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Complexities in Delivering Effective Special Needs Education to Children with Disabilities in Selected Primary Schools in Kampala District-Uganda

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Abstract

Special Needs Education (SNE) is essential for providing children with disabilities (CWDs) equal access to quality education and opportunities for growth. In Uganda, initiatives such as Universal Primary Education (UPE) have played a key role in integrating CWDs into mainstream schools, promoting inclusivity. Despite these efforts, CWDs in Kampala District continue to face significant challenges in accessing quality education. This study explores the complexities of delivering effective SNE in selected primary schools in Kampala, with the aim of identifying solutions to improve educational access for CWDs.

The study employed a qualitative research approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews on a sample of five primary school teachers and five education officials responsible for managing education for CWDs. Data analysis was conducted through cross-case analysis, grouping similar responses to identify common themes across the interviews. The findings revealed several complexities, including inadequate physical infrastructure, a shortage of educational materials, difficulties in classroom accessibility, and a lack of essential support services. Additionally, teachers were found to be insufficiently motivated to address the needs of CWDs, which resulted in low morale. Corruption among education officials further hindered the effective delivery of special needs education services.

In conclusion, while the UPE initiative marked progress towards inclusive education, significant improvements are still needed to ensure that children with disabilities in Kampala District receive the support they require. The study recommends enhancing infrastructure, providing sufficient resources, boosting teacher motivation, and addressing corruption within the education system to improve the delivery of special needs education for CWDs.

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1. Introduction to the study

Special Needs Education (SNE) is essential for ensuring that children with disabilities (CWDs) have equal access to education and opportunities for development, in alignment with both national and international commitments to inclusive education. In Uganda, significant progress has been made through initiatives such as Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the inclusive education framework, aimed at expanding educational access to all children, including those with disabilities. However, challenges persist in effectively delivering quality SNE, particularly in urban areas like Kampala District. This research examines the complexities of providing SNE to CWDs in selected primary schools within Kampala. Despite growing recognition of the importance of inclusivity, many schools continue to struggle with creating a supportive learning environment for CWDs. By exploring the experiences of primary schools in Kampala, the study seeks to identify the key barriers to the effective delivery of

SNE and offer insights into potential solutions. The findings will contribute to the ongoing conversation on improving educational outcomes for CWDs in Uganda, helping policymakers, educators, and stakeholders gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in fostering inclusive education in Kampala District.

2. Related Literature

This chapter reviews existing literature on the complexities involved in delivering special needs education (SNE) to children with disabilities in primary schools. The focus is on the challenges faced in the educational environment, particularly in the context of Kampala District, Uganda. The review draws on a range of relevant studies, journals, articles, and theses, all of which were carefully selected for their relevance to the study. The search words used in identifying pertinent literature included: disability, education for all, social exclusion, social inclusion, integration, and special schools. Google Scholar played a significant role in gathering relevant materials.

It is crucial to create a school environment that provides both special education and an enabling atmosphere for children with disabilities, rather than expecting these children to adapt to existing educational settings. As noted by Evans in a study conducted in England, one of the primary needs identified was the adjustment of educational settings to better accommodate children with disabilities (Evans, 2008) ^[7]. However, the study did not explicitly outline the specific requirements of such "educational settings" for children with disabilities. The school environment plays a vital role in helping children with disabilities achieve their educational goals, as emphasized by Ainscow (2007) ^[1].

Disability affects not only the individual but also the broader social environment (Savolainen, 2000). When exploring the concept of disability, the social model presents ethical and economic implications distinct from the medical model, which views disability primarily from a clinical perspective. In a study conducted by Savolainen (2000) in Finland, it was found that the social consequences of disability had a more significant impact on the individual than the disability itself. However, this study overlooked children from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as those from low-income families, single-parent households, or orphaned children.

A study by Gezahegne and Yinebeb (2011) in Ethiopia, a developing country, revealed that inadequate funding was a major barrier to the successful implementation of inclusive education programs, similar to challenges faced in many other countries (Tirussew, 1999, as cited in Gezahegne and Yinebeb, 2011). The study also identified issues such as inadequate teacher training, negative teacher attitudes, and lack of resources, including materials and equipment, as factors hindering inclusive education for children with disabilities. Furthermore, the attitudes of teachers were found to be influenced by the severity of the disability, with those facing more complex disabilities often receiving less attention and support. Additional challenges highlighted in the study included the absence of specialized training and large class sizes (Gezahegne and Yinebeb, 2011).

Similarly, Peters (2003) ^[15] conducted a comparative study on inclusive education in both developing and developed countries on behalf of the World Bank. This study focused on the attitudes of teachers, largely ignoring other barriers that children with disabilities face in accessing education. Peters found that while teacher training is crucial, teachers must also possess a positive attitude. Those who are able to develop a more inclusive mindset significantly benefit their students (Peters, 2003) ^[15].

For inclusion to succeed, it is widely believed that all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other needs, must fully participate in education. This principle was outlined in the Salamanca Statement (1994) ^[19] in Spain. In the context of universal primary education, children are encouraged to attend local schools near their families for easier monitoring, even if they do not have a disability. Therefore, including children with disabilities in the education system is seen as an essential step toward achieving their full participation. When children with special needs are fully integrated into their class, just like their peers, they feel like part of the group, and there should be no need for separate classes for them. However, one of the main limitations of the Salamanca Statement is that it oversimplified the issue of disability and failed to consider the varying socio-economic, cultural, and political realities of different countries.

For example, Uganda may face challenges in providing adequate resources for meeting the educational needs of children with disabilities, and this remains a major barrier to access. According to a previous study on Uganda, inclusion is viewed as a process of addressing the needs of children with disabilities (CWDs) within regular schools using the available resources. Key factors such as the quality of education, accessibility, attitudes, teaching methods, and the curriculum are critical in supporting the specific needs of children with disabilities (UNISE, 2002). A study in South-East Europe emphasized that inclusive education is meant to enable everyone to learn, grow, and work together in regular schools, irrespective of their backgrounds (Skjørten, 2001). This aligns with the Salamanca Statement, which emphasizes that successful inclusive schools require collective efforts from teachers, staff, peers, parents, families, and volunteers. A UNESCO study (2004) conducted across various African countries highlighted the importance of designing materials and curricula that support the integration of learners with special needs. It emphasized that inclusion requires collective efforts from the entire society, not just individuals or organizations. However, the study also noted a major flaw: the lack of cooperation from all teachers, peers, families, voluntary organizations, and the general public.

Holbrook (1996) suggested that mainstream schools offer valuable opportunities for children with visual impairments to interact, share experiences, and form relationships with others. He recommended providing adapted materials, such as Braille books, and teaching students how to use them, which could foster competition and engagement with their classmates.

In a study conducted in Uganda (Kristensen *et al.*, 2003) ^[9], it was found that, to ensure access to quality education, a strong support system must continue to offer guidance to both teachers and learners. Teachers need proper training to understand the diverse needs of students, but they also require specific resources like Braille materials for blind children, hearing aids, and well-designed classrooms accessible to children with mobility impairments. These important considerations were often overlooked in earlier research.

Further studies revealed that both children and teachers in Uganda held positive attitudes toward the inclusion of children with disabilities and other special needs. Inclusive education in Uganda has made significant progress, but there is still a need for additional preparation at the grassroots and national levels. Strengthening support systems is essential to accommodate the diverse needs of all learners within regular school environments.

The research also suggested that the education system should be structured to support learners from different backgrounds,

regardless of their ethnicity. To prevent issues like exclusion and dropout, the Ministry of Education must develop systems, structures, and capacities at all levels to support inclusion (Kristensen *et al*, 2003) ^[9]. Furthermore, adequate funding and educational materials should be provided for learners with special educational needs. Reducing the student-to-teacher ratio would also allow teachers to better support these learners.

In conclusion, numerous studies have highlighted the challenges in providing education to children with disabilities in Uganda. This study aims to address both the possibilities and challenges as described by education officers and teachers.

The literature reviewed suggests that the educational needs of children with disabilities can be met by restructuring the general education system through an inclusive approach. This involves teachers taking responsibility for educating all students. In order to make the curriculum suitable for all learners, the physical infrastructure must also be adapted to accommodate all different groups of students.

Most of the studies discussed in this chapter were conducted in developed countries, where the education system is already advanced and more inclusive of diverse student groups. These studies primarily focus on teachers as the main providers of education, while overlooking other important factors such as curriculum design, socio-cultural challenges, and the role of parents in the education of children with disabilities.

Furthermore, while it is true that some individuals are born with disabilities, disabilities can also be acquired at any point in a person's life. This should be a key consideration for those responsible for creating an environment that can accommodate potential disabilities. Although inclusive education benefits everyone involved, it is crucial not to ignore the challenges that individuals face.

A curriculum that meets the educational needs of children with disabilities should be designed alongside appropriate teaching methods and an educational environment that supports all learners. It is important to create a simple curriculum that is easy for students to understand, promotes positive outcomes, and prevents disengagement. The right choice of curriculum, teaching practices, and educational environment is essential to improving the abilities of children with disabilities and those with special educational needs (McDermott, 1993, referencing a study in American society) ^[13].

In conclusion, much work remains to be done in developing a clear framework for the fair distribution of educational resources and opportunities aimed at inclusion (Terzi, 2005) ^[20]. Using our data, we will suggest a solution that works for Uganda and is financially feasible. Our study will examine the challenges faced by children with disabilities in accessing education in Uganda.

3. Material and Methods

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, utilizing structured interviews for data collection. A qualitative approach allowed the researcher to gather diverse perspectives from both existing literature and first-hand accounts to draw comprehensive conclusions and provide actionable recommendations. Specifically, the researcher employed a phenomenological approach, which aimed to deeply understand individuals' lived experiences (Patton, 1990). By applying phenomenology, the researcher sought to explore how the interviewees experienced and perceived the phenomenon in question, capturing their personal descriptions of particular situations or events. Data will be

collected through in-depth interviews with individuals who have directly experienced the subject matter, rather than relying on second-hand accounts.

A total of ten (10) interviews were conducted, involving five (5) teachers and five (5) educational officials. Semi-structured interviews were used, with open-ended questions designed to allow participants to share detailed insights into the challenges faced by children with disabilities (CWDs) in accessing education. This method was chosen to encourage in-depth discussions and enable the researchers to explore unique perspectives (Robson, 2000) ^[17].

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants with relevant knowledge and experience. Five teachers were recruited from the five divisions of Kampala District, with head teachers informing potential participants about the study. Additionally, the researcher's familiarity with the district helped establish contact with educational officials, who were also purposively selected. Some interviews were conducted by telephone to provide flexibility and accommodate participants' schedules. Interview duration ranged from 20 to 40 minutes.

The purposive sampling method ensured that educational officials with expertise in CWDs' education and policy management were chosen, enhancing the reliability of the data (Grinnell, 2001). Participants were assured of confidentiality and informed of the study's significance (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) ^[11].

The semi-structured format allowed for guided conversations while also offering flexibility to explore emerging themes and personal experiences. This approach was particularly valuable for capturing the complexities of the challenges faced by both teachers and education officials. Data were analyzed thematically to identify key issues in the education system for CWDs.

Interviews were conducted in English, as it is the second language of the participants the researcher and participants ensured that interviews took place in quiet, private settings to maintain confidentiality and minimize interruptions.

The researcher conducted interviews using a semi-structured method, described as "a planned yet flexible interview designed to capture descriptions of the interviewee's life world and interpret the meaning behind the phenomena discussed" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) ^[11]. While the researcher oversaw the interview process, participants were encouraged to express themselves freely without interruption. Respondents were invited to answer all questions openly, with some responses prompting additional questions to ensure the validity and authenticity of the information. The interview questions were developed based on the main research question, with guidance from the supervisor. Additionally, the researcher consulted the book *Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) ^[11] and followed the seven stages of interview inquiry.

The area selected for this study was chosen due to its significant number of schools that offer special needs education, surpassing other areas in this regard. This made it an ideal location to conduct the research, as it provided a diverse range of settings where the study's objectives could be effectively explored.

Interviews with some officials were conducted using a phone on speaker, while also being recorded with a digital audio recorder. Notes were taken during the process as well. The interviews with teachers were conducted using semi-structured questionnaires, with one of the interviews also recorded using a digital audio recorder. All ten interviews were transcribed by the researcher. As Kvale and Brinkmann

(2009) [11] mention, "to some extent, the researcher will have the social and emotional aspects of the interview situation present or reawakened during transcription" (p. 180). During transcription, all expressions and emotional responses, such as laughter and sighs, were carefully noted. To protect the confidentiality of the interviewees, strict ethical guidelines were followed throughout the transcription process. Rather than using the interviewees' names, each was assigned a unique code: A, B, C, D and E respectively to ensure their identities remained anonymous. This approach helped safeguard their privacy while maintaining the integrity of the data analysis.

4. Results and discussion

It is essential to provide a brief introduction to the background of all the interviewees to better understand their perspectives and expertise in the field. Teacher A: Was responsible for the deaf-blind children in the school, with eight years of experience working with this group. Teacher B: Had experience working with children in an inclusive school setting. Teacher C: Was a trained special needs educator who developed expertise in managing children with disabilities through direct interaction and hands-on experience. Teacher D: Had fifteen years of experience working with children with disabilities and was a senior staff member and expert in the field and Teacher E: Had 10 years of experience in teaching children in inclusive classrooms. The researcher organized the interview results into two main themes to address the key research questions, providing a clear structure to analyze the responses and draw meaningful conclusions.

Theme 1: What is the special education needs of children with disabilities in Uganda according to the teachers?

Theme 2: The Challenges Teachers Face in Providing Special Education for Children with Disabilities in Uganda

Empirical analysis for theme 1 and 2

From the responses of our participants, it is clear that the design of physical infrastructure and social schemes significantly impacts the ability of children with disabilities to fully engage in school activities. Essential facilities, such as wheelchairs, accessible buildings, and transportation, as well as the provision of specialized tools, are crucial in bridging the gap between individuals and their environment. In addition to these infrastructure-related needs, other challenges identified by the teachers include financial constraints and a lack of adequate teaching materials, which hinder the effective delivery of special education.

Theme 3: Are Some Challenges Harder to Manage? Could You Describe a Typical Challenging Situation?

Theme 4: What are the Solutions to the Above Challenges? Both for Society (Children, Parents/Guardians, and Others) and Institutions Tasked with Realizing Such Goals.

Empirical analysis for theme 3 and 4

The respondents emphasized the critical need for well-trained teachers and the creation of an enabling environment for children with disabilities. Many children were admitted to special schools based solely on medical diagnoses, without considering how each child functions or their specific educational needs. Additionally, the impact of their environment on the children, at the micro, macro, and meso levels, was often overlooked. Most special schools are boarding schools, which means many children are placed far from their families or communities. This distance often leads to a loss of emotional connection between the children and their families. Other challenges identified by the respondents

included unaffordable school fees, which rank as a significant barrier for many families. Children with disabilities also expressed feelings of neglect by their parents when sent to these boarding schools. Additionally, concerns were raised about the quality of care and feeding in these institutions. The respondents also noted the need for teachers to adapt their teaching methods and enhance the curriculum to ensure all learners, including those with disabilities, can access better educational services.

Theme 5: Do Children with Disabilities Drop Out More Often than Other Children? What Happens to Them Afterward? Can You Describe Some Scenarios?

Theme 6: Learning Achievements of Children with Disabilities (CWDs) Compared to Other Children

Empirical Analysis of Theme 6

All respondents agreed that CWDs perform better in vocational training, particularly excelling in handiwork. They observed that these children tend to focus more on practical tasks, indicating a preference for vocational studies. Teachers actively support and encourage this preference.

Officials' responses

Official A: A supervisor of education services in Division A of the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), with over fifteen years of experience working with children with disabilities. Official B: An assistant school inspector responsible for special needs education in Division B of KCCA, with ten years of experience in this role. Official C: A supervisor of education services in Division C, with eight years of experience working with inclusive schools. Official D: An assistant supervisor of education services in Division D, responsible for special needs education, with more than ten years of experience in this role. Official E: A supervisor of education services in Division E, with twelve years of experience in this position.

Theme 1: What would you consider as successes for policy implementation in education and why?

Empirical analysis for theme 1

Based on the responses from our participants, the program has been deemed successful due to the combined efforts of both the government and parents. One key success in policy implementation is the organization of primary schools in Uganda into clusters of 15 to 20 schools (MOES, 2004b). Each cluster is assigned either a Special Needs Education Coordinator (SNECO) or a Centre Coordinating Tutor (CCT), whose responsibility is to visit all schools within their cluster, including special schools.

Theme 2: What are the major complaints raised by CWDs in education?

Empirical analysis for theme 2

The most significant educational challenge faced by children with disabilities (CWDs) is the lack of proper educational facilities. These include the absence of trained sign language teachers, Braille materials, and other necessary learning resources. Teachers in Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools also lack the expertise to use Braille effectively. Additional challenges include the absence of ramps and accessible toilets. Moreover, assistance from both teachers and fellow students is sometimes withheld when it is most needed, which could stem from a lack of proper teacher training, as mentioned by one respondent. CWDs require support from both their schools and families. Unfortunately, they often face marginalization and discrimination both in school and at home. Families need to be more supportive,

offering counseling and other forms of help. With the right support from both their schools and families, CWDs may be able to overcome some of the many challenges they face.

Theme 3: What challenges did you experience in your role?

Empirical analysis of theme 3

The issue of teacher training was consistently raised by nearly all of our respondents. For the first time, one interviewee highlighted corruption as a significant challenge, noting that much of the equipment intended for schools is diverted for personal gain. Additionally, we encountered concerns about the negative attitudes towards children with disabilities (CWDs), which were present both among parents and teachers.

Theme 4: What do you think has contributed to the failures in UPE when focusing on CWDs' literacy needs and why? What aspects of policy implementation do you think need to be changed and why?

Empirical analysis of theme 4

Some of our respondents indicated that the failure of the UPE policy was mainly due to insufficient financial support, as the program initially relied heavily on foreign donors. When these donors withdrew, the Ugandan government struggled to maintain the program's operations. Another concern raised was that the teaching curriculum was not adequately tailored to meet the specific needs of children with disabilities (CWDs). Based on the responses, many CWDs expressed a stronger interest in vocational training, but this was not provided to the extent they desired. In light of these challenges, it was suggested that the program's overall design should be revisited and revised to address these issues. Additionally, the government needs to focus on securing consistent funding to ensure the long-term viability and success of the program.

Theme 5: What role do you think the Ministry of Education plays in supporting CWDs in achieving the UPE goal?

Empirical analysis for theme 5

There is a need to increase awareness about the program, as the current uncertainty regarding its effectiveness highlights this necessity. Raising awareness will help parents and teachers gain a clearer understanding of the program. Additionally, non-governmental organizations should be actively involved in the process. As previously mentioned, teacher training must be enhanced because, even with the provision of necessary materials, the success of the program cannot be achieved without sufficient knowledge and training for educators.

Theme 6: What type of support would you need for more effective implementation of education programs for CWDs?

Empirical analysis of theme 6

Motivating teachers through appropriate support from the relevant authorities will undoubtedly encourage them to work harder and more effectively. Increasing awareness, as previously mentioned, is also crucial for the program, as it will improve the community's perception of CWDs. Additionally, several respondents highlighted the importance of monitoring the educational system for CWDs, which will provide accurate data on the progress made and identify challenges faced. This will help ensure the program achieves its desired outcomes. Furthermore, treating CWDs equally is essential for the program's success.

4.2. Empirical analysis of the result

The analysis is based on the results from the interviews, examined through the framework of systems theory, focusing on the interactions between the environment and the people within it, specifically children with disabilities (CWDs). People with disabilities face numerous challenges in their daily activities and are often excluded from society, which can lead to them being perceived as outcasts. This situation is particularly prevalent in developing countries, such as the one where this study was conducted. To understand how CWDs interact and engage with both their school environment and society at large, and how the environment impacts them, the researcher applied social systems theory. This theory emphasizes that each system is open, subject to external influences, and has the potential to affect what lies beyond its boundaries. The respondents revealed that the design of physical infrastructure and the structure of social activities are critical in enabling CWDs to fully participate in school life. They highlighted the importance of having well-trained teachers and creating an inclusive environment for these children at the micro level.

Many CWDs are admitted to special schools based on medical diagnoses, without considering the specific level of disability or individual educational needs. Furthermore, most of these special schools are boarding institutions located far from the children's families or communities, leading to a loss of close emotional contact with their families. In some cases, contact becomes limited or ceases entirely. This highlights the lack of basic knowledge among teachers regarding how to effectively teach and train CWDs. Other difficulties mentioned by the respondents include the high costs of maintaining these special schools, as well as the feeling of neglect experienced by CWDs when placed in boarding institutions. Students pointed out that daily necessities were often lacking, and the quality of food in the schools was poor. To address these issues, teachers need to be adequately trained and should adapt their teaching methods to improve the curriculum, ensuring that all learners have access to tailored learning strategies that suit their specific needs.

Ackoff (1981) explains that in every environment, there are three levels of purpose within a social system: "the purpose of the system, of its parts, and of the system of which it is a part, the suprasystem." When performing a systems analysis of the challenges faced by CWDs in accessing special education, we first examine the problem itself, without preconceptions about the outcome. Once the challenges and needs of CWDs are identified, we then look inward at the sub-systems, which include the teachers, education officials, parents, and interactions with peers at school, and outward to the larger environment or society. These systems can be categorized into micro, meso, and macro levels, which help us understand how various actors within the environment, the family, the school, and the government are responsible for providing the necessary tools for students to enroll and access school facilities.

According to our interviewees, the most significant educational challenges faced by CWDs include the lack of proper educational resources, such as trained sign language teachers, Braille materials, and other necessary teaching aids. Teachers in Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools often lack the skills needed to operate Braille effectively. Additionally, the absence of ramps and accessible toilets further limits the ability of CWDs to fully engage in school activities. Another challenge mentioned was the lack of

support from both teachers and fellow students, which could stem from inadequate teacher training, as one respondent noted. The absence of essential teaching materials and equipment may also contribute to the low enrollment rate and higher dropout rates among CWDs compared to children without disabilities.

5. Discussion

Despite the various challenges faced by institutions in delivering special needs education to CWDs, these children continue to have the opportunity to attend special schools. The findings from the respondents reflect their experiences, which were explored through multiple themes, including the specific needs of CWDs and the obstacles they encounter in accessing education. These themes shed light on both the progress made and the areas that still require attention to better support CWDs in their educational journey.

The findings of the study reveal that CWDs face a variety of challenges in accessing special education in the region. A key takeaway from the results is the critical need for teacher training in managing CWDs. Without teachers having the appropriate skills and knowledge, these children will continue to experience exclusion from mainstream education. The study also highlighted that the current curriculum in schools is not adequately designed to meet the specific needs of CWDs. According to the findings, CWDs tend to show a stronger interest in vocational training, which better matches their skills and interests.

Another significant challenge identified was the difficulty in securing funds for the program. This financial shortfall has hindered institutions from addressing the various needs of CWDs. The study further exposed instances of corruption within the system, where some individuals in charge of funds diverted these resources for personal gain. This issue worsened after donor countries withdrew their financial support.

The research also revealed that the facilities at schools, such as toilets, classrooms, and hostels, were not designed to accommodate CWDs. Teachers reported a shortage of essential resources like ramps, instructional materials, Braille, and hearing aids. Even when such resources were available, they were often in poor condition, requiring repair or replacement.

Furthermore, the attitudes of some teachers and parents contribute to the exclusion of CWDs. Certain teachers and parents neglect the needs of CWDs, a situation that is likely common for many children with disabilities. Additionally, some parents fail to fully support their children's education, potentially due to a lack of awareness or financial difficulties. Many CWDs come from poor backgrounds, and some parents prefer their children to beg on the streets, where they often receive sympathy from the community. This could explain the lower enrollment rates of CWDs compared to children without disabilities.

According to the interviewees, the majority of CWDs were not properly diagnosed before being enrolled in the UPE program. Admissions were based largely on physical appearance, without considering the children's developmental progress or specific educational needs. Hearing tests were not conducted for children who were deaf or hard of hearing, nor for those with other disabilities (Gezahegne & Yinebeb, 2011).

The study also found that many parents did not visit their children once they were enrolled in school. Parental involvement plays a crucial role in a child's education, and the lack of communication between parents and teachers has created a gap in supporting the children effectively. It is

essential that both parents and teachers fulfill their roles in order to build a strong support system for the children (UNESCO, 2001).

Our investigation also highlighted the lack of reliable data on dropout rates. However, several factors contributing to these dropouts were identified, including a lack of public awareness about the importance of education for CWDs, a shortage of schools that can accommodate children with disabilities, and inadequate facilities within the schools that do accept them, hindering movement and access to necessary resources.

In conclusion, if the issues outlined above are addressed, the dropout rates for CWDs could be significantly reduced. While we did not directly interview the children themselves, the responses from teachers and officials suggest this outcome.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the researcher's understanding of the needs and challenges faced by CWDs in accessing special education, the following recommendations are proposed. To ensure CWDs receive a high standard of education, the Ministry of Education should establish specialized units that cater specifically to their needs. A dedicated team should be appointed to design a curriculum that accommodates the diverse needs of different categories of disabled children.

The relevant authorities should reassess the enrollment procedures for CWDs in schools across Uganda. Given that CWDs have varying levels of impairment, a thorough diagnosis should be conducted to identify which children require specialized support and which can attend mainstream schools. Schools must also be equipped with essential infrastructure such as ramps, wheelchairs, and Braille materials. Moreover, these resources should be tailored to meet the unique needs of each child.

It is essential to have an accurate diagnosis of the nature and severity of a CWD's disability, ensuring that appropriate services are provided to meet their specific needs. The government should also launch an awareness campaign to educate the public; including parents, community leaders, and other stakeholders on the importance of integrating CWDs into the UPE program.

The researcher recommends that continuous professional development and training for teachers be prioritized to enhance their capacity to effectively teach CWDs. In addition, the government should establish a robust monitoring system to oversee both schools and ministry officials responsible for budget management. This will ensure that funds are allocated properly for the benefit of CWDs. Finally, any official or teacher found guilty of misappropriating funds or engaging in misconduct should be dismissed and subject to legal action.

5.2 Further Research

The researcher believes that children with disabilities (CWDs) are among the most marginalized groups in society and in schools, highlighting the need for more in-depth research to understand the unique requirements of each type of disability. This research would be crucial in providing the necessary support to ensure these children can access special education. A key area for further exploration could be addressing societal attitudes, particularly among parents, teachers, and the broader community. This could be achieved through awareness campaigns that involve all relevant stakeholders, including government officials, non-governmental organizations, and international bodies.

Additionally, employing a mixed-methods or quantitative

approach could help gather more accurate data on the enrollment rates of CWDs in inclusive schools, as well as track those who have dropped out of these programs. Another important avenue for future research would involve conducting comparative studies across different countries to identify shared challenges in delivering services to CWDs. By doing so, countries could exchange valuable insights and experiences, which could lead to the development of more effective reforms at both the community and national levels. Further areas for research could include exploring the impact of teacher training programs on improving the quality of education for CWDs. Research could investigate how well-prepared teachers are to handle diverse disabilities, and whether specialized training programs enhance their ability to create inclusive learning environments. Another area to explore is the role of technology in facilitating access to education for CWDs. Research could focus on the development and effectiveness of assistive technologies, online learning platforms, or digital tools that support CWDs in the classroom.

Additionally, there is a need to examine the intersection of disability and other social factors, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. Research could explore how these factors compound the challenges faced by CWDs, especially in marginalized communities, and identify strategies to address these inequalities. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable to track the educational outcomes and long-term impacts of special education on CWDs, assessing how early intervention and continuous support affect their academic and social development.

Finally, investigating the policies and frameworks at the national and international levels that govern the education of CWDs is essential. Further research could evaluate the effectiveness of existing laws and policies in promoting inclusive education and identify gaps in legislation that hinder access to education for children with disabilities. This could include examining how funding allocation, government priorities, and local resource availability influence the implementation of special education programs.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that he has no conflict of interest.

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