differentiation in the mainstream classroom. The other mainstream teachers that were not trained as much as Adeboye expressed a lot of frustration in



supporting the students with DD and felt there was a drop in the learning for other students in the classroom as a result. Some efforts were being made to implement such evidence-based practices as differentiated instruction and assessment, collaborative team work, and cooperative learning, however, these attempts were often sporadic and quickly given up on in favour of the removal of the students with DD to a segregated special education setting.

The interviews from the participants of this study revealed that the students with developmental disabilities are doing a totally separate program in the core subjects (i.e. Numeracy, Literacy, Science and Social Studies) and these goals are not linked to the grade-level curriculum. In other words, they are not engaging with the curricular contents of the regular classroom because it is cognitively challenging for them. This is a disconnect between the grade-level curriculum contents and individual education plan of the students with disabilities identified by Zagona, Kurth, and MacFarland (2017). It is interesting that Shola, Dayo and parents of Shola confirmed the effort the classroom teacher (Adeboye) and learning assistant (Bayo) has made to support Shola in engaging the grade-level curriculum. However, the classroom teacher acknowledged the tension in the two aspects of Shola's education program i.e., the individual education program and grade-level curriculum. Somewhat surprisingly, mainstream teachers, special education teachers, and learning assistants co-planned lessons, yet when the time came to implement them, students were often removed from the classroom. Tensions clearly existed between the individual educational programs of students with DD, which took place mostly outside the mainstream classroom and had different learning goals and activities from the peers in the regular classroom, and the IPC.

Adeboye and other mainstream teachers appeared to be unclear about what constitutes academic inclusion. Students from the learning support unit are claimed to be integrated into

mainstream lessons “where necessary / possible” as well as sharing break times and events with regular students across the school community. This is in contrast to the policy that states all students should be enrolled in mainstream classrooms (not in the learning support unit and then partially integrated). They discuss inclusion in terms of sharing break times and events with regular students across the school community. For example, the special needs teachers interviewed for this study stated that there is a school production event, showcasing the talents across the whole school, and students from the learning support unit have played musical instruments such as violin, and piano in the school concerts. However, inclusive education calls for access to general curriculum, instruction from general education teachers, and opportunities to learn in interaction with peers without disabilities, and this was rarely evident here.

Adeboye and other members of the team in the school frequently expressed “Every child matters regardless of his abilities”. Thus, it appears that while values exist in regards to inclusive education, concerns remain regarding understanding of what meaningful inclusion is and the efficacy and import given to implement what policy calls for.

**Question 2: In what ways do stakeholders’ perceptions and attitudes influence inclusive education in an inclusive classroom for a student with developmental disabilities in Nigeria?**

***Cultural Beliefs of the Stakeholders in the School***

Cultural beliefs in Africa reflect beliefs, attitudes, and treatment of people with disability (Bunning, Gona, Newton, & Hartley, 2017). The findings from this study suggest that cultural beliefs influence the inclusion of student with developmental disabilities, which is consistent with existing research in Africa (Bunning et al., 2017). In this study, the parents of students with DD felt that the impact of socio-cultural beliefs of the stakeholders has negatively impacted the

inclusion practices in the Nigerian educational system. The most striking observation is that cultural beliefs and monetary value or gains have been orchestrated unknowingly in the attitude and the policy makers in implementing inclusive education in Nigeria. Some parents of regular students attribute disability, especially DD, to be the consequence of grandparents flouting the cultural norms or breaking taboos, and labelled people with developmental disabilities as a contagious disease that needed to be treated and cured. These negative perceptions and beliefs might look subtle, but it has been engraved from the top-down in the decision-making regarding issues related to disabilities in Nigeria.

In this study, the participants revealed several barriers to inclusive education in the school embedded in these cultural beliefs. The participants in this study believed that the effects of this lack of value given to individuals with disabilities and their families was reflected in the school environment and structure, budgeting and funding allocation to disability, and training provided. Many of the classroom teachers did not appear to accept the students with developmental disabilities should be learning together with the regular students. The greater value placed on students without disabilities is inherent in the idea that their learning is more important than that of the students with DD, and therefore the students with DD should be removed if their presence in any way appears to compromise the learning of the students without DD.

Other mainstream teachers, Nneke, Esther, Vivian and Cecilia, stated that the students with DD should be placed in the learning support classroom where specialised attention should be given to them. Adeboye also stated that the students with DD that are placed on an I.E.P learning goals should be placed permanently in the learning support unit because the staff in the learning support unit achieved 85% of the learning targets on the IEP. This is consistent with findings from Ineke, Mariya, Mireille, and Sabine (2018), who suggest attitude of staff present a

major barrier to inclusion of students with disabilities. In these examples, both classroom teachers and learning assistant's attitudes seem to reflect a lack of perceived value of including students with DD and their individual education programs.

A lack of training has been reported in existing literature to be a barrier of inclusion for students with disabilities (Sokal & Katz, 2015). Findings from this study suggest the experiences of the two students with developmental disabilities from different inclusive classes in the school were more alike than different in terms of the learning practices to which they were exposed, their rate of engagement in the class learning, and interactions with peers despite the differences in their teachers' training. Thus, it is possible that the cultural beliefs and attitudes of the teachers played a more significant role than did teacher training. School culture that wavered between inclusive values and the devaluing of disability underlay the inconsistency of implementation.

Budgeting also impacted the implementation of inclusive education in terms of both the training and availability of teachers and support staff, and on the physical plant. The results show that the size of the classroom structure, as asserted by the mainstream teachers and learning assistants, was too small and not designed with the cognisance of students with developmental disabilities. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Model (1979) proposes that the individual and their relationships within their immediate surroundings and their interactions influences a person's development and learning. Most of the mainstream teachers complained about the size of the classes and how this has impacted learning especially when there is no light in the school. Kemi's parent also expressed concerns about the stairs required to reach the classroom, and no recognition of the importance of accessibility. Furthermore, the large number of students with disabilities, and the shortage of support staff, meant it was easier to meet students' needs in a centralized location.

The relationship of my findings to the existing literature shows the same results and barriers to inclusive education of students with developmental disabilities occur in Nigeria as in other countries, with some unique exceptions related to cultural beliefs about disability. The existing literature on the inclusive education of students with developmental disabilities have demonstrated that the students with developmental disabilities academically outperformed their colleagues in self-contained settings (Specht & Young, 2010), expressive and receptive language skills of students with disabilities improve significantly (Justice, Logan, Lin & Kaderavek, 2014), better growth in measures of academic skills (Marder, Wagner, & Sumi, 2006), and satisfactory degree of social participation of students with DD (Marloes, Sip, Han, & Els 2010). Both the parents and the teachers of Kemi and Shola felt they benefitted from participating in the mainstream classroom, particularly in communication and social skills. The findings of my study also suggest the same experience found in the existing literature that students with DD experienced meaningful inclusion in the social life of the classroom when they are included in the group and when their individual learning goals were woven into classroom activities and daily classroom routines; Unfortunately the trend for students with DD to spend a significant amount of time outside of the mainstream classroom and to lack access to general curriculum was also noted. These findings are consistent with existing literature in that academic life of the classroom for students with DD is in an adapted or restricted role. For example, Shola and Kemi participate in activities that are linked to a lower grade-level curriculum or functional life skills and mostly received their teaching in the learning support unit with the special education teacher.

## **Conclusion**

Policy exists at the international, national, and local level supporting inclusive education in Nigeria. At the World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain in

1994, Nigeria was one of 92 countries that signed an agreement to move towards inclusive education. Signatories, including Nigeria, believed inclusive education would remove the social prejudice and alienation that has been hitherto experienced by children with special needs (Eric et al., 2018). In addition, the Nigerian National Policy on Education that was revised in 1981 also contains numerous pledges concerning the provision of appropriate educational and relevant services to citizens with special needs (Obiakor & Eleweke, 2014). Most recently, the implementation of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2015), and in particular SDG goal #4, prohibit any exclusion from educational opportunities for people with and without special needs (UNESCO, 2015). The call within the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

The purpose of this study was to explore the inclusive education of students with DD in Lagos state, Nigeria. This case study qualitative research study is ideally suited to understand the experience of students with developmental disabilities in an inclusive classroom. It focuses on the description and understanding of people that have a collective identity (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2011). Hence, understanding the academic and social inclusion of students with DD may help to improve the support for individual with developmental disabilities not only in Nigeria, but in sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries of the world since they face the same challenging circumstances and are governed by some of the same international policies.

In this study, a government agency was asked to nominate a model school that they felt was implementing inclusive education. The school principal likewise asserted that his school offered an inclusive environment and completed the SWIEBP indicating as much. This school did in fact demonstrate a lot of emerging indications of inclusive practices that most schools in

Nigeria can emulate, though there is still room for improvement on the inclusion practices in the school. As a model for social inclusion, the school demonstrated important qualities such as the ability to foster positive teacher-student relationships, and friendships between students with and without disabilities. Teachers were able to create a positive classroom climate, as demonstrated by both Shola and Kemi's desire to spend more time in the mainstream classroom. However, results of this study, based on a model school, suggest that the Nigerian educational system is still at the beginning stage of creating an academically inclusive educational system as most indicators of inclusive practices are still missing in regard to equal education for all in line to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4. If this school is considered a model, then it is clear that such important characteristics as universal design for learning, differentiated instruction and assessment, and other evidence based practices that allow students with diverse abilities to access general curriculum is missing. IEP's were designed in ways that created a separate program from their classmates, rather than supporting their inclusion. This resulted in their segregation for significant periods of the day.

The study therefore provided empirical evidence of the progress of inclusion of students with DD in Nigeria, and how the cultural beliefs have been woven to the educational system of Nigeria. The voices of parents of students with special needs are rarely recognised and the government has failed to implement the laws on disability to protect the rights of parent and students with disabilities in Nigeria. Hopefully, the findings from this study and future studies will pave the way for my country, Nigeria, to begin to understand how to include students with DD better in an inclusive classroom.

### **Further Research**

This study identified a school for this case study on how inclusive education for student

with developmental disabilities is implemented. Further research should identify more than one school to give comparative and detailed narratives of including student with developmental disabilities in Nigeria. Furthermore, studies investigating and doing classroom observation of inclusive practices in the mainstream classroom would help to elaborate and contribute to the development of collaborative models in inclusive education.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

**Strengths.** This study selected a wide variety of stakeholders rather than focusing on only one group (e.g., teachers or parents). This allowed for triangulation and confirmed the assertions that were agreed upon by multiple stakeholders that social inclusion was being supported, but academic inclusion was at an infancy stage. By using a case study of a school, it allowed for focused comparison.

A second strength of this study was the opportunity to hear the voices of the students with developmental disabilities and parents of students with DD. The lack of power and import given to these students and their families has been noted for decades as an issue in the research literature, and this study offers a unique view into the similarities and differences in how the school operations were perceived.

**Limitations.** The major limitation to this study is that there were no classroom observations in the inclusive classroom, and this is due to the impact of COVID-19 which has restricted movement of new faces to the school and limited social gathering. I couldn't see the real situation of the participants in a school community. This would have afforded me the opportunity to see the social inclusion of the students with developmental disabilities.

The second limitation is the small sample size of this study and limited number of the classrooms. The study used two inclusive classrooms. However, more mainstream teachers



participated in the study based on their experience teaching students with developmental disabilities.

The third limitation is the absence of important stakeholders like the school principal, school board and policy makers that influence decisions as regard educational policies in Nigeria. In addition, parents of students without disabilities would have made a great contribution to this study too.

Finally, as the interviews with participants were done via a UBC Zoom platform, there was difficulty with the network in most cases and the time difference too made things difficult and therefore may have limited some participants responses.

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## APPENDIX A:

### School-Wide Inclusive Education Best Practice Indicators: Self-Rating Survey

This document reflects a set of inclusive education best-practice indicators that can be used as a framework to guide inclusive programming and school improvement. It was adapted from the Best Practices guide authored by Jorgensen, McSheehan, and Sonnenmeier; and from the Kentucky Alternate Assessment Portfolio Teacher's Guide. The Best Practice Indicators are divided into twelve areas that impact effective inclusive education for students with disabilities.

#### Instructions for completing the document:

Read and consider each indicator carefully. Rate the degree to which your *team/school* currently practices each indicator using the following scale - No evidence (NE), Minimal evidence (ME), Some evidence (SE), etc. in the columns headed "Progress."

At this time, don't mark anything in the column labeled "Total," the shaded columns titled "Planning."

Most of the indicators use the singular form "*The student...*" Rate the indicators according to whether they are in evidence for *most* students with disabilities on your team/in your school.

#### Key:

<b>Progress</b>	<b>NE</b>	No evidence (numerical rating of 1)
	<b>ME</b>	Minimal evidence (numerical rating of 2)
	<b>SE</b>	Some evidence (numerical rating of 3)
	<b>AE</b>	Adequate evidence (numerical rating of 4)
	<b>EE</b>	Exemplary evidence (numerical rating of 5)

Please check your role/job title:

☐ General Education Teacher

☐ Special Education Teacher

☐ Administrator

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
1.	<b>High Expectations and Least Dangerous Assumptions</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
	<i>The inherent value and dignity of students with significant disabilities is respected. All students with significant disabilities pursue the same learner outcomes as students without disabilities. When students do not currently demonstrate content knowledge or skills, the least dangerous assumption principle applies, and all aspects of their educational programs continue to reflect high expectations.</i>								
1.1	“Person First” language is used.								
1.2	Language regarding the student’s functioning or developmental level is not used; rather, descriptions of the student focus on abilities and needs.								
1.3	Annual goals on the student’s IEP reflect content standards from the general education curriculum.								
1.4	Predictions are not made that the student will “never” acquire certain knowledge or skills.								
1.5	People speak directly to the student rather than through a paraprofessional or other person.								
1.6	People use age-appropriate vocabulary and inflection when talking to the student.								
1.7	In order to respect privacy, staff discuss the student’s personal care, medical needs, and other sensitive issues out of earshot of other students, and only with those who need to know.								
1.8	Students with disabilities work on the same grade level content standards as typical peers with appropriate supports.								
1.9	Student’s individual discipline and behavior intervention plans rely on teaching appropriate skills (punishers or aversives are not used).								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
2.	<b>General Education Class Membership and Full Participation</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
	<i>Students with significant disabilities are members of age-appropriate general education classes in their neighborhood schools. There are no programs or rooms just for students with disabilities and these students have access to the full range of learning experiences and environments offered to students without disabilities.</i>								
2.1	The student is on the roster of and formally a member of an age-appropriate general education class.								
2.12	The student attends the school he/she would attend if he/she didn’t have a disability.								
2.13	The student progresses through the grades according to the same pattern as students without disabilities.								
2.14	The student marches at graduation at the average age at which other classmates without disabilities graduate.								
2.15	The student receives a diploma upon discharge from special education.								
2.2	The student learns in outside-of-school, age-appropriate, and inclusive environments after the age of 18 and before he/she receives a high school diploma or is discharged from special education.								
2.21	The student is not pulled out of general education classes for instruction.								
2.22	Related services are delivered primarily consultation in the classroom.								
2.23	Related services are delivered in typical, inclusive environments.								
2.3	There are no places or programs just for students with disabilities.								
2.31	Students with disabilities are proportionally represented in classes, courses, clubs, and extracurricular activities.								
2.32	The student’s name is on all class lists, lists of groups put on the board, job lists, etc.								
2.4	The student receives the same materials as students without disabilities, with supports (i.e., accommodations and adaptations) provided as necessary.								
2.5	The student participates in classroom and school routines in typical locations, such as the Pledge of Allegiance, lunch count, jobs, errands,								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
2.	<b>General Education Class Membership and Full Participation</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
	eating lunch in the cafeteria, etc.								
2.6	The student rides the same school bus as his/her peers without disabilities.								
2.61	The student attends classes with other students, arriving and leaving at the same time.								
2.62	The student participates in classroom instruction in similar ways as students without disabilities; for example: whole class discussions, at the board, in small groups, when called on by the teacher.								
2.7	The student participates in school plays, field trips, and community service activities.								
2.8	The school is physically accessible.								
2.9	The school accommodates the student's sensory needs.								
2.91	The student's individual behavioral goals are aligned with the school-wide behavioral rules.								
2.92	The student's individual behavior supports and interventions are similar to ways that students without disabilities are supported								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
3.	<b>Quality Augmentative and Alternative Communication</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
	<i>Students with disabilities who are not able to communicate academic and social messages in a way that is commensurate with same-age, non-disabled classmates are provided with accurate and reliable augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) supports and services.</i>								
3.1	The student has a means to communicate at all times.								
3.11	The student has a means to communicate for a variety of purposes.								
3.12	Although the student may have multiple ways of communicating, a primary means of communication is identified. The student's communication system is programmed with messages to demonstrate learning of age-appropriate core academics, commensurate with his/her age-appropriate classmates.								
3.2	AAC systems are provided to enable the student to communicate for the purposes of self-determination and futures planning.								
3.21	Supports are provided to enable the student to communicate for the purpose of self-determination and futures planning.								
3.3	The student, his/her family members, and classmates without disabilities participate in the selection of messages programmed into the AAC system.								
3.31	When acting as a facilitator, people clearly engage in a support role, not actively participating in the content of the interaction between the student using AAC and his/her conversational partners.								
3.32	When conversing with the student as a conversational partner, classmates and adults utilize information provided by facilitators to converse directly with the student, not with the facilitator.								
3.4	Training and support to use the AAC system is provided to the student in the contexts and routines in which the student will communicate.								
3.41	Training and support to use the AAC system is provided to the team, including classmates, in the contexts and routines in which the student will communicate.								
3.5	AAC supports take into consideration the communicative functions of								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
3.	<b>Quality Augmentative and Alternative Communication</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
	challenging behavior.								
3.6	A variety of funding sources and streams (Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, school funding, etc.) are utilized to acquire and maintain assistive technology and AAC systems, and to support training of the student, his/her family, classmates, and support personnel.								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
4.	<b>Curriculum, Instruction, and Support</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
	<i>Curriculum and instruction are designed to accommodate the full range of student diversity. Individualized supports are provided to students with significant disabilities to enable them to fully participate and make progress within the general education curriculum. Students learn functional or life skills within typical routines in the general education classroom or other inclusive activities and environments.</i>								
	<i>Curriculum is ...</i>								
4.1	Based on common content standards for all students.								
4.11	Presented in a variety of accessible formats including written information at appropriate reading levels, and in formats as indicated on the student support plan (e.g., video, picture/symbols, actual objects, demonstrations, orally, etc.).								
4.12	Individualized through the development of personalized performance demonstrations for some students.								
	<i>Instruction...</i>								
4.2	Reflects principles of Universal Design for Learning (CAST): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To support recognition learning, provide multiple, flexible methods of presentation</li> <li>To support strategic learning, provide multiple, flexible methods of expression and apprenticeship.</li> <li>To support affective learning, provide multiple, flexible options for engagement.</li> </ul>								
4.21	Reflects the learning styles of all students in the class by the use of visual, tactile, and kinesthetic materials and experiences.								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
4.	<b>Curriculum, Instruction, and Support</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
4.22	Prioritizes the use of research-based strategies for increasing student achievement, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying similarities and differences</li> <li>Summarizing and note taking</li> <li>Reinforcing effort and providing recognition</li> <li>Homework and practice</li> <li>Nonlinguistic representations</li> <li>Cooperative learning</li> <li>Setting objectives and providing feedback</li> <li>Generating and testing hypotheses</li> <li>Questions, cues, and advance organizers</li> <li>Using technology in presentation of content and to support students' demonstration of learning</li> </ul>								
4.23	Is provided in multiple formats such as individual, pairs, small groups, and whole class.								
	<i>Instructional Supports...</i>								
4.3	Are provided within the general education class and other typical environments to enable the student to participate in and benefit from the general education curriculum and other inclusive learning opportunities and activities.								
4.31	Are defined by a specific student support plan, and may include: physical, emotional, and sensory supports; adapted materials; assistive technology and augmentative communication; personalized performance demonstrations; personalized instruction; and individualized grading and evaluation plans.								
	<i>Behavior Supports...</i>								
4.4	Are consistent with a school wide positive behavior interventions and support philosophy.								
4.41	[For an individual student's challenging behavior] are designed <i>after</i> completion of a functional behavioral assessment.								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
4.	<b>Curriculum, Instruction, and Support</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
4.42	[For an individual student's challenging behavior] focus on teaching a new skill that replaces the function of an inappropriate behavior.								
4.43	[For an individual student's challenging behavior] take into consideration the student's sensory needs.								
	<i>Evaluation and Grading...</i>								
4.5	Includes criteria for judging success that reflects general education curriculum standards and individualized IEP goals and objectives.								
4.51	Reflects benchmarks similar to those of students without disabilities.								
4.52	Reflects evaluation methods similar to those of students without disabilities.								
4.53	Allows the student to receive grades that reflect "personal best" achievement and improvement.								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
5.	<b>Ongoing Authentic Assessment</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
	<i>Authentic, performance-based assessments are conducted within typical activities in inclusive environments for the purpose of identifying students' learning and communication styles, preferences and interests, academic strengths and weaknesses, and need for support.</i>								
5.1	Present level of performance statements on the IEP reflect the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student's talents, abilities, skills</li> <li>• students' learning styles</li> <li>• student's preferences</li> <li>• supports that the student needs to learn well</li> </ul>								
5.2	Assessment reports reflect the student's abilities and needs rather than deficits and weaknesses.								
5.3	If the student has difficulty communicating, assessment tools and strategies are chosen accordingly.								
5.4	Teachers and related service providers use ongoing dynamic assessments instead of discrete, one-time assessment tools.								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
6.	<b>Family-School Partnerships</b>	1	2	3	4	5		Check	1,2,3
	<i>Families and schools are engaged in partnership to create quality inclusive educational experiences for students with significant disabilities. Families are connected to resources for developing their own leadership and advocacy skills.</i>								
6.1	Family priorities are reflected in annual goals on the student's IEP.								
6.2	Families acknowledge teachers' efforts on behalf of their child.								
6.3	Families know about resources for building their own leadership and advocacy skills relative to their child's education.								
6.4	Families attend case-management meetings or planning meetings on a regular basis.								
6.5	Families have input and receive regular information about their child's social behavior.								
6.6	Individual behavioral interventions reflect the family's cultural practices.								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
7.	<b>Team Collaboration</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
	<i>General and special education teachers and related service providers demonstrate shared responsibility by collaborating in the design, implementation, and evaluation of students' educational programs and their IEPs.</i>								
7.1	The roles and responsibilities of all teachers and staff reflect the commitment and skills needed to teach and support all students, including those with disabilities.								
7.2	Special education staff work within the general education classroom as co-teachers, team-teachers, small group instructors, or one-on-one support teachers for all students in the class.								
7.3	The roles and responsibilities of special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers reflect the provision of supports and services to students to enable them to participate in and benefit from the general education curriculum and to teachers to enable them to effectively teach heterogeneous classes.								
7.4	There is collaborative planning time during the day for general and special education teachers, and related service providers to ensure all parties are familiar with the lesson content and appropriate supports are provided for the student.								
7.5	Teams use formal processes for conducting meetings, problem-solving, making decisions, and evaluating their own effectiveness.								
7.6	There is a team in place for teachers to discuss and problem-solve learning and behavioral concerns for individual students.								
7.7	A special educator is designated as an "Inclusion Facilitator" for students with more significant developmental disabilities, including autism, intellectual disability, and multiple disabilities. That special educator/s does not have a classroom of students, per se, but provides leadership to students' educational team members around the design and implementation of supports that enable the student to fully participate in general education instruction in the general education classroom and in typical, inclusive social activities.								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
8.	<b>Social Relationships and Natural Supports</b>	1	2	3	4	5			1,2,3
	<i>The first essential condition for friendship is full inclusion. When students with disabilities are kept apart from the mainstream of school life there are few opportunities for friendships to develop between students with and without disabilities. Going to recess, eating in the cafeteria, and access to extracurricular activities are recognized as key ingredients to the formation of friendships. Students who experience significant disabilities should be on sports teams, perform in band and choral groups, perform in school plays, and so forth. Accessible transportation and staff support are provided when necessary to enable students to participate successfully.</i>								
8.1	The student with disabilities has the same variety of social networks as students without disabilities: close friends, acquaintances, kids they share activities with, etc.								
8.2	The student with disabilities participates in the same variety of inclusive and typical extracurricular activities as students without disabilities.								
8.3	When needed, adults facilitate the building of social networks for the student.								
8.4	When ever possible, physical, emotional, and instructional supports are provided by non-special educators -- by classroom teachers, librarians, classmates, office personnel, volunteers.								
8.5	The student has the opportunity to provide support and assistance to others as well as to receive it.								



INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
9.	<b>Futures Planning</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
	<i>Students with disabilities develop a four-year plan of study with their guidance counselor just like students without disabilities. Their course selection is based on regular graduation requirements. They attend college fairs and are encouraged to apply for post-secondary education.</i>								
9.1	The student has a graduation plan, not simply a transition plan, developed using the principles of person-centered planning.								
9.2	The student has a graduation plan, not simply a transition plan, developed using the principles of person-centered planning.								
9.3	Graduation planning includes choices of postsecondary education, work, community living, leisure and recreation.								
9.4	When chosen by the student and his/her parents/guardians, the school supports his or education in non-school, age-appropriate learning environments after the age of 18 and before special education services are discontinued.								
9.5	Structures are in place for students transitioning between grades to ensure that supports and educational programs are passed between receiving and sending schools.								
9.6	Structures are in place for students transitioning between preschool to elementary, elementary to middle, and middle to high school involving families, teachers and support staff to ensure that supports and educational programs are passed between receiving and sending schools.								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
10.	<b>Self-Determination</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
	<i>Self-determination includes personal attitudes and abilities that facilitate an individual's identification and pursuit of meaningful and self-identified goals. It is reflected in personal attitudes of empowerment, active participation in decision-making, and self-directed action to achieve personally valued goals. Within the school curriculum there are opportunities for students with disabilities to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and to begin to advocate for the accommodations they need with teachers and employers. All students with disabilities attend their own IEP meetings, are supported to join organizations that promote self-determination, and to design a post-graduation "futures plan" that has as its goal a fully inclusive life in the community.</i>								
10.1	The student with significant disabilities communicates his or her own thoughts, needs, opinions, and wishes, with support from augmentative communication, friends, family, and educators.								
10.2	The student actively participates in a process of academic goal setting, monitoring, and evaluation of performance and uses the results to improve overall performance.								
10.3	The student with disabilities participates in IEP meetings from junior high through graduation.								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
11.	<b>School Leadership</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
	<i>Administrators provide leadership to align general and special education reform and improvement with respect to the creation of a community of learners that is inclusive of students with significant disabilities.</i>								
11.1	The values of diversity and inclusion are evident in the school's mission statement.								
11.2	General and special education administrators promote the values and benefits of inclusive education at meetings, in school improvement plans or annual reports, in school newsletters or Web sites, and in conversations.								
11.3	General and special education personnel participate together in school wide improvement and reform efforts that benefit students with and without disabilities.								
11.4	General and special education administrators serve on a building leadership team together, making collaborative decisions about all school policy and practices.								

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS		Progress						Planning	
		NE	ME	SE	AE	EE	Total	TI	Priority
12.	<b>Professional Development</b>	1	2	3	4	5		check	1,2,3
	<i>Professional development for general and special education staff is linked to improved educational outcomes for students with significant disabilities.</i>								
12.1	Teams use reflective practice strategies and structures to engage in job-embedded learning and professional growth.								
12.2	General and special education staff attend professional development events together.								
12.3	General education staff identifies learning about students with disabilities in their professional development plans.								
12.4	Special education staff identifies learning about general education curriculum in their professional development plans.								
12.5	Regular review of student learning data informs the content and format of district, school, and individual professional development plans.								
12.6	Professional development includes topics related to practices that facilitate the learning of all students, including those with the most significant disabilities.								

## **Appendix B**

### **Examples of Interview Questions for Classroom Teachers**

1. Tell me about your philosophy and beliefs on inclusive education for students with developmental disabilities? What are the school's values and practices regarding inclusion?
2. What does it mean for a student to be included in the learning in the class?
3. How do you know when a student is included in your class and school community? Does everyone in this class participate regularly? Why or why not?
4. What happens for students with developmental disabilities during learning section in the class– do they participate? If yes, can you tell me about that? What facilitates participation? If not, why not? What do you see as barriers to participation or inclusion?
5. How do students in your class take part in classroom activities or daily routines? Are all students involved? Why or why not?
6. Can you tell me about the different student roles that exist in your classroom?
7. What makes a student a member of your class?
8. Is everyone included in the social activities of the classroom? Why or why not?
9. How do you ensure all students are engaged in what they are learning? Can you tell me about any programs, strategies, adaptations, or modifications you use?
10. Describe your experiences with your school-based team with respect to including students with developmental disabilities in your class. What are your relationships like?
11. Do you have any experience working with other professionals such as occupational therapist, speech and language therapist, behavioural therapist, etc? Tell me about it.
12. What would you like for individuals outside the classroom to know about students in your class?

### **Examples of guiding questions for the student's learning assistant(s):**

1. Tell me about your philosophy and beliefs on inclusive education for students with developmental disabilities? What are the school's values and practices regarding inclusion?
2. Can you tell me about your role in the classroom?
3. What does it mean for a student to be included in class?

4. Does everyone in this class participate regularly? Why or why not?
5. What happens for students with developmental disabilities during learning section in the class— do they participate? If yes, can you tell me about that? What facilitates participation? If not, why not? What do you see as barriers to inclusion?
6. How do students in your class take part in classroom activities or daily routines? Are all students involved? Why or why not?
7. Tell me about the different student roles that exist in the classroom?
8. What makes a student a member of this class?
9. Is everyone included in the social activities of the classroom? Why or why not?
10. Do you have any experience working with other professionals such as occupational therapist, speech and language therapist, behavioural therapist, etc? Tell me about it.
11. What would you like for individuals outside the classroom to know about students in your class?
12. Describe your experiences with your school-based team with respect to including students with developmental disabilities. What are your relationships like?

**Examples of guiding questions to guide semi-structured interviews for students with developmental disabilities and their peers include:**

1. What does it mean to be included? What does it mean to be included in your classroom? Is everyone in your class included?
2. What makes someone a member of your classroom?
3. What does it mean to participate in class?
4. Does everyone in this class participate regularly? If yes, why? What are some of the things that encourage or allow students to participate? If not, why not? What do you see as barriers to participation?
5. What are the roles students play in the classroom?
6. Does student(s) with developmental disabilities makes choices about their learning?
7. Tell me about classroom routines. How do students participate in them?

8. Does everyone in your class participate in social activities in the classroom? Why or why not?
9. Tell me about some of your classroom activities. Groupwork? Assignments?

### **Examples of Interview Questions for the Parents**

1. Do you have a child attending a class with inclusion practices?
2. What are the school inclusive practices in your child's school?
3. What does inclusive education look like for your child? (For example, what is a typical day like?)
4. What is your relationship like with the school community teacher, other parents, school administrators and other students? Is the school your child/ward going a good place for your child physically and emotionally?
5. What are the social inclusion you have noticed between your child and other students? (e.g. playing, sports day, fun day etc)
6. How do you know when your child is participating in the class or included in the learning in the classroom?
7. What knowledge and skills do you think a general education teacher requires to teach effectively in an inclusive classroom?
8. Tell me about some strategies you have learnt from the teacher to support your child at home.
9. What do you think that students without disabilities gain from being in an inclusion classroom?
10. How often do you communicate with the general education teacher?
11. Please tell me about the relationship you may have about other professional working with your child provided in his/her general education class?
12. What changes (if any) have you noticed in your child who is brought into the inclusion classroom? Whether socially and cognitively. Tell me
13. What would you like for individuals outside the classroom or school community to know about your child experiences in an inclusion classroom?