2023

Perspectives on Instructional Barriers to Inclusion at Primary Schools in Jamaica

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Inclusive education, which is a global practice in schools, recognizes the rights of all children to equal educational opportunities, including those with special needs or disabilities; however, educators in low-income countries like Jamaica struggle with its implementation. This basic qualitative study explored teachers' and principals' perceptions toward instructional and curricular barriers to inclusion in primary level schools. The theory supporting this study is Bronfenbrenner's development ecology model. Research questions focused on educators' perspectives of instructional barriers to inclusion. Twelve participants from seven mainstream schools in a single region were interviewed. Data were analyzed using open coding to determine patterns, and the themes that emerged included mainstream principals' attitude toward enrolling students with special needs (SWSN), teachers' beliefs that SWSN has negative and positive impacts on them, challenges to inclusion, instructional barriers teaching SWSN, the effect instructional barriers have on students' performance, solutions to combat instructional barriers, strategies to mitigate parental, instructional and curriculum barriers, and the impact of the national standard curriculum on instructional barriers for SWSN. Recommendations include the need for strong commitments from the government, stakeholders, and educators to establish an effective inclusive education in Jamaica. This study will affect positive social change as educators and policymakers revise the curriculum to address instructional barriers for SWSN and employ strategies to remedy the same.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral dissertation to my husband, Ryan Peak, who has been a tower of strength to me through this process. There were times when I was overwhelmed in meeting deadlines or uncertain how to respond to assignments. With his prayers, unwavering support, and special phrase, “You can do it, Marcia, so do it,” I had the inspiration and momentum to advance to the next phase of the journey.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I give God thanks for His favor and provision in sustaining me through this remarkable journey. A commendation, also, to each person for the significant role you played in my completion of this dissertation. I could not achieve this milestone without your valuable contribution.

A special thank you to my dissertation committee for marshalling me through this journey. To my chair, Dr. Bailey your expertise, commitment, and prompt response to all my queries and concerns throughout this trajectory is highly appreciated. To Dr. Stacy Wahl, thank you for your thoroughness and expeditious posture in addressing all matters regarding my dissertation process. To Dr. Leslie Van Gelder, University Research Reviewer, I am grateful for your quality service in reviewing my work. To Dr. Jon Jones, ex-chair, for his mentorship during the former stages of the dissertation. Many thanks to the faculty members for their insight and time invested in my courses as well as my student advisors for their efficient service. I am also grateful to Robert Thompson, the editor, for his encouragement and meticulous service in revising my work.

I would like to acknowledge the Jamaica Ministry of Education for granting permission to conduct the research in the primary schools. Thanks to the educators who voluntarily participated in this research and those who sat on the expert committee.

At times the dissertation journey was challenging, yet also fulfilling and enjoyable.

As a result, I wish to extend gratitude to my family, parents, siblings, friends, colleagues, and church community for their unswerving support through prayers,

encouragement, resources in time, cash or kind; you made this dissertation dream come into fruition.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Inclusive education means students with disabilities have access to an education in a general education environment alongside their nondisabled peers (Pas et al., 2016). The Salamanca Statement (1994) serves as the guide for countries to establish national, regional, and international legislation to support and promote the education of all children in the general education setting. Specifically, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994) delineated policies and practices relevant for special education. Jamaica, as well as other countries, adopted policies in favor of students with special needs (SWSN) in primary education. Jamaica's Ministry of Education (MOE) mission statement, which states a focus on "Providing quality care and education for all children in an innovative, inclusive and enabling environment," promotes inclusive education for all schools in Jamaica (M.O.E, n.d).

The MOE established an inclusive education policy in 2008 (Tomalin, 2019); however, after 12 years of inclusion implementation across schools in Jamaica, full inclusion is still at a basic stage. In a situational analysis, Gayle-Geddes (2016) noted that the MOE was no closer to inclusion socially or educationally and showed no evidence of supplementary enrolment of SWSN in mainstream schools, and negative social stigma toward disability remains (Tomalin, 2019). In addition, the author indicated that with little inclusion in schools and segregation of students with special needs, teachers in Jamaica have not experienced inclusion and do not feel adequately equipped to facilitate it. Hence, students with special needs (SWSN) in primary schools are often denied equitable access to educational provisions in primary education.

LeMay (2017) explored the attitudes of teachers and administrators toward inclusion in the classroom, reporting that teachers often perceived that having students with disabilities in their classroom was a disadvantage to other general education students in that class. Larmon (2021) postulated that staff within the school, such as special education teachers, general education teachers, related service providers, paraprofessionals, and even administrators, are not sure how to provide the services and implement the strategies to allow students to make effective progress in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Furthermore, in this field of study, the perceptions of teachers and administrators' perceptions toward working with students with special needs (SWSN) in the regular classroom are essential for students' achievement. Therefore, it was imperative to examine educators' perceptions toward inclusion of SWSN into regular classrooms.

My study investigated teachers' and principals' perceptions of instructional and curricular barriers to inclusion at primary schools in Jamaica. Information garnered from this study may be used by policy makers to improve curriculum development for SWSN in an inclusive setting. The results may also provide awareness to teachers, administrators, and teacher training colleges on relevant programs and training required to mitigate barriers to instructional and curricular practice in regular schools. Moreover, it may impact teachers' and administrators' perspectives regarding inclusion education.

In this chapter, I present the research overview, including a brief discussion of the background of the Jamaican educational system regarding special education in a mainstream setting, as well as a presentation of the recent literature on related topics.

Additionally, I examine the research problem and purpose. I also explain the research questions and conceptual framework of the study and present definitions specific to the research to enhance lucidity and understanding. Finally, I outline the scope, delimitations, and limitations of this study, as well as its potential significance.

Background

The Jamaica Ministry of Education is the government entity responsible for the management and administration of public education in Jamaica. It provides the framework for the efficient functioning of more than 1,000 public educational institutions that serve over 100,000 students and over 20,000 teachers (Jamaica Ministry of Education, 2021). Students are admitted to primary level educational institutions at age six, where instruction is given in English, and students remain there between the ages of six and 12. Primary education is offered in grades one through six of primary and preparatory schools. The six years of primary school education in Jamaica are compulsory and free, but the cost varies for students attending preparatory schools (Jamaica Ministry of Education, 2021). Students are required to take the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) assessment at various grade levels in the primary schools, and special accommodation is made for SWSN to take the PEP assessments in the regular classrooms.

In 2004, a task force recommended that children with special needs should be included in regular classrooms (Task Force on Educational Reform Jamaica, 2004). Since then, the government has been working on educational services, which include the draft of the special education policy (2015), to promote inclusion education for SWSN. In the

academic year 2015-2016, the Special Education Curriculum was provided to 3,402 SWSN (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2017). In this study, I included the perceptions of teachers and principals on PEP Assessment, as well as the Special Education Curriculum regarding instructional and curriculum barriers to inclusion for SWSN at the primary level.

Local research delineated the issue of teachers' attitude and concern towards inclusive education. Samms (2017) explored 191 primary education teachers' self-efficacy attitudes and concerns toward the practice of inclusion; data were collected through questionnaires in public, private, rural, and urban schools in three parishes in Jamaica. Samms (2017) used Albert Bandura's social learning theory to examine the predictive relationship between teachers at the different grade levels, types of school, teachers' attitude to inclusion, the level of inclusion training, and the results of self-efficacy for inclusive practices. In addition, Samms postulated that further research is needed to understand the barriers to inclusive education in Jamaica and to examine more deeply the specific categories of inclusion that special needs teachers may have adverse attitudes and why they have these attitudes (Samms, 2017).

In a qualitative situation analysis, Wilson-Scott (2018) reported on the issue of access and inequality that people with disabilities face in gaining equal access to education in Jamaica. Findings revealed that primary education is the highest educational attainment for most persons with disabilities and there was low educational achievement and limited access to services for the same populace, especially in the rural areas (Wilson-Scott, 2018). Gaps in services included, but were not limited to, inadequate

specialized schools and financial benefits at the primary level, along with disparity in specialized services in geographical spread. In 2011, the World Health Organization conducted a study among 100 primary and high schools in Jamaica to assess the levels of access and inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the Jamaican education system. Researchers found that although many respondents perceived that education is an intrinsic right, and that children with disabilities should be integrated within the general education system, there are significant barriers to full access and integration of children with disabilities into these institutions (Morris, 2011).

The challenges pertaining to access and inclusion also extended to the low number of schools with teachers who are specially trained or sensitized to engage students with disabilities. The study revealed significant gaps in teacher training, accessible buildings and infrastructure, and available communicative and assistive technologies, which are recognized as critical measures of access for PWDs (WHO, 2011). In addition, Wilson (2018) posited that the current primary curriculum in Jamaica should be revised to better identify intellectual delays or learning challenges, and to respond to them through intervention strategies. This research clearly identified the gaps SWSN face, which may be considered part of the problem statement for exploring instructional barriers to inclusion and mainstream education at primary schools in Jamaica.

According to Tomalin (2019), differences in attitudes and self-efficacy exist among Jamaican teachers regarding inclusion after coteaching in an inclusive classroom. In teacher training colleges, subject lecturers rarely hold any teaching qualifications,

training is always lecture-style, and all teacher practicums are assessed in traditional classrooms in mainstream schools (Samms, 2018). Morris and Henderson's (2016) study of *Empowerment of Children with Disabilities in Jamaica* reported that barriers such as negative attitudes and inadequate teacher training appear were the main causes for the lack of facilitation of inclusion, despite new and inclusive educational policies. They also reported that this phenomenon is common in other countries. The findings from this research are significant because they point out influential barriers to instructional strategies to inclusion for students in special needs in mainstream classes, which enhanced the depth of my study.

Additionally, several studies examined the perceptions of teachers and administrators concerning inclusion and barriers that students with special needs encounter in regular classrooms (Brennan et al., 2019; LeMay, 2017; Moriña & Orozco, 2019; Sharma et al**.,** 2019). Sharma et al. (2019) established that barriers at the micro, meso, and macro levels did impact inclusion education. Further, teachers' responses toward inclusion are classified as a barrier at the micro level (Sharma et al., 2019). Regardless of teachers' willingness to include learners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, teachers often feel ill-equipped to teach students with special educational needs, both in terms of their training and access to teaching resources (Sharma & Michael, 2017). At the meso level, one of the barriers is the negative attitude of people in the community, while a macro barrier shows inadequate funding allocated for inclusive education from the regional, national, and provincial levels. In addition to the findings, two critical aspects that require serious attention are the curriculum and pedagogy that

would be suitable for in-service and preservice educators to learn. The study confirms the possible implications for policymakers, curriculum developers, researchers, and funding agencies supporting inclusion education in the Jamaica education system.

Understanding teachers' perspectives on inclusive pedagogy in primary education is a vital step in supporting the teaching learning process. Moriña and Orozco (2019) described the beliefs, knowledge, designs, and actions of primary education teachers who carry out inclusive pedagogy. Findings from the study by Moriña and Orozco (2019) show the positive perceptions teachers have concerning inclusion education, including claims by teachers who carry out inclusive pedagogy, that they need to establish a stronger bond with the families, while other teachers of primary education and universities seek to develop synergies. This finding is aligned with studies by Binkhorst et al. (2015), Brennan et al. (2019), and Haironet et al. (2015), who stated that support networks must be created to build a collective and purposeful teaching leadership that promotes a true collaborative culture. Further study is required to identify successful examples of teachers practicing inclusion. These examples may be used in case studies that inspire others and transform their way of thinking, being, and action, with the goal of ensuring that all students participate in their classrooms.

As evidenced in the literature, teachers were given support to facilitate inclusive education. Brennan et al. (2019) explored how primary school teachers in the Republic of Ireland were supported to enact inclusive pedagogy to meet the needs of learners with special educational needs (SEN) in ways that avoid stigmatization. The researchers' findings provided a model of how critical dialogue and public sharing of work in a

Professional Learning Community (PLC) can support teachers to contribute to the goal of equality for all learners. This study showed that the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action (IPAA) can support new and experienced teachers to enact inclusive pedagogy with positive outcomes for teachers and learners.

The Jamaica Policy on Special Education (2015) is a draft that was submitted to the Jamaican Cabinet in 2017 and currently awaits approval. The policy highlighted findings from a situational analysis conducted on children with disabilities. Census figures reported on approximately 445 teachers employed in special education institutions, including 121 of whom trained in special education (Jamaica Policy on Special Education, 2015). Students were served in approximately 44 independent and government facilities at the preschool, primary, secondary levels, and one postsecondary vocational training facility across the island. Findings from the research included the demand for special education services to be provided for the myriad of administrative, instructional, corrective, therapeutic, and professional needs to service the field adequately (Jamaica Policy on Special Education, 2015). Students with special needs were emphasized, as were the limitation of resources to address students' needs appropriately and the insufficient number of qualified teachers placed in mainstream schools to work with special needs students. The data from this research may provide policymakers with solutions to the dilemma facing those in this field of study. Although researchers have investigated Jamaican teacher and administrator concerns toward inclusion in primary schools, the topic has not been explored as it relates to the instructional and curricular barriers that may impact inclusive education for primary

schools in Jamaica. In this study, I explored the perceptions of teachers and administrators related to these instructional barriers to help fill the gap in the literature.

Problem Statement

The specific research problem that I addressed through this study is the instructional and curriculum barriers to inclusion for students with special needs (SWSN) at primary schools in Jamaica. The Special Education Unit of the Ministry of Education implements a curriculum for students with moderate to profound intellectual disability to help fill the instructional gap in schools; however, Wilson (2018) noted that the current primary curriculum in Jamaica should be revised to better identify intellectual delays or learning challenges and then respond to them using intervention strategies. According to Sharma et al. (2019), two critical aspects in inclusion education that requires serious attention are the curriculum and pedagogy that would be suitable for in-service and preservice educators to learn. Research done by Moriña and Orozco (2019) showed that the curriculum used by the teachers is flexible but not modified to meet the needs of special needs children in the regular classroom. Instead, the curriculum is adapted to the reality of the classroom, considering students with special education needs (Moriña & Orozco, 2019). In the Jamaican context, if the curriculum barriers are not addressed in the primary schools, then inadequate instructional and learning support for students with special needs may lead to underachievement. One of the problems faced by students with special needs (SWSN) is low student academic performance at the primary levels (Jamaica Ministry of Education Draft Special Education Policy, 2015). In 2021, a total of 4,420 students in the private schools sat for Primary Exit Profile (PEP) exams, as well as

32,858 students in the public schools. Only 27 SWSN registered for the PEP exam (MOE PEP Press Conference, 2021). The SWSN low performance at the primary level may be a result or implication of the primary curriculum. Wilson (2018) mentioned that it needs revision.

Administrators have a critical role to promote inclusion and to ensure no child is left behind in the education system. The reluctance of some principals toward integration of students with disabilities at their schools is seen as a barrier to equitable access to education because it infringes on the rights of the child (Jamaica Ministry of Education Draft Special Education Policy, 2015). DeMatthews et al. (2021) asserted that principals can feel torn between creating inclusive schools while also dealing with restrictive district directives, resource deficits, teacher resistance, and disgruntled parents (Frick et al., 2013). These dilemmas are clear indication that students with special needs in primary schools are often denied equitable access to educational provisions at the primary level, and that such barriers should be addressed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and principals toward instructional and curricular barriers to inclusion for students with special needs in schools at the primary level. The findings from this research may delineate the current micro, meso, and macro barriers that affect inclusion instruction for students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms, along with the intention to heighten governance awareness that such gaps exist. The study may contribute to other scholars' addressing the problem of instructional barriers to inclusion

and offer recommendations of programs and services to help meet the needs of students with special needs (SWSN) in mainstream schools. Ferguson et al. (2000, as cited in Daniel, 2020) believed that regular education classes can provide an environment in which students with special needs have more opportunities to learn and make educational progress in academic achievement.

Research Questions

The following research questions informed my study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of teachers toward instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs in primary schools in Jamaica?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of principals toward instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs in primary schools in Jamaica?

RQ3: What kinds of instructional barriers to inclusion are created by the current primary curriculum?

Conceptual Framework

The theory that grounds this study is Bronfenbrenner's development ecology model (1979). It is applicable to micro, meso, and macro barriers that are significant to teachers' and administrators' perspectives on instructional and curriculum barriers to inclusion in Jamaican primary schools. Bronfenbrenner divided the environment into five systems: the microsystems, mesosystem, ecosystem**,** macrosystem, and the chronosystem; however, I elaborated on the microsystems, mesosystem, and macrosystem in correlation to teachers' and principals' perceptions toward inclusion.

In Bronfenbrenner's model, the microsystem refers to the setting in which the individual lives. These contexts include family, peers, school, and neighborhoods. Most of the direct interactions with parents, peers, and teachers take place in the microsystem. For example, each representative in the microsystem contributes to the student's development, and the interactions with parents, siblings, or the neighborhood may exert negative or positive influence on the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This outcome may contribute to increasing instructional barriers to the learner if the teachers and principals mismanaged the child's negative attitudes while the child was at school.

The mesosystem refers to relations among microsystems or connections among contexts. For example, children whose parents have rejected them may have difficulty developing positive relations with teachers. This scenario may negatively impact teachers' perceptions on instruction and curriculum while working with SWSN in mainstream classes. The macrosystem refers to the cultural beliefs and ideologies, the laws and policies of the organizational structures, the political system, and the child's socioeconomic level (Maniram, 2015). In this study, the macrosystem consists of the service providers (society), the Ministry of Education, the Special Education Unit, the teachers' colleges, and the socioeconomic and sociocultural levels of the learner with special education needs. My study explored how these agents affect teachers' and administrators' perceptions in relation to instructional and curriculum barriers for SWSN in the regular school.

The logical connections between the framework presented and the nature of my study include teacher and administrator perceptions of instructional barriers for students

with special need (SWSN) in terms of the microsystem, ecosystem, and macrosystem. In the microsystem, educators play a pivotal role in the teaching and learning processes and encounter challenges on the job. For example, in the Jamaican context, educators struggle to adapt a mainstream curriculum to suit the needs of learners with barriers to learning. Wilson-Scott (2018) asserted that the current primary curriculum in Jamaica should be revised to better identify intellectual delays or learning challenges and respond to them through intervention strategies. The barriers observed in the curriculum should be addressed to benefit all learners. Maniram (2015) indicated that Mercer and Mercer (2005) mentioned the educator's perceptions of inclusive education are significant, as they can determine how learners with barriers to learning are accepted and accommodated within mainstream schools. The mesosystem consists of interaction with the microsystem. Nojaja (2002) postulated that many families remain uninformed regarding the learning areas stipulated in the National Curriculum Statement (Literacy, Numeracy, and Life-Skills), prevocational programs (practical skills involving gardening, cookery, sewing), and therapies (speech, hearing, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy) offered at the school, and are therefore dependent on the knowledge and skills of teachers and related specialists to ensure that the holistic development of children with special education needs are met (Maniram, 2015).

In keeping with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, I used the National Curriculum Statement to examine the perceptions of teachers and administrators to explore my research questions. The macrosystem includes all other systems and the societal culture surrounding the persons. Maniram (2015) argued that a child's personal

development may be influenced by the ideologies, values, customs, and beliefs that exist within the macrosystem. Hence, it is imperative for educators to be cognizant of these issues and prepare to address them within inclusion settings. Maniram (2015) asserted that special needs students exposed to poverty are more susceptible to underperformance in schools, which compounds the barriers experience in learning. Poor educational situations lead to the frustration, demoralization, and demotivation of educators, which has a negative impact on teaching and learning (Donald et al. 2006).

In Jamaica, the support service offer at the macro level should facilitate the MOE's addressing the curriculum policies in special education, thus resulting in better services rendered to special needs students in the mainstream and creating the opportunity to overcome the instructional and curriculum barrier faced by this marginalized group. I considered the three systematic levels (microsystemic, mesosystemic, and macrosystemic) of Bronfenbrenner's theory for this study to examine teachers' and principals' perspectives of instructional and curriculum barriers to inclusion at primary schools. The logical connections between the framework presented and the nature of my study include teacher and administrator perceptions of instructional barriers for SWSN within the microsystem, mesosystem and macrosystems of the schools examined within the scope of this study.

Nature of the Study

For this study, I selected a basic qualitative design because of the exploratory nature of the study. Creswell (2013) asserted that in the qualitative research process, the researchers focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or

issue. According to Merriam (2019), qualitative researchers find out how people make meaning of their experiences by asking interview questions, or through observation about the phenomenon of interest. To understand how educators think about the topic under investigation, I examined the perceptions of five teachers and seven principals through interviews in participating primary schools in region six of Jamaica, specifically regarding instructional and curricular barriers to inclusion. The qualitative approach that I undertook aligned with Creswell and Merriam's theories on qualitative design.

To address the research questions in this basic qualitative study, the specific research design included Creswell's (2009) disability theories. According to Mertens (2009, 2010 as cited in Creswell, 2009), disability inquiry addresses the meaning of inclusion in schools and encompasses administrators, teachers, and parents who have children with disabilities. Creswell (2009) further stated that qualitative research begins with assumptions guided by theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems, which also address the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. In researching the phenomenon of disability using Creswell's (2009) study, I constructed the theoretical framework of this study to include Bronfenbrenner's development ecology model (1979).

Merriam (2009) stated that basic qualitative studies are commonly found in education and outlined some characteristics associated with it. A major characteristic of qualitative research focuses on the researcher's interest in understanding the meaning people have constructed, which is how people make sense of their world and the experiences people have in their world. Additionally, Merriam (2009) indicated that all

investigations in qualitative research are informed by some specific theoretical framework that enables the focus of the inquiry and data interpreted. For example, in my study I used Bronfenbrenner's development ecology model (1979) as I am more interested in how principals and teachers think about instructional and curricular barriers to inclusion education and the process they engage in at primary schools. I designed the research to recruit educator participants for individual interviews and developed interview protocols to address the problem and purpose of the study. I interviewed 12 participants and collected data via one-on-one, in-depth, and structured, individual interviews with seven principals and five teachers from mainstream primary schools in Jamaica. Each revealed information that allowed me to compare similarities and differences of participants' responses to research questions.

Research questions one and two in this study explored factors associated with the perceptions of principals and teachers toward instructional barriers to inclusion in primary schools, whereas question three focused on the impact the current primary curriculum, National Standard Curriculum (NSC), has on instructional barriers to inclusion. For example, one interview question for a teacher was, "Describe students' performance level in the teaching and learning processes." An interview question for the principal was, "What are the barriers to instructional and curriculum for inclusive education at your school?"

I used a thematic approach to analyze the qualitative data. First, I analyzed the narrative from interviews and fieldnotes. Second, I condensed the data to identify codes, themes, and categories in relation to the research questions. Third, I presented the

findings from the data in the tables. Additionally, I used open coding to aid in sorting and managing data. This research design aligns with Creswell's (2009) studies, which refer to the researchers use of a qualitative approach to inquiry in the collection of data in a natural setting, being sensitive to the people and places under study, and conducting data analysis that is both inductive and deductive to establish patterns or themes. Merriam (2009) stated that a characteristic of qualitative research includes the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis and the process of induction. I combined findings inductively derived from interviews to provide themes and categories for the study.

Definitions

A list of definitions and terminology used throughout this study is listed below.

Curricular barriers: The barriers that affect students' ability to access and learn the content (Meier & Rossi, 2020).

Inclusion: Education environments that adapt the design and physical structures, teaching methods, and curriculum as well as the culture, policy, and practice of education environments, so that they are accessible to all students without discrimination. This definition is specified in Understanding Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Inclusive Education, 2017).

Inclusive Education: An inclusive education system is one that accommodates all students whatever their abilities or requirements, and at all levels preschool, primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational, and life-long learning as specified in Understanding

Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Inclusive Education, 2017).

***Instructional barriers*:** Instructional barriers are skills and curricular barriers that impede students achieving academic goals and learning (Meier & Rossi, 2020).

Least restrictive environment: An educational setting or program that allows the exceptional learner to develop and learn in an environment best suited to their ability in the same setting as peers and without discrimination (MOE, 2015). In Jamaica, students receiving special education services in the LRS access educational opportunities and experiences to continue their development without bias or prejudice (Draft Special Education Policy, 2015).

Mainstream settings: Mainstreaming is considered the practice of placing students with disabilities in classes and schools with their nondisabled peers (Nathan Ebanks Foundation, n.d).

Special Educational Needs (SEN): Refer to learners with learning, physical, and developmental disabilities; behavioral, emotional, and communication disorders; and learning deficiencies (Kryszewska, 2017). In this research, this term refers to students with special needs with documented disabilities who can be educated in the mainstream and receive the necessary support intervention services to aid their continued development (Draft Special Education Policy, 2015).

Assumptions

I assumed that the perceptions of instructional barriers were expressed by the teachers and principals participating in the interviews who had knowledge and experience

teaching SWSN in the regular classrooms at the primary level. I also assumed that the interview questions were thoroughly answered with clarity and honesty by the sample of inclusion educators. These suppositions provided the framework to understand the data as valid information for analysis in this study.

Scope and Delimitation

The scope of this study included 12 participants from seven schools in region six, which is in the southern region of Jamaica. All inclusion educators had students with special needs in the regular classroom. Some delimitations were highlighted in this research. For one, teachers who do not teach students with special needs in the regular classrooms were excluded, as well as principals working outside of mainstream settings. I excluded these educators because the data collection required for this study was within the boundaries of teachers and principals working with special needs students in an inclusion system. The purpose of this study was to explore educators' perceptions of instructional and curriculum barriers to inclusion for students with special needs (SWSN). The educators from the schools in the region in which I worked were omitted from the interview process, which I deemed necessary to minimize any form of bias. No observational data was collected to verify the teachers' and principals' responses on the topic; neither were students' perceptions of instructional and curriculum barriers accounted for in this study.

Limitations

A potential barrier when collecting primary data includes the lengthy duration of interviews. The main disadvantages of interviews, as expressed by Koshy (2010, p. 88),

are that interviews are time consuming. For example, the effect of lengthy interviews may result in some interviewees becoming distracted and uncomfortable should the interview surpass the allotted time schedule for the session. Therefore, this issue may bias their responses. The limitations to this study included the small sample size used to provide insights, as research cannot be generalized to all primary schools in Jamaica. Further research may investigate additional primary schools in rural and urban regions of the country to give a more comprehensive study concerning teachers' and principals' perceptions on instructional and curriculum barriers in Jamaica.

Significance

This study is significant in that it may help fill a gap in the literature by focusing specifically on development of problem statements by educators in mainstream schools. The results of this study may also aid principals, teachers, and in-service teachers to address possible instructional and curriculum barriers that learners with special needs experience in regular classrooms. These inadequacies can be attributed to educators having differences in their training backgrounds, levels of education, levels of experience, and understanding of disabilities (Cook et al., 2004). Policy makers may use data collected to improve or develop a new special needs curriculum relevant to the diverse needs of students, thus resulting in providing strategies, appropriate interventions to overcome such obstacles, and attainment of higher achievement levels in the learner. Education is a medium through which social change may affect inclusion. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994) recognize the rights of all children to equal education.

The effects of social change as identified in this study may also support the Jamaica Education System's maintaining international standards of children right to access educational resources and inclusion.

Summary

Chapter 1 delineated the significance of students with special needs (SWSN) to integrate with their nondisabled peers in the regular classroom under the auspices of the Salamanca Statement (1994), which embodies the standard for many countries to establish legislations to govern inclusion education. The status of the Jamaican education system toward inclusion in primary level schools is observed. The Salamanca Statement (1994) and the Task Force on Educational Reform Jamaica (2004) are both instrumental in Jamaican schools considering inclusion. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and principals toward instructional and curricular barriers to inclusion for special needs students in Jamaican mainstream schools at the primary level. Chapter 1 delved into 10 existing research studies from current literature to justify the research problem. Barriers to inclusion education in the Jamaica education system and beyond include, but are not limited to, gaps in teacher training, accessible buildings and infrastructure, and available communications and assistive technologies, which are all recognized as critical measures of access for PWDs (WHO, 2011). A Jamaican revised special education curriculum is recommended (Wilson, 2018).

The theory that grounds this study includes Bronfenbrenner's development ecology model (1979). In this study, I addressed teachers' and principals' perceptions toward inclusion and how they correlate to the microsystems, mesosystem, and

macrosystem aspects of Bronfenbrenner's theory. This study may be significant in that its focus is specifically on development of interventions by educators in regular classrooms. The findings from this study contribute to a more complete understanding of principals and teachers, with the goal of improving inaccurate perceptions of instructional and curriculum barriers that SWSN experience in mainstream settings. I present a more detailed examination of current literature related to perceptions on instructional barriers to inclusion at primary school in Jamaica in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review process allows researchers to critically evaluate other studies that relate to their topic of interest, while putting their study's outcomes into perspective (Winchester & Salji, 2016). The specific research problem I addressed through this study was the instructional and curriculum barriers that students with special needs (SWSN) experience at primary schools in Jamaica. The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and principals toward instructional and curricular barriers to inclusion for students with special needs with the intent to close the gap in literature, which is a lack of research on barriers to inclusive education (Samms, 2017). The analysis of the gap will enable readers to understand the meaning of inclusion and its correlation to the Jamaican education system.

Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. As an overall principle, it should guide all education policies and practices, beginning with the fact that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2009a). A plethora of literature exists concerning inclusive education globally; however, there is a dearth of information and research on the topic in Jamaica. While Jamaica does embrace inclusive education, there are barriers that impede SWSN and put them at a disadvantage in relation to their peers without a disability in mainstream classrooms. According to UNESCO (2009), lack of relevant policy support,

discriminatory attitudes toward children with disabilities, and neglect of their right to education are the major challenges confronting their access to schools.

In this chapter, I discuss the following: the literature search strategy, the conceptual framework, inclusive education, principals' and teachers' perspectives on inclusive education, instructional practices, instructional barriers, curriculum, teacher training and support in inclusive education, policy and inclusive education, and the gap in published literature.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted comprehensive research on the topic to broaden the scope of understanding on inclusive education at primary schools, searching the literature specifically for publications from 2017 to the present. When no current research was found, I expanded the search to older publications. The databases I used included Walden University's Thoreau Library, Google Scholar, thesis, and PhD dissertations, peer-reviewed journals, articles and research, ERIC Library Database, EBSCO Discovery Service, books on inclusive education in Jamaica, Scholar (APA), and international journals. Key words and related terms searched include the following: *instructional barriers to inclusion, inclusion and mainstream, special needs and mainstream, inclusion education, teachers' attitude and inclusion, administrators,' school leaders or teachers' perceptions toward inclusion, barriers to inclusion, primary schools*, and *inclusion*.

The process of data collection was as follows. When an article relating to the research topic was found, different colour codes were used to highlight the sections applicable to the study. The data were transferred from the literature to a matrix sheet

with details of the name of the article and author(s), the year, the theme, and page number of interest. I included a summary of each article and sub-topic assigned. The citations for the selected pieces were also recorded for future mention on the references at the end of the study. All resources were archived electronically with the exceptions of manual books.

The Conceptual Framework

The theory that grounded this study includes Bronfenbrenner's development ecology model (1979). This model is applicable to micro, meso, and macro barriers that are of significance to teachers' and administrators' perspectives of instructional and curriculum barriers to inclusion in Jamaican primary schools. In his theory, Bronfenbrenner divided the environment into five systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem; however, I elaborated on the microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem in correlation to teachers' and principals' perception toward inclusion. The microsystem refers to the setting in which the individual lives. These contexts include the person's family, peers, school, and neighborhood. Most of the direct interactions with parents, peers, and teachers take place in the microsystem. For example, each representative in the microsystem contributes to the student's development and the interactions with parents, siblings, or the neighborhood, all of which may emit negative or positive influences on the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This outcome may pose instructional barriers to the learner if the teachers and principals mismanage the child's negative attitudes while the child is at school.

Researchers concurred with Bronfenbrenner's theory. Sharma et al**.** (2019) examined the roles of participants who shared inside and outside perspectives of key barriers to inclusion, which hampered the progress of countries, and suggested strategies that could be used to overcome and successfully implement the inclusive education across the Pacific region. Sharma et al. (2019) posited that barriers at the micro, meso, and macro levels do impact inclusion education. Teachers' responses toward inclusion were classified as a barrier at the micro level. Regardless of teachers' willingness to include learners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, teachers often feel ill-equipped to teach students with special educational needs, both in terms of their training and access to teaching resources (Sharma & Michael, 2017). Further, McDonnell and Hardman (1989) postulated that everyone in the school has a role to play, but teachers are the most important players in the provision of inclusive education.

Another area of emphasis in Bronfenner's theory is the mesosystem, which refers to relations among microsystems or connections among contexts. For example, children whose parents have rejected them may have difficulty developing positive relations with teachers. This scenario may negatively impact teachers' perceptions on instruction and curriculum while they are working with SWSN in mainstream classes. Sharma et al**.** (2019) asserted that at the meso level, one of the barriers to discuss is the negative attitudes of people in the community. For example, in Jamaica, some parents do not want to share the results from diagnostic tests because they fear that they or their child will suffer discrimination (Gooden-Monteith, 2019). This scenario reflects a meso barrier to inclusive education.

Bronfenbrenner further theorized that the macrosystem describes the cultural beliefs and ideologies, the laws and policies of the organizational structures, the political system, and the child's socioeconomic level (Maniram, 2015). In this study, the macrosystem consists of the service providers (society), the Ministry of Education, the Special Education Unit, the teacher colleges, and the socioeconomic and sociocultural levels of the learner with special education needs. I explored how these agents affect teachers' and administrators' perception in relation to instructional and curriculum barriers for (SWSN) in Jamaican primary schools. Sharma et al**.** (2019) noted that a macro barrier shows inadequate funding allocated for inclusive education from the regional, national, and provincial levels. Gooden-Montieth (2019) postulated that financial constraint is one of the challenges facing the Jamaica education system. For example, in Bergsma (2000), a consultant to the Jamaican government made recommendations for the government to provide resources required to implement successful inclusion. Many of the recommendations were not implemented. The lack of finances and the absence of a special education policy enacted in Jamaica is a macro barrier that may impede instructional progress for (SWSN) in mainstream settings.

Educators play a pivotal role in the teaching learning process and encounter challenges on the job. For example, in Jamaica, educators struggle to adapt a mainstream curriculum, the National Standard Curriculum (NSC), to suit the needs of learners with barriers to learning. Hence, Wilson-Scott (2018) asserted that the current primary curriculum in Jamaica should be revised to better identify intellectual delays or learning challenges and respond to them through intervention strategies. The barriers observed in

the curriculum should be addressed to benefit all learners. Sharma et al. (2019) highlighted that two critical aspects that require serious attention are the curriculum and pedagogy that would be suitable for in-service and preservice educators to learn. Maniram's (2015) research indicated that Mercer and Mercer (2005) mentioned that the educator's perceptions of inclusive education were significant as they can determine the degree to which learners with barriers to learning were accepted and accommodated within mainstream schools.

The mesosystem consists of interaction with the microsystem. Nojaja (2002) postulated that, unfortunately, many families remain ignorant of the learning areas stipulated in the National Curriculum Statement (Literacy, Numeracy and Life-Skills), prevocational programs (practical skills involving gardening, cookery, sewing), and therapies (speech, hearing, physiotherapy and occupational therapy) offered at the school, and were therefore dependent on the knowledge and skills of teachers and related specialists to ensure that the holistic development of children with special education needs were met (Maniram, 2015).

Wilson-Scott (2018) described a detailed assessment of the population of persons with disabilities in Jamaica, including children. The researcher reported that the MOE in Jamaica has in place an assessment team comprised of a diagnostic specialist, clinical psychologist, and educational psychologist. Ideally, this team should be replicated across all the educational regions; however, at the time of the study, only one region had all three specialists available (Wilson-Scott, 2018). It was noted that there are six educational regions, and the limited resources available are in one region. Brown-

Campbell, a school psychologist, summarized that Jamaican education systems needed to put in place a cadre of specialists to include school psychologists, speech pathologists, and clinical psychologists who will be a critical part of the intervention team in the schools to deal with children with special needs and to offer support to the teachers (Riddell, 2013). These two illustrations in the Jamaican context indicated that the number of therapists available to work with students with special needs (SWSN) was lacking and reflected a meso barrier to instructional learning in inclusive education. According to Fernando et al. (2010) inaccessible school infrastructure, limited learning materials, limited capacity of teachers, poverty, disability, conflict, and a lack of supporting policy frameworks were the major causes of exclusion of children with disabilities from the mainstream education system.

I used Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to discover school and family collaboration in this study. The macrosystem includes all other systems and the societal culture that surrounds people. Maniram (2015) argued that a child's personal development may be influenced by the ideologies, values, customs, and beliefs that exist within the macrosystem. Hence, it is imperative for educators to be cognizant of these issues and be prepared to address them in the inclusion settings.

Maniram (2015) found that special needs students exposed to poverty are more susceptible to underperformance in schools, which compounds the barriers experienced in learning. Mentz and Barrett's (2011) study in Jamaican primary schools found that infrastructure and basic resources in schools were lacking and underfunded. Schools and classrooms were largely overcrowded, and principals were not adequately prepared to

lead the effort to create an inclusive environment. Based on these findings, it is necessary to validate the macro barriers the education system is facing at the primary level, thus affecting students' achievements in mainstream classes.

In Jamaica, the support services offered at the macro level should facilitate the MOE and address the curriculum policies in special education rendered to students with special needs (SWSN) in mainstream schools to create the opportunity to overcome the instructional and curriculum barrier faced by this marginalized group. I considered the three systematic levels: microsystemic, mesosystemic, and macrosystemic of Bronfenbrenner's theory for this study to address teachers' and principals' perspectives on instructional and curriculum barriers to inclusion at primary schools.

Literature Review

Inclusive Education

According to Samms (2017), as stated by Spaulding and Pratt (2015), the care and education of persons with disabilities over time has depended upon the ideology and cultural trends of a society. Therefore, the approach taken with persons with disabilities began to change somewhat from the 16th to the 18th century to the provision of specialized care, when philosophers began to conceptualize humans as autonomous beings with intellect and human dignity became valued (Kudlačova, 2008). However, it was not until the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century that individuals began to receive institutionalized special care (Jahnukainen, 2011).

Since the establishment of the CRPD in 2006, there has been a greater global thrust toward inclusive education (Bhatnagar & Das, 2014; UNESCO, 2007). More and

more countries are recognizing the importance of including persons with disabilities in the general education system. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994) delineated policies and practices relevant for special education and Jamaica, as well as for other countries that have adopted policies in favor of SWSN in primary education. The United Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and framework for Action (1994) recognize the rights of all children to quality education. In 2007, Jamaica as with other signatories from heads of 81 countries, signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Jamaica is bound by law to ensure the Convention is fully implemented and to take the necessary action to guarantee equal access to education and to protect the dignity of children with special needs.

According to the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. As an overall principle, it should guide all education policies and practices, starting from the fact that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society (UNESCO, 2009). Inclusive education is the "least restrictive environment" for children with disabilities. As such, it is the preferred educational setting, as specified in Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.** Least restrictive environment (LRE) is an educational setting or programmed that allows the exceptional learner to develop and learn in an environment best suited to the learner's ability, in the same setting as peers and without discrimination (Jamaica MOE, 2015). In Jamaica, students

receiving special education services in the LRE, access educational opportunities and experiences to continue their development without bias or prejudice (MOE, 2015).

According to Anderson (2017), as a signatory to CRPD, Jamaica has taken steps toward the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in society. Jamaica's National Development Plan, Vision 2030, has as one of its goals that persons with disabilities should be fully integrated within the society, have access to appropriate support services, and be recognized as valuable members of society (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2009). In addition, Anderson's research on Self-Efficacy of Jamaican Pre-service Teachers Working in Inclusive Classrooms reported on a study done on inclusion education in Jamaica. The World Health Organization estimates that 10% to 15% of each age cohort has a disability. This would imply that, in Jamaica, approximately 87,000 children across all levels of the education system have special learning needs. Anderson highlighted that the 2013 enrolment data from the Ministry of Education indicated that 4,142 children were enrolled in special schools across the island (Ministry of Education, 2014). Therefore, there are many students with special needs in general education classrooms, some of whom are unidentified or undiagnosed.

Morris (2020) conducted a phenomenological study on inclusive education in Jamaica. The author stated that, on a national scale, Jamaica has been implementing a mixed approach to the education of persons with disabilities. The three approaches to the education of persons with disabilities are present in the education system (Gooden-Monteith, 2019). From a legal perspective, the Constitution of Jamaica through the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms makes provision for education to be a right

to all children up to the primary level (Ministry of Justice, 2010). The Disabilities Act 2014 makes provision for persons with disabilities to be included in the general education system. Educational institutions must provide the support needed for persons with special needs to access the facilities and resources needed for education (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2014). From a policy perspective, the Ministry of Education Youth and Information has an overarching policy that "Every child can learn, and every child must learn," (MOEYI, 2005). This policy is meant to promote acceptance that persons with disabilities have the capacity to learn and must be included in the general education system.

Despite Jamaica's effort to implement an inclusive education system, scholars have different perspectives. Tomalin (2019) concluded that The MOE had established an inclusive education policy in 2008. However, after 12 years of inclusion implementation across schools in Jamaica, it is still at a basic stage. Gayle-Geddes (2016) noted that the MOE was still no closer to inclusion socially or educationally with no evidence of supplementary enrolment of SWSN in mainstream schools and negative social stigma toward disability remained. In addition, the author indicated that with little inclusion in schools and segregation of students with special needs, teachers in Jamaica have not experienced inclusion and do not feel adequately equipped to facilitate it. According to Wilson-Scott (2018), data indicated that persons with disabilities including children in the rural areas in Jamaica are at a greater disadvantage because they experienced low educational attainment, limited access to services, disparity in geographical spread of specialized services, and inadequate distribution of specialized primary schools. Based on

these findings SWSN in some primary schools are often denied equitable access to educational provisions in primary education. Hence inclusive education is not practiced in those regions and the need to understand the instructional and curricular barriers educators are experiencing in primary education.

Morris (2020) posited that in the Caribbean, as in other jurisdictions across the world, there are different types of approaches to the education of children with disabilities. Special education institutions cater to different types of disabilities. Children with disabilities may be integrated in special classrooms in regular schools, and children with disabilities may be included in mainstream educational institutions (Ajodhia-Andrews & Frankel, 2010; ECLAC, 2017; Gayle-Geddes, 2015). Morris (2020) further postulated that there is an international, regional, and national acceptance of inclusive education as the modern paradigm for educating persons with disabilities.

Much literature has emerged that examined inclusive education from an educational reform perspective. Sebba and Ainscow (1996) offered a definition of inclusion that described the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering its curricular organization and provision. UNESCO (2009) stated that inclusion is an approach that seeks to include persons with disabilities in the general education system within a society. Further, UNESCO rejects the notion of isolation and segregation unless the circumstances of disability are so extreme that it warrants special education treatment. The United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) strive for all children to have equitable access to education as a basic human right.

According to Sharma (2015), children with disabilities are less likely than their peers to receive an education: roughly 90% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school, while the few who do often attend subpar programs. "Equitable access" to education entails integrating children with disabilities into inclusive education systems rather than segregating and isolating children in separate institutions. Furthermore, Sharma asserted that inclusive education systems must provide sufficient support for teachers within schools, including a senior dedicated staffer who ensures inclusive practices and acts as a resource for other teachers, realistic and appropriate staffing levels, leadership and support from the school's governors, joint problem solving and co-teaching among the staff, and use of students' families and communities as resources. Sharma indicated that schools that cannot afford to fully retrain teaching staff could alternatively train one teacher per facility to become the central resource for learning support for the wider staff. In addition, Sharma postulated that curriculum and teaching practices can also utilize classroom assistants who can support children with disabilities as they learn and access building facilities.

Researchers' views on inclusive education indicated that teachers' reluctance to educate children with disabilities is considered a barrier to inclusive education (Ghouri et al., 2010). DeMatthews et al. (2021) noted that a principal "set the direction" for inclusion by ensuring teachers worked together, adapting organizational structures, and working conditions, fostering a culture of data-driven decision making, and monitoring teachers to ensure high-quality instruction is in all classrooms (Waldron et al., 2011). According to Jahnukainen (2011, as cited in Samms, 2017) in Finland, schools

previously employed a part-time special education model and slowly transitioned to the placement of the least restrictive environment along a continuum (Jahnukainen, 2011). Formal assessments or referrals are not needed for children to attain intervention. The main goal of the system was to prevent and remediate mild problems by focusing on reading, writing, mathematics, and behavioral challenges. Samms (2017) stated that, some countries have used full inclusion such as Denmark and Sweden, while other countries have defined inclusion as a continuum of services. This experience of inclusion as a continuum is used by countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States where the child is placed in the least restrictive environment along the continuum (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Stella et al., 2007). Therefore, inclusion can be defined by the way it is enacted (Odom et al., 2011). In these cases, inclusion is defined by the systems, individuals, organizational structure, and scope of service delivery options, as well as by the funding initiatives involved in the endeavor (Jahnukainen, 2011; Odom et al., 2011).

Scwab et al. (2015) conducted a study among 212 Austrian general education teachers and 128 special education teachers. The participants were asked questions about the types of special needs seen among their students. They were required to identify instructional methods used to teach the students and the frequency with which these methods were used. The following factors related to inclusive education were included on the survey: (a) positive and respectful school climate; (b) democratic leadership style of school management; (c) teamwork as well as cooperative and open teaching methods; (d) pedagogical diagnostic competencies; (e) performance assessment; (f) dealing with

challenging behavior; (g) expertise in individual subjects; (h) intervention for children with reading and writing difficulties; (i) intervention for children with dyscalculia; and (j) knowledge about special education needs (Gooden-Monteith, 2019). The findings revealed that teachers agreed with the methods to be used in the inclusive setting. Positive teamwork, leadership, and management were rated highly by the teachers. The teachers mentioned that teamwork was not used in their daily job. It was also discovered that teachers were untrained to work with SWSN. The authors concluded that teachers should collaborate as teams, which would lead to further change in attitudes, beliefs, practices, and recognition of the complementary competencies that exist between them. They also concluded that for inclusion to be successful, all the relevant persons needed to be involved: teachers, parents, politicians, principals, and students.

Characteristics of Inclusive Education

Although a plethora of literature defines inclusive education its characteristics need to be explicit. Anderson (2017) reported that there are three characteristics of inclusive education. First, students with disabilities are educated in the same classroom as their peers without disabilities and receive all or most of their educational services within this setting. Second, not only are these students physically placed in these classrooms, but they are also socially integrated within this community of learners through relationships that are nurtured to achieve full integration with their peers and teachers. Third, in these inclusive classrooms, students with disabilities are instructed using the same curriculum as students without disabilities but with adaptations based on their needs (Friend & Bursuck, 2009).

Benefits of Inclusive Education

According to Hayes and Bulat (2017), decades of research in the United States and other high-income countries demonstrated that inclusive education benefits not only students with disabilities, but also students without disabilities. Inclusive classrooms teach all students about the importance of diversity and acceptance. Evidence also indicated that students with and without disabilities who are educated in inclusive classrooms have better academic outcomes than students who are educated in non-inclusive classrooms. For example, studies such as those done by Cole et al. (2004) and Coser et al. (2004) showed that students without disabilities make significantly greater progress in reading and mathematics when taught in an inclusive setting with students with disabilities. The amount of time a student with a disability spends in the general education classroom is positively correlated with higher test scores in math and reading, less disruptive behavior, and increased future employment opportunities (Cole et al., 2004; Cosier et al., 2013). This positive correlation has been found in all students with disabilities, regardless of the type of disability or its severity (Wagner et al., 2006).

The Impact of a Segregated Environment

Researchers in several studies reported that segregated schools face economic, social, and structural challenges. Bulat and Hayes (2017) observed that researchers in more than 100 studies showed that establishing segregated, separate, and parallel education systems within a country (i.e., one system of schools for the general population and a different system of segregated schools for students with disabilities) is more expensive and less sustainable than inclusive education models (McGregor &

Vogelsberg, 1998). This outcome occurred partly because segregated school systems incur additional costs for transportation, infrastructure, and in many countries, on campus residences. For example, the (Labon) 1999 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report estimated that the costs for segregated school systems were seven to nine times higher than those for inclusive education systems.

In Jamaica, some students are placed in segregated special education facilities with a medical and or psycho-educational report indicating the documented disability and recommended services. Students are placed in a special class based on documented proof of their need for specialized instruction and support (Draft Special Education Policy, 2015). Furthermore, such students may be transitioned into the mainstream or alternative opportunities for learning as their observed performance dictates. No single concept of inclusive education applies across all contexts. Most fundamentally, inclusive education is the "least restrictive environment" for children with disabilities. As such, it is the preferred educational setting, as specified in Article 24 of the CRPD and many domestic laws, including the US Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Hayes & Bulat, 2017).

Principals and Teachers' Perspective on Inclusive Education

Evidence in literature delineated below reveal principals' and teachers' perspectives toward inclusion education in various countries including Jamaica, United States of America, Republic of Ireland, Egypt, and Ghana.

Principals' Perspective

Administrators, principals, and other leaders are typically responsible for ensuring that national and local laws are being adhered to, that students with disabilities receive needed support, that such supports are appropriately used by teachers, and that teacher training related to inclusive education is ongoing (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). The leadership of these individuals is pivotal for the improvement of educational opportunities for all students, especially those with disabilities or unique learning needs (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). Many studies found that administrators are as much, and sometimes more, of a barrier to including children with disabilities in the classroom than are their teachers. Some studies, including those conducted in the United State, Egypt, and Finland, revealed that administrators and principals may not have a thorough understanding of inclusive education and may have received limited training or preparation on how to run an inclusive school (Daane et al., 2000; Moberg, 2000; Sadek & Sadek, 2000).

Jamaica like other countries do face challenges with principals' preparedness and receptivity to inclusive education. Principals' responsibilities include guiding, training, and soliciting teachers to support SWSN in their schools so that this populace can work toward achieving common educational goals. Morris (2011) conducted a survey of principals in 84 Jamaican primary and high schools revealed that in 66.7% of the schools there were no teachers to teach students with special needs, and 88.1% of the teachers did not have access to training regarding how to work effectively with SWSN. In addition, 33.3% of the principals in these schools indicated that the principals are not

aware of the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, adopted by Ministry of Labour and Social Security in 2002 (Gooden-Montieth, 2019). The reluctant attitude of some principals toward integration of students with disability at their schools in Jamaica was seen as a barrier to equitable access to education as it infringed on the rights of the child (MOE Draft Policy, 2015). These data are relevant to the current study because the data shows the dilemma in the Jamaica education system that should be addressed.

LeMay (2017) examined the attitudes of teachers and administrators toward inclusion in the classroom. Participants included 183 teachers and administrators from three school districts. Administrators at these schools had mixed results about perception for inclusion in schools. Inzano (1999) surveyed 300 administrators in New Jersey concerning their attitudes toward inclusion. The survey population included 100 administrators across three settings: urban, rural, and suburban. The study revealed that 88% of administrators agreed that students who are delayed 1-2 academic years or who have learning disabilities should be educated in a general education setting. The discrepancy came regarding students with mild to severe disabilities. Only 17% of administrators said that those students should be educated in a general education setting (LeMay, 2017). Harris (2009) indicated that administrators with positive attitudes were more willing to provide opportunities for students with disabilities to remain in a general education setting. Administrators play a pivotal role in shaping the school climate as well as in shaping the teachers' attitudes toward inclusion practice. LeMay's study recommended that future researchers select one school district and provide administrators with more training on inclusion.

Research on inclusive pedagogy was dominated by scholars including Brennan and his colleagues. Brennan et al. (2019) explored how primary school teachers in the Republic of Ireland were supported to enact inclusive pedagogy to meet the needs of learners with special educational needs (SEN) in ways that avoided stigmatization. The research approach was a qualitative, single-site case study that incorporated multiple methods of data collection. Ten participants were recruited through purposive sampling and comprised eight mainstream class teachers, the deputy principal, and the school principal, both of whom were in administrative positions. Findings offered a model of how critical dialogue and public sharing of work in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) can support teachers to contribute to the goal of equality for all learners. This study showed that the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action (IPAA) can support new and experienced teachers to enact inclusive pedagogy with positive outcomes for the teachers and learners. The research is significant due to the possibility of exploring the use of IPAA model with the students in the mainstream classroom and to view whether the result will minimize instructional barriers to inclusive education, thus potentially improving students' learning. The implementation of IPAA may support class teachers in devising inclusive choices for learners.

Teachers' Perspective on Inclusion Education

Inclusive pedagogy engages all students to achieve academic success in a collegial environment regardless of their ability and background. Moriña and Orozco (2019) described the beliefs, knowledge, designs, and actions of primary education teachers who carry out inclusive pedagogy. The researchers collected data using two

semi-structured interviews. Eleven Spanish urban public schools participated in the study with 25 primary education teachers. The findings showed the positive perceptions teachers have concerning inclusion education. It delineated perceptions such as, teachers who carry out inclusive pedagogy claim that they needed to establish a stronger bond with the families, other teachers of primary education and universities to develop synergies. Binkhorst et al. (2015), Brennan et al. (2019), and Hairon et al. (2015), agreed that support networks must be created to build a collective and purposeful teaching leadership that promotes a true collaborative culture. Further study is required on acceptable examples of teachers' practicing inclusion to be used in case studies that may inspire others, transforming their way of thinking, being and action, with the goal of having all students participate in the classroom. The study is of significance because it augments other scholars' perspectives on the positive virtue associate with special needs students in the regular classroom, thus helping teachers to move away from the vision of negative attitudes toward having diversity in mainstream settings.

An abundance of literature delineated the impact teachers' attitude has on the academic performance of SWSN in mainstream schools. LeMay (2017) reported successful integration of students with disabilities into a general education setting were found to be affected by teachers' attitudes toward inclusion (Darrow, 2009) and are predictive of effective teaching in an inclusive classroom (Kuyim & Desai, 2007). In relation to inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classroom, special education teachers were more tolerant than general education teachers. The findings from

the study showed that the academic progress and teachers' interaction toward students with disabilities was influenced by the teachers' attitudes.

Students with disabilities who are perceived negatively by the teacher may be subjected to lower expectations, higher levels of criticism, and more negative attention (Bosch, 2015). However, some researchers found issues with the inclusion movement. Zimmerman (2002) stated that even though there are many educators who agree with the premise of inclusion, it can also create a backlash for teachers. Teachers often perceive having students with disabilities in their classroom as a disadvantage to other general education students in that class. Future researchers may conduct qualitative studies to delve deeper into administrator and teacher attitudes toward inclusion, as well as the types of training that would be most beneficial. Interviews could be conducted to allow for explanation and expansion of answers. The study also recommended more training on inclusion for teachers. This research is significant to the current study as it would be contributing to the body of knowledge needed to address the gap in research and teachers' perceptions of inclusion in mainstream classrooms.

Matzin and Nishan (2020) investigated comfort levels and attitudes toward people with disabilities, Nketsia (2016) surveyed 501 pre-service teachers from three public colleges in Ghana. Nketsia found that disability was understood by the pre-service teachers as an interaction between the environmental factors and the biological factors. Though some participants were susceptible to cultural and religious beliefs, positive attitudes toward inclusive education were found. Further, this identified the cultural and religious beliefs about the cause of disability were endorsed by participants to a very little

extent. Findings also revealed that only 25% of the participants agreed that religious and cultural beliefs influenced their attitudes toward inclusive education. The attitudes of teachers who had a slight influence from their culture and religion regarding disabilities were positive (Nketsia, 2016).

Matzin and Nishan (2020) asserted that a teacher's positive attitude is one of the success factors in inclusive education (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Nketsia, 2016). However, negative attitudes of teachers can develop as they encounter challenging students, and changing teachers' attitudes can take time (UNESCO, 2009). Teachers' attitudes have an important role in inclusive education. While teaching students with special needs can be quite challenging at times, a positive attitude can become a means to facilitate it. Although researchers have conducted numerous studies on teacher attitudes, they have reached differing conclusions. Studies investigating teacher attitudes toward including students with special needs in the regular classrooms in developed and developing countries yielded mixed results (Nketsia, 2016). Studies concluding with differing results are not surprising as special education differs across school systems (Monje, 2017).

Matzin and Nishan (2020) noted that teachers are expected to have a positive attitude toward inclusion. Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) explained teachers' attitudes toward inclusion as a level to which teachers have positive notions of teaching students with special needs in mainstream settings and accept this as a responsibility of their profession. This means that teachers' positive attitudes can make inclusive education successful. This view is also supported by Shade and Stewart (2000) who indicated that one of the main factors that influences the successful implementation of inclusive policy

is the positive attitude of teachers. Further, teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion model and children with special needs appears to be an important predictor of the level of success (Engelbrecht et al., 2015).

Cochran (1998) indicated that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and disability can have a substantial influence on the success of including students with disabilities in the general education classroom. For example, teachers are often more open to including students with physical or sensory disabilities than those with intellectual, learning, and behavioral disabilities (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Researchers have shown that the more opportunities teachers have to engage with individuals with disabilities, the more likely they are to support the concept of inclusive education (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). For example, a study in Egypt revealed that teachers who had social relationships with individuals with disabilities were more supportive of inclusive education (El-Ashry, 2009). Teachers' sense of their ability to teach students with disabilities should also be addressed. In some cases, the largest resistance to the shift from segregated to inclusive systems comes from special education teachers themselves who may be concerned about their place within inclusive systems and can have unsubstantiated prejudices against inclusion (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000).

Instructional Practices

Principals' roles in instructional leadership are significant to improve students' academic performance. Scholars argue that principals are responsible for instructional practices in schools. Angura's (2020) study on New Primary School Principals' Understandings and Practice of Instructional Leadership in Ethiopia stated that scholars

of school leadership assert that instructional leadership (IL) is an Anglo –American concept that originates from the effective school's research of the 1980s (Salo et al., 2015). The school leadership scholars assert that IL should be the central responsibility of school principals in every education system (Hallinger & Lee, 2013; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). IL is viewed as curriculum and instructional management and is focused on how school leaders contribute to student learning outcomes. (Hoadley et al., 2009). Scholars argued that principals are responsible for managing instructional programs in schools, which incorporates coordinating the curriculum, supervising, and evaluating instruction and monitoring student progress (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Researchers have posited that when educators effectively manage instructional practices, better teaching and learning is observed for SWSN in the regular classrooms. Kuntz and Carter (2019) theorized that for inclusion with positive outcomes to become a reality for students with extensive and pervasive support needs, key instructional practices, and instructional content warrant consideration. When evidence-based practices are implemented, student outcomes improve. The term, evidence-based practices, refers to strategies or practices that have been validated empirically to have a positive impact on student outcomes. Zigmond and Kloo (2011) summarized that general education focuses on group level instruction, while special education is modified to individual needs. Although differentiated instruction is a useful tool in supporting diverse student needs in a general education classroom, it is often insufficient to meet the needs of students with disabilities, as students requiring special education often need a level of explicit,

intensive instruction that is difficult to attain in regular education classrooms (Wilcox, 2020).

Vaughn et al. (2010) found that students with a special learning disability in reading require interventions delivered in small groups, with long sessions, over 20–30 weeks, utilizing explicit, direct instruction, active student engagement, and practice. Most elementary school teachers in inclusive settings would struggle to provide this type of instruction, even if they were trained, as they would have multiple students with differing special needs. Wilcox (2020) opined that full inclusion demands a level of differentiation that most teachers cannot achieve (Kauffman & Badar, 2016) and requires general education teachers from primary through high school to meet the instructional needs of students who need feeding and toileting assistance, instruction in braille and sign language, applied behavior analysis, picture exchange systems, and training in life and job skills, as well as intensive academic and study skills interventions. Wilcox's (2020) research on inclusion theorized that some students need specific instructional content and strategies that would not benefit most students in general education. Students who are eligible for special education are likely not to learn at the same rate as students without disabilities since students with disabilities often require a slower pace of instruction and more intensive, individualized instruction, with greater support, and more repetitions and feedback than necessary for most students in general education (Cooc, 2019).

Instructional Barriers

Many instructional barriers and strategies influence students' achievement. Therefore, it is imperative that educators understand how skills, curricular, and individual

barriers affect the teaching learning process. Anderson (2012) concluded that teachers must consider how students' disabilities affect their involvement and progress in the general education curriculum and the programmatic or instructional supports needed to enhance involvement and ensure progress.

Skills Barrier

There are three ways to acknowledge students' variability in learning. Meier and Rossi (2020) concluded that a teacher should consider two types of instructional barriers—skill barriers and curricular barriers, as well as address any individual barriers students may face. Skill barriers are barriers students face from year to year when learning new skills. They occur when students have the requisite skills to master the new concept but need support to reach the goal. For example, when teaching students to compose a paragraph, teachers may use a graphic organizer to support students in learning to include a topic sentence, three supporting details, and a closing sentence in their paragraph. Providing supports for a skill barrier is like providing scaffolding for students in their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Curricular Barriers

Curricular barriers are barriers that affect students' ability to access and learn content. To address and overcome curricular barriers, teachers must think about the learner variability present in the classroom and the context in which that variability inhibits learning. For example, using only a textbook to teach content will inhibit students who have difficulty with reading comprehension; similarly, lecturing alone to teach content will be an obstacle for students who struggle with listening comprehension. Once

strategies are in place to overcome curricular barriers, they can be implemented each year as needed and appropriate.

Individual Barriers

Individual barriers refer to instructional barriers that affect only a specific student and would not typically recur on a yearly basis. These barriers are infrequent and specific to an individual student. An example of addressing an individual barrier might be ensuring that a student who has limited speech capacity has an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device so that they can participate in a class discussion. Although the authors highlight how instructional barriers may affect the goal and impede students' learning, there is uncertainty of how Jamaican principals and teachers would perceive such barriers in the mainstream primary schools. Therefore, in this study, I provided useful information on instructional practices on using inclusion in the Jamaican educational system.

Inadequate Physical and Human Resources

The lack of resources in schools can create frustration for mainstream principals and teachers in their daily operations thus impeding students maximizing their academic potential as the appropriate resources are unavailable. Morris (2020) in a study of Inclusive Education noted data released from the (MOE, 2018) revealed that just over 130 schools on the island had ramps and rails to accommodate wheelchair users (Houses of Parliament, 2018). Morris and Henderson (2016) conducted a study of *Empowerment of Children with Disabilities in Jamaica* in which they reported that barriers such as, negative attitudes and inadequate teacher training appear to be the main cause for the lack

of facilitation of inclusion despite new inclusive educational policies and that this phenomenon is common in other countries. The problems faced by students with special needs in schools include limited resources to address student needs, a shortage of qualified teachers, and low student academic performance at the primary levels (Jamaica Ministry of Education Draft Special Education Policy, 2015).

Jamaica has taken minimal step towards inclusive education for SWSN at the primary level. Samms' (2017) study reported that Mentz and Barrett (2011) conducted a comparative analysis between Jamaica and South Africa considering progress with inclusive education and leadership. The authors found that Jamaica had made some commitments toward facilitating inclusive environments. For example, new schools are required to be accessible to those with physical challenges; the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) exam can now be conducted in Braille; and many children with developmental abilities now graduate high school with vocational or technical skills (Mentz & Barrett, 2011). However, Mentz and Barrett (2011) also found that infrastructure and basic resources in schools were lacking and underfunded. Schools and classrooms were largely overcrowded, and principals were not adequately prepared to lead the effort to create an inclusive environment (Mentz & Barrett, 2011)

Studies also confirmed that lack of appropriate resources in schools for SWSN were problematic in other country like South Africa and caused learning barriers. Materechera (2020) reported on the findings of a study that investigated perceptions of selected primary school teachers concerning inclusive education to gain an understanding of the connection between learner support and experiences in the inclusive classroom. In

Africa, 80 teachers from four schools were randomly selected to participate in the quantitative phase of the study, while 9 teachers from two selected schools participated in the site-based qualitative phase of the study. As part of the study questionnaires were administered to 59 teachers across four schools in one of the district municipalities and augmented by in-depth interviews with 9 teachers at two schools. Findings revealed that the major barriers to learning in inclusive education are time, classroom size, and lack of training in primary schools in South Africa. Farrell (2000) argued that mainstream schools' lack of time, money, and resources to provide education and training needed by learners with disabilities was a reality. Farrell showed that large class size is a problem that impedes the successful implementation of inclusive education in most of South Africa's mainstream schools. Another barrier to learning that Farrell observed is the lack of professional training and support. Teaching learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive environment is not easy; the necessary changes in instructional practices require support beyond the classroom and the local school (Nel et al., 2016). The research is significant to this study as it increases awareness to the different types of barriers to learning in inclusive education in another country, which may contribute to how similar barriers may mitigate instructional barriers to inclusive learning in Jamaica.

The *Jamaica Policy on Special Education* (2015) is a draft that was submitted to the Jamaica Cabinet in 2017 and currently awaits its approval. The policy was based on a study from a situational analysis done on children with disabilities. Census figures report approximately 445 teachers employed in special education institutions and 121 were trained in special education. Students were served in approximately 44 independent and

government facilities at the pre-school, primary, secondary levels, and one postsecondary vocational training facility across the island (Jamaica Ministry of Education Draft Special Education Policy, 2015). Findings from the research included the demand for special education services to provide for the myriad of administrative, instructional, corrective, therapeutic and professional needs to service the field adequately. The problems faced by special needs students were emphasized, including the limitation of resources to address students' needs appropriately, insufficient qualified teachers placed in mainstream schools to work with SWSN, and the Ministry of Education's concern for students' not meeting key performance standards, which resulted in underperformance at the primary and secondary levels.

SWSN do not learn at the same pace as their peers. As a result, class size and available learning resources impact learning outcome for students with special needs. Mentz and Barrett (2011) affirmed the negative impact overcrowded classrooms and lack of resources SWSN have in Jamaican schools, despite the myriad of policies and documentations available on special education and inclusion. Morris and Henderson (2015) and Gooden-Monteith (2019) reported on the absence of technological support in the classrooms to accommodate persons with disabilities.

Assistive technology is instrumental in facilitating progressive learning for SWSN. Hayes and Butal (2017) noted that assistive technology devices can help students to access information and be successful in the classroom. Currently, only five to 15 percent of children with disabilities in low-income countries have access to assistive technologies or assistive devices (Saebones et al., 2015). Furthermore, many countries

may be using severely outdated technology; for example, teaching students to write Braille using slates and stylus tablets rather than Braillers. A mandate to make assistive technology devices available to students is clearly stated within the CRPD, and countries that are developing specific domestic laws should consider including a specific reference to assistive technology. Another source of assistive aid is text-to-speech software. According to Meier and Rossi (2020) text-to-speech software (i.e., software that reads words aloud) can be useful in instructional practices. If the goal of the lesson is for students with literacy challenges or speech impediment to discuss the water cycle, then using text-to-speech to support students in accessing a science textbook to learn content and engage in the discussion about what they learned, is appropriate. Here, using text-to-speech does not diminish the challenge as the goal is to learn the content and discuss it, not to read the textbook.

Globally, children who are deaf are often not taught sign language and have limited access to instruction given in sign language, which affects their ability to learn and reach their full potential. Partly because of the lack of teachers trained to teach in sign language, an estimated 90 percent of children who are deaf worldwide are illiterate (Barriga, 2010). As with the right to assistive technology, the CPRD clearly upholds the right to receive education in local sign language. Inclusive education policies must underscore the right to receive education in local sign language for individuals who are deaf or have limited hearing.

Children's Diagnostics

Early diagnostic assessment of students' academic performance creates the opportunity to detect SWSN learning gaps and provide intervention programs to effectively remedy them. Gooden–Monteith (2019) postulated that there is no early screening and intervention program to detect SWSN at the early childhood level in Jamaica. Hence, many of these students advanced to mainstream settings at primary schools without being diagnosed. In addition, Gooden-Monteith indicated that Bowell-Howell chairman of the special education committee Jamaica Teachers' Association (JTA), conducted a study which showed that more than 50% of students entering grade 1 at primary schools do not have the readiness skills to start the primary school curriculum. The JTA did further research and made recommendations to the MOE to help remedy the problem. The lack of readiness for students at the grade 1 level in addition to having undiagnosed SWSN in the regular classroom has implications for quality instructional practices demonstrated by the teachers. Hence, there is a need to explore principals' and teachers' perceptions of instructional barrier to inclusion at primary schools in Jamaica.

Another challenge in Jamaica is that some parents do not want to share the results from diagnostic tests because they fear that they or their child will suffer discrimination (Gooden-Monteith, 2019). Also, some administrators receive the test results and do not share the information with the teachers. As a result, no individualized instruction plan (IEP) or behavior implementation plan is put in place to assist these children. Insufficient assessment teams are lacking to provide the services SWSN require in the mainstream classrooms. In a qualitative situation analysis of persons with disabilities in Jamaica,

Wilson-Scott (2018) reported that the MOE has in place an assessment team comprising a diagnostic specialist, clinical psychologist, and educational psychologist. Ideally, this team should have been replicated across all the educational regions; however, at the time of the study, only one region had all three specialists available. It is noted that there are six educational regions and the limited resources available are in one region. Hence, parents and students must wait for a year before they can access the same services provided by a few public institutions (Montieh, 2019). In the private schools, students can be assessed and diagnosed much earlier because their parents are in a better socioeconomic position to afford the cost (Montieh, 2019).

Scholars in the field of study noted that specialists are significant to support the teaching learning process for SWSN in schools. Anderson (2012) observed that the Jamaican teaching-learning situation is woefully unprepared to cater to the needs of these children. Brown-Campbell, a school psychologist, stated that Jamaican education systems needs a cadre of specialists to include school psychologists, speech pathologists and clinical psychologists who will be a critical part of the intervention team in the schools to deal with children with special needs and to offer support to the teachers (Riddell, 2013). Hayes and Butal (2017) summarized that in many low- and middle-income countries, support staff and therapists, including teachers' assistants, social workers, psychologists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists, may not be available in the classroom, and even when they are, parents may have to pay for their services. These support staff may play an important role in the education of students with disabilities. However, these staff members and their services should ideally be made freely available

and should work together with the general education and special education teachers to help identify students who have specific learning needs to deliver national curriculum-led instruction, identify supports and/or assistive devices that could benefit the student, and engage parents in student learning.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) recognizes that all students, with and without disabilities, learn in different ways. When the curriculum is designed to meet the needs of "average" students, it fails to address the natural diversity and backgrounds that exist in all classrooms (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). Meier and Rossi (2020) conducted a phenomenological study on removing instructional barriers with universal design for learning. The UDL framework promotes learning for all students through flexible instruction that addresses the four means for learning, i.e., goals, methods, materials, and assessment (Rose & Gravel, 2010). In this framework, educators proactively and intentionally address barriers in the curriculum, such as barriers within goals, methods, materials, and assessments that make learning more difficult, or even unachievable, for some students (Meier & Rossi, 2020). This approach is necessary because learners come to school with different backgrounds, experiences, and learning abilities. Thus, the traditional one-size-fits-all curriculum is not adequate to address the instructional needs of all students (Coyne et al., 2007). The UDL is one curricular framework proposed to accommodate the range of learners and to support all students in accessing and learning curriculum (Rose & Strangman, 2007; UDL).

UDL encourages goal, method, materials, and assessment as ways to enhance learning. *Goal*: When implementing UDL, the key is to make the goal flexible and clear. For instance, a traditional goal may state, "Students will write five facts about the moon." However, the UDL goal may be, "Students will express their knowledge by sharing five facts about the moon." In the traditional goal, the learning expectation is clear (i.e., write five facts about the moon), but it is not flexible because writing is required to demonstrate learning. The UDL goal is both clear and flexible. The teacher can design alternate ways for students to demonstrate what they know (e.g., create a video, write a paper, draw the moon, and label details). Methods are the "instructional decisions, approaches, procedures, or routines" used during instruction to help students learn the content (Novak Educational Consulting, 2020).

The materials component of UDL involves incorporating a variety of media (e.g., podcast, video clips, text) during instruction to keep students engaged in the learning process and allow them to access and learn the content. According to Meyer et al. (2014), the materials a teacher incorporates in the lesson must be appropriate for the goal and not reduce the learning challenge. Assessments also should be flexible and varied. Students who struggle with writing may demonstrate their learning by giving an oral report, or when writing they may be provided with scaffolds that support their writing efforts. Teachers must monitor progress using formative assessments to recognize and address gaps in learning as they occur (Marshall, 2016). In this study, it is imperative that teachers and principals address the goals, methods, materials, and assessments in the regular classrooms so that SWSN can access and learn the content of the curriculum.

Benefits to Universal Design and Learning

Researchers showed that when teachers utilize various instructional strategies in the classroom, they validate the practice of universal design for learning, thus enhancing the opportunity to implement solutions to mitigate instructional barriers. Kurtts (2006) revealed that teachers find UDL to be an effective instructional approach and that it enables teachers to better engage diverse groups of students. Strategies on how teachers can use UDL include the following (Rose & Meyer, 2002): *Use multiple strategies to present the content.* Use a variety of techniques, including case studies, music, role play, cooperative learning, hands-on activities, and field trips, and a variety of learning contexts, including individual, pair, and group work; peer learning; and field work. *Use a variety of materials.* To present, illustrate, and reinforce new content, use different materials, such as online resources, manipulative, and existing textbooks and supplemental reading books. *Provide cogitative supports.* Present background information for new concepts using pictures, objects, and other materials that are not lecture based. Scaffold student learning by providing a course syllabus, outlines, summaries, and study guides. *Teach to a variety of learning styles.* Build movement into learning and give both oral and written instructions for students who learn auditory or visually. *Provide flexible opportunities for assessment.* Enable students to demonstrate their learning in multiple ways, including visual and oral presentations, as well as written assignments. Universal design is instrumental in aiding teachers with a wide range of strategies to remedy instructional barriers in the classroom with SWSN.

Instructional Barrier Matrix

Understanding how to use instructional matrix barriers aid teachers in mitigating learning challenges in the classroom for SWSN. Meier and Rossi (2020) summarized that the UDL framework requires teachers to plan lessons that address the learning needs of all students, while the instructional barrier matrix provides the blueprint by focusing on the concept of predictable dimensions of student variability (Meyer et al., 2014). To develop an instructional barrier matrix, teachers should first consider the predictable student variability in skill and curricular levels they expect to see in the classroom in any given year. When completing the matrix, teachers should also include all strategies and tools available to address student variability within each curricular area. Thus, when planning a specific lesson, teachers need only to determine how and to what extent those identified barriers will impact the lesson being created, and which specific strategies are most appropriate to reduce or eliminate those barriers without decreasing the challenge of the lesson. In this study, educators facing instructional barriers when working with SWSN in mainstream setting may find the instructional barrier matrix useful because the instrument fosters proactive planning. Hence, the teacher may consider the barriers to learning that the SWSN may encounter and then design lessons integrating strategies to enhance student learning and minimize barriers identified.

Teacher Training and Support for Inclusive Education

Teachers' Colleges play a pivotal role in preparing teachers to effectively address barriers faced with instructional and curricular practice when working with students in the regular classroom. A plethora of literature revealed that graduates from Teachers'

Colleges are still entering the education system feeling unprepared to teach in an inclusive classroom. In this section, scholars' theorized, but not limited to teachers' self-efficacy, proficiency, and teacher education program in relation to inclusion education.

Teacher Colleges

The MOE is responsible for all teacher colleges in Jamaica. In 1989 a special education module was introduced to all teacher colleges to provide teachers-in-training with an understanding of the needs of exceptional learner and to equip them with some strategies for working with this population. Full certification is offered at Mico Teachers' College and Sam Sharpe Teachers' College. Some tertiary institutions offer selected courses in this field (MOE Draft Special Education Policy, 2015). Sharma (2015) found that inadequate teacher training and knowledge is a significant barrier to the transition to fully inclusive classroom. Meredith, education project coordinator at the MOE, indicated that there is a great need for qualified personnel to serve the students with special needs (Ministry of Education Jamaica, 2016). Morris (2011) indicated that there is the absence of teachers with the requisite skills to train and impart knowledge to persons with disabilities in Jamaica.

Philosophy on inclusive education with the support of teacher training in special education and exposure to experiences working with SWSN can contribute to teachers' efficiency and confidence level when teaching in mainstream settings. The Taskforce report (Davis, 2004) outlined concerns in the Jamaican education system and highlighted the inadequate preparation of teachers in training to meet the needs of the special child within the regular classroom setting. In addition, inappropriate teaching methods that do

not meet special needs are evident. The findings suggested that there is a correlation between teachers' instructional practices in the mainstream classroom and the type of training preservice teachers obtained at teachers' colleges.

Teachers' inadequate training in how to work with SWSN affects their facilitating inclusive education in the regular classroom. Gooden-Monteith (2019) in a study in Jamaica on inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom, showed the results from a case study involving 39 teachers at a primary school. The teachers' comments included but were not limited to: "an inclusive classroom might be beneficial to some teachers; however, I firmly belief that teachers should be adequately trained for this kind of classroom and should also be given support to meet the different needs." Others believed that, "Students with special needs should not be in a general education setting." One teacher responded, it is a bad idea that does not work and will never work!" Other respondents were more optimistic, such teachers articulated that "after doing the workshop on inclusive classroom settings and teaching, I am better able to deal with students who have some disabilities" (Gooden-Montieth, 2019. p. 61, 62). Findings from the case study showed that teachers are unprepared to work with SWSN in the regular classroom and teachers' colleges play a pivotal role in preparing pre-service teachers addressing this gap in the education system.

According to Tomalin (2019) feeling unprepared to teach in an inclusive classroom due to inexperience of inclusion is a common theme among teachers across many countries. Jamaican teachers are also shown to feel unprepared and inexperienced to teach SWSN with inclusive methods (Roofe & Miller, 2009; Roofe, 2018; Samms,

2018), as teacher-led instruction without differentiation is the only type of instruction Jamaican teachers have ever experienced and the only type they receive at teacher training college (Cook, 2015 as cited in Tomalin, 2019). Mangope et al. (2018) found that teacher attitudes toward inclusion only changed in Botswana when teachers were exposed to inclusive settings, although, whether the change was positive or negative reflected on their personal experience of the setting. Tomalin further posited that, these studies together with studies below are showing that the type of experience teachers have, whether good or bad is linked to their attitude and self-efficacy toward inclusion, positively and negatively. For example, Dupoux et al. (2015 as cited in Tomalin, 2019) discussed and compared attitudes to the integration of SWSN between teachers from Haiti and the United States. The group from Haiti became more cynical as their experience of teaching SWSN increased, while the United States group's attitude positively increased with their years of experience. This difference may be due to the availability of resources in each country, which may indicate that a positive attitude can exist without experience and that a negative attitude can be changed with a positive experience (Mangope et al., 2018 as cited in Tomalin, 2019).

According to Sharma et al. (2012, as cited in Gooden-Monteith, 2019), the change in practice that is required for effective implementation of inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom setting is contingent on whether teachers in training are exposed to special education and the philosophy of inclusion. Sharma et al. theorized that both preservice teachers and those who are practicing should receive the appropriate training in inclusion and diversity to improve their attitudes, knowledge, and

skills related to inclusive education. UNICEF recommends that teacher training curricula should also include child-centered methodology, teaching techniques in multicultural and inclusive environments, and strategies to support children with disabilities and specific educational needs with adaptable individual education plans (Sharma, 2015).

Schools and further education institutes in Jamaica are traditional and teacher-led (Cook, 2015). Consequently, inclusion with SWSN remains an educational theory for Jamaican teachers. In the teacher training colleges, subject lecturers rarely hold any teaching qualifications; training is always lecture style; and all teacher practicums are assessed in traditional classrooms in mainstream schools (Samms, 2018). Blackman et al., 2012, as cited in Gooden-Monteith, 2019, suggested that because teachers believe they are not adequately prepared to include special needs students, teacher training in the Caribbean region should be reexamined. According to (Sharma et al., 2015 as cited in Gooden-Monteith, 2019) changes may be necessary in the teacher education program to ensure that teachers entering the education system have both a positive attitude regarding inclusion and strong self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach special needs students in the general classroom.

Based on the findings from the Jamaica research, it is unclear what teachers and preservice teachers understand about inclusive education. This gap in knowledge calls for investigation to explore teachers' and principals' perspective on having SWSN in the mainstream setting and how to effectively cater to their needs. The knowledge gained from this study may enable educators; teacher colleges; The Jamaica Teaching Council, the teacher licensing body to train teachers; and the MOE to analyze existing teacher

training programs and implement strategies relevant to address barriers faced with instructional and curricular practice when working with SWSN in regular schools.

Professional Development

Professional development plays a key role in teachers' growth in the profession. Researchers maintained that providing professional development opportunities to both special and general education teachers is a necessary component in the creation of inclusive classrooms (Gable et al., 2012; Gartner & Lipsky, 2012; Muccio et al., 2014). Gooden Monteith (2019) conducted a three-day professional development with 36 teachers in a primary school in Jamaica. The training components included inclusive education, students with special needs and early intervention, co-teaching, differentiated instruction, coaching and mentoring, behavioural assessment and planning, and family and school collaboration. At the end of the session, a questionnaire was used to determine the impact of inclusion professional development workshop on teachers' perception of the available of resources and the collaboration of special education and general education teachers. The data from the questionnaire showed that much work must still be done to provide teachers with (a) special educator for the classroom when needed, (b) appropriate instructional material needed for educating students with disabilities, (c) a special education teacher's aide in the classrooms when needed, (d) parent support, (e) principal support, (f) smaller class sizes, (g) time to attend meetings about students with disabilities and (h) time to educate students with disabilities in the regular classroom. The primary needs highlighted on the questionnaire were the lack of physical and human resources. Such needs included technology equipment, greater support from other

teachers, more instructional materials, a structured curriculum, and time for one-on-one instructions.

The participants were also required to express their comments on the workshop and some of the respondents' feedback comprised of, "While I am willing to cater to students with disabilities, I would like to receive more in dept training to do so." Another teacher willing to persevere despite the obstacles wrote, "I think it is important for this to be done. It is extremely difficult, but I am willing to try my best to get it done." A teacher also commented that, "The current classroom and instructional setup are not suitable to facilitate inclusion of students in the regular classroom setting" (p. 69). The results from the workshop indicated the limitations and availability of resources to support teachers in inclusive settings and further highlighted teachers' perceptions on working with SWSN in the regular classrooms. The comments asserted by the Jamaican teachers on the questionnaire may be compared with other scholars' perspectives in the field of study.

Studies revealed that while teachers think they have the skills to create an inclusive classroom environment, they find it difficult to plan, prepare, manage, find activities and materials, and assess primary school students in an inclusive environment (Gaitas & Martins, 2017). A review of research noted that teachers reported that they feel unprepared to teach in inclusive settings and to meet student needs and behavorial needs, especially those that interfere with their ability to meet the needs of the class as a whole, leading to additional work demands (Gray et al., 2017). According to UNESCO (2007 as cited in Morris, 2020), teachers are therefore quintessential to this inclusive education paradigm and as such, governments must ensure that teachers are trained and equipped to

deal with the varied challenges of persons with disabilities in the classroom. Comparable results were found by Glazzard (2011) in his study on inclusion in a primary school in Northern England. The findings revealed that insufficient training, resources, and monetary support for teachers were fundamental obstacles to successful implementation of inclusionary practice.

Much research, including studies by Gooden-Montieth (2019), stated the value of professional learning for the positive impact it has on teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and skills needed for implementation (Deppeler, 2012; Forlin et al., 2014; Tindall et al., 2014). Researchers' findings outlined that professional development presentations give teachers information, and for them to implement what they learn in the classroom, they need rigorous job embedded professional learning opportunities (Althauser, 2015; David & Kuyini, 2012; De Simone & Parmer, 2006; Green et al., 2013; Reeves, 2010). Training and professional development to improve teacher efficacy has been studied extensively; overall, the literature shows that training is successful (Chao et al., 2017 as cited in Tomalin, 2019), but the feeling of self-efficacy may not last long or may not lead to the implementation of the inclusive strategies after training (Schwab et al., 2017 as cited in Tomalin, 2019). The goal for teacher training should go beyond the training and immediate feelings of self-efficacy. Ultimately, it should provide students and teachers simultaneously with the benefit (Escriva-Boulley et al., (2018 as cited in Tomalin, 2019).

Principals and Professional Development

It is essential that principals enhance professional development to improve teachers' instructions. Teacher's concerns about the implementation of inclusion's

resulting in a heavier workload and about a deficit in needed resources are not related to training but must be addressed by school and district administrator (Sokal & Sharma, 2014). The ability of the school principal to establish systems and structures that protect instructional time as well as program, monitor, and implement effective professional development demonstrates effective instructional leadership (IL) practice (Angura, 2020). According to Sebastian et al. (2016) school principals should directly manage professional development, school program coherence, and engage teachers in improving the school's learning environment. Principals in conjunction with district administrators are also responsible for ensuring that teachers have the time, resources, and materials needed for them to be effective in the inclusive classroom (Gooden-Montieth, 2019). Based on these findings, it is necessary for Jamaican principals at primary schools to equip their staff with knowledge and skills through professional development on inclusion practices as it should provide teachers with information and strategies necessary to combat instructional challenges with SWSN in mainstream classrooms.

Curriculum

Managing curriculum standards is one of the major roles of the Curriculum Unit in the Ministry of Education to guarantee students' success in national examinations. Hayes and Bulat (2017) asserted that national disability inclusion policies should explicitly state that all students should have access to the national curriculum. Too often, students with disabilities are taught only life skills, such as a basic understanding of how to do household chores and basic hygiene and are not allowed access to the general curriculum, which includes vital literacy and math skills. The authors noted that not all

students with disabilities can equally access the national curriculum; the curriculum should be modified or adapted to promote individualized instruction. Curriculum adaptation does not mean developing a separate or alternative curriculum based on a student's diagnosis, as doing so can limit a student's potential growth, even if unintentionally. The researchers stated that adaptation requires reviewing the national curriculum standards and determining how best to expose the student to each standard and related performance goal using accommodations. Finally, Hayes and Bulat (2017) concluded that curriculum adaptation can be an even greater challenge in low- and middle-income countries, where education supports are often limited. However, a shift toward national curriculum adaptation is emerging in even the most resource-constrained countries, and as more countries begin to expand their national legislation on inclusive education, access to the curriculum should be included as a key component of new laws.

Research enabled identification of the meaning of curriculum adaptation for SWSN in the regular classroom. Moriña and Orozco (2019) revealed that the curriculum was flexible and was not modified to meet the needs of special needs children in the regular classroom. Instead, the curriculum was adapted to the reality of the classroom considering students with special needs. The teachers believed SWSN can learn the same content even though they may move at a slower pace. Findings from Hayes and Bulat (2017) and Moriña and Orozco (2019), on curriculum adaptation reiterate the importance for Jamaica national curriculum to be reexamined to facilitate the best way forward to meet SWSN gaps in the classroom. This approach is consistent with Wilson's (2018) research showing that the current primary curriculum in Jamaica should be revised to

better identify intellectual delays or learning challenges and better respond to them through intervention strategies.

The United Nations 2018 Disability and Development Report stated: "In 2017, 88% of 102 countries surveyed had a law or policy mentioning the right of children with disabilities to receive education, up from 62% in 2013. Most countries, 65% of 88 countries, provided curricular inclusive of children with disabilities, as compared to only 42% in 2013" (United Nations, 2018, p. 92).

Over a decade ago, the taskforce project in Jamaica made recommendations that were instrumental in improving schools' curriculum. The 2004 Task Force on Educational Reform recommended that the Jamaican education system undergo a major transformation process to facilitate the essential skills and competence required for the citizens to possess a competitive advantage in the global marketplace (Primary Exit Profile Report, MOE, 2019). The report further stated that, several approaches to reform Jamaica's education system were identified by policy makers and educators through implementation of the Education System Transformation Program (ESTP). In 2012, a team of consultants along with the Core Curriculum Unit of the MOE revised the national curriculum for grades one to nine. The outcome of the revision produced the National Standards Curriculum (NSC), which was developed and implemented in 2016. The NSC establishes new standards for student learning as well as developing competencies in students that include critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. In addition, a shift toward a student-centered approach to learning occurred. The NSC is the groundwork on which the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) is set follows the same content. The

PEP is the final assessment that is received by each student at the end of the primary level to determine how well they have done at that level of the education system (MOEYI, 2019).

Another recommendation from the 2004 Task Force Report was a review of several of the assessment tools which the MOE has since enacted. A review of the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) began in 2009. In 2018, PEP replaced the GSAT. The conceptual designed of PEP employed the use of the Evidence Centered Design (ECD) approach for test and item construction, as well as Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) approach for defining the rigor of content and cognitive skills measured by the tests. PEP is a series of assessments administered to students in Grades 4, 5, and 6 which provides multiple assessment opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills based on the standards outlined in the NSC (Primary Exit Profile Report, MOE, 2019). The assessment instruments are aligned with the standards embedded in the NSC and elicit the requisite skills claimed, thus, enabling students to apply knowledge and skills with emphasis on higher order thinking skills such as problem solving, analysis, and synthesis (Primary Exit Profile Report, MOE, 2019). Wilson (2018) noted that the current primary curriculum in Jamaica should be revised to better identify intellectual delays or learning challenges and responds to them through intervention strategies. Hence, this study investigated teachers' and principals' perspectives of the NSC in relation to instructional barriers for SWSN at primary schools in Jamaica.

The National Standardized Test at the Primary Level (PEP)

There are approximately 250,000 children in the primary schools, and on an annual basis, approximately 40,000 of these children take the PEP. At the PEP Results 2021 Press Conference, Minister Fayal Williams, MOE report outlined: The background of the PEP exam: The full profile of students' transitioning from grade 6 at primary level to the secondary level in June 2021 should consist of a combination of students' scores obtained from the following**:** grade 4 literacy and numeracy, grade 4 performance task and grade 6 ability test.

Table 1

Grade 6 Primary Exit Profile (PEP) National Report 2021

School Types	Male	Females	Total
Public	16,627	16,231	32,858
Private	2,173	2,247	4,420
Overall	18,800	18,478	37,278

A total of 37, 278 students were registered to sit the PEP Ability Test. Of that number, 37, 139 sat the Ability Test, as there were 139 registered students who were absent. Of the total number registered to sit 4,420 were from independent schools or sat as private candidates and 32, 858 were registered in the public schools. Adjustments were made to the PEP six exams due to the unprecedented impact of the COVID-2019 pandemic on the education system. Research and proven psychometrical processes contributed to the changes made to the approach for instruction and assessment.

Placement and Scoring

The computation of the placement score for 2021 comprises of five tests: grade 4 literacy, grade 4 numeracy, grade 4 PEP performance task mathematics, grade 4 performance task in science 2019, and grade 6 ability test in 2021. Minister Williams (MOE, 2021) stated that the weighting option used for the exam was the fairest model. PEP uses the total placement score for ranking and placing students based on a weighted formula of standardized test scores. The weighting was as follows: grade 4 = 20% and grade 6 = 80%. The cancellation of the grade 5 performance task created a gap in the results contributed to the grade 6 results.

Table 2

Student Achievement in Language Arts

Achievement Level	Number of Students	Percent of Cohort
Beginning	5,910	16.4%
Developing	9,764	27.2%
Proficient	15,222	42.3%
Highly Proficient	5,068	14.1%

Note: Sourced from Primary Exit Profile (PEP) National Report 2021.

Table 3

Student Achievement in Mathematics

Achievement Level	Number of Students	Percent of Cohort
Beginning	3,791	10.5%
Developing	15.132	41.9%
Proficient	13,232	36.6%
Highly Proficient	3,921	10.9%

Note: Sourced from Primary Exit Profile (PEP) National Report 2021.

The PEP achievement level is ranked in four categories: beginning, developing, proficient, and high proficient in relation to skills and competency as outlined in the National Standard Curriculum (NSC). Students who perform at beginning level are

categorized as needed intense support in accessing content at grade 7. Hence, these students will undergo a psychological education assessment to determine the target program needed. Students functioning at the developing level are categorized as acquiring skills for grade 7 and need minimal support in accessing content at grade 7 (MOE PEP Press Conference, 2021

Table 4

Student Achievement in Comparison

Subject	2019	2021	Achievement Level	Grade Level
Language Arts	Over 50%	Over 50% (56.4)	Proficiency or High Proficiency	4
Mathematics	48.9%	47.5%	Proficiency or High Proficiency	4

Note: Sourced from Primary Exit Profile (PEP) National Report 2021.

The grade 4 results in 2019 showed that more than 50% of the students are at the proficient or high proficient level in language arts and 48.9 students were at the proficient or highly proficient for mathematics. The report also noted that majority of the students were at the developing level for mathematics in 2019 and in 2021 (See Table 2). The ability test 2021 assessed how well students can reason with numbers and words. The two skills assessed in this test are qualitative and verbal reasoning. The distribution for the ability test remains normal, and students are therefore performing at the expected levels based on the Ministry's assessment.

Students with Special Needs (SWSN)

There were 27 students registered for PEP 2021 with special needs. The unique needs of each child were assessed by the Special Education Unit (SEU) and the schools they are placed in were evaluated to ensure that they will be accommodated (MOE PEP

Press Conference, 2021). Findings from the report suggested that since the implementation of PEP exams in 2018 students at primary schools did not perform at the optimum level in mathematics and language arts based on Table 3. In addition, the 27 SWSN registered for the PEP 2021 examination indicates the significance of this current study to explore research question 3: How does the current primary curriculum impact instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs in primary schools in Jamaica? The answers to this research question should benefit preservice teachers at Teachers' Colleges, educators at mainstream, and policy makers in writing a curriculum to improve and address the methodology in instruction and assessment for SWSN. Such an approach should support this populace to perform at a higher level of achievement when sitting the PEP examination soon.

The MOE is concerned about students not meeting key performance standards, as underperformance is evident at both primary and secondary levels (Special Education Policy Draft, 2015). The lack of differentiated instruction to children with special needs in Jamaica may also be contributed to the fact that many students in the public school system are recording poor performance in the national standardized tests (Gooden-Monteith, 2019). Students with special needs who underperform may leave school after not mastering or even achieving any academic target mentioned on their IEP targets and students with behavioral issues tend to be expelled from schools (Gooden-Monteith, 2019).

Policy and Inclusive Education

To manage inclusive education, a country policy should reflect educational standards that explicitly define inclusion and avoid its being undermined by budget constraints. The primary audiences for Hayes and Bulat's (2017) study are policymakers and national-level education stakeholders working on education reform with the emphasis on low- and middle-income countries that are moving from a segregated system toward an inclusive system of education. Hayes and Bulat addressed potential attitudinal barriers, which have a considerable influence on the performance of students with disabilities in inclusive settings including but not limited to national policies and frameworks for inclusive education. The researchers highlighted that once a country has committed to the concept of inclusion in education, it is important to adopt national policies and laws. The education of children with disabilities and the importance of inclusive education are best integrated into the country's overall education strategic plan, with implementation strategies reflected in the national education strategic implementation plan (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). Through this approach, the commitment to inclusive education is clearly reflected in national policy and strategic planning in general and should be included in the education budget (Hayes & Bulat, 2017).

Anderson (2017) stated that the Jamaica 2011-2020 National Education Strategic Plan projected that by 2016 the special education policy would be in effect to promote inclusive education. Moreover, this Strategic Plan delineated that all children should have access to educational opportunities appropriate for their developmental age and stage; however, this goal is unachieved as, "special needs

students are currently underserved in the education system" (p.11). In addition, the author commented on Morris (2011) report stating that data on the issue of access and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Jamaican education system are "woefully lacking" (p. 6). Research on the subject has been conducted primarily in countries in which there are policies that have been developed to support inclusive education. However, this structure is not the case in Jamaica, as the special education policy is yet to be passed by parliament. This policy, which is anticipated to take effect within the next fiscal year, will, among other things, promote a more inclusive approach to education.

Researchers confirmed that finance impacts the practice or implementation of effective inclusive education. Gooden-Montieth postulated that financial constraint is one of the challenges facing the Jamaican education system. For example, in 2000 Bergsma, a consultant to the Jamaican Government made recommendations for the government to provide resources required to implement a successful inclusion. However, many of the recommendations are unimplemented. A review of the literature indicated that Mentz and Barrett (2011) acknowledged that strong leadership is imperative to drive successful inclusion and recommended that the government should place priority on teacher training to improve quality teaching and learning.

According to UNESCO's Policy Guidelines for Inclusion in Education, national legal frameworks should, at a minimum, achieve the following (UNESCO, 2009): Identify minimum standards in relation to the right to education, including physical access, communication access, social access, economic access, early identification,

adaption of curriculum, and individualized student supports. According to Haye and Butal (2017), developing an inclusive system implies a shift from seeing the child with a disability as the problem to seeing the education system as something that must be strengthened to better serve the child. It requires strong commitments from local government, ministries, administrators, teachers, parents, and citizens. There is a large gap between policy and practice that results from a lack of budget for general education (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). The gap identified in this research is one of the macro barriers that may be explored for the understanding of the topic I explored, *Instructional Barriers to Inclusion in Mainstream for Special Needs Students* at *Primary Schools,* and how it correlates in a low-income country like Jamaica.

Gap in Literature

There is a dearth in research on inclusive education in Jamaica and majority of the findings on the topic being studied were outside of the 5-year range 2017-2021. Recent research observed on Inclusion Education in Jamaica included: Inclusive Education Works: I Am a Testimony (Morris, 2020). Inclusion of Students with Special Needs in the Regular Classroom (Gooden-Montieth, 2019). Attitudes and Self-efficacy of Jamaican Teachers Toward Inclusion after Co-Teaching in an Inclusive Classroom (Tomalin, 2019). Inclusion in Jamaican Primary Schools: Teachers ' Self-Efficacy, Attitudes, and Concerns (Samms, 2017) and An Investigation into the Self-efficacy of Jamaican Pre-service Teachers for Working in inclusive classrooms (Anderson-Morgan, 2017). The common themes highlighted in these studies were:

- What is inclusive education?

- School leadership and inclusion
- Inadequate Special Education teachers
- Teachers unprepared for inclusive education
- Teacher's attitude and efficacy toward inclusion
- The lack of physical and human resources
- The Draft Special Education Policy, which seeks to provide access and equity in education for all students with special needs, has been submitted for Cabinet approval.

Based on the findings from the authors' studies, the data did not outline if the few SWSN that did the PEP 2021 exam at the primary level were in an inclusive or segregated school. It is also unclear whether such populace functioned at the proficiency, beginning, or developmental achievement level in the PEP exam. Even though researchers addressed critical topics on inclusive education, it is still unclear from the findings what educators' perspectives on instructional barriers to inclusion are. Thus, this study explored principal and teacher perspectives on instructional barriers to inclusion at primary school in Jamaica with the intent to contribute to the gap in literature.

The findings from this research may be significant because they may delineate the current micro, meso, and macro barriers that affect instruction to inclusion for students with learning disabilities in mainstream with the intention to heighten governance awareness of such gaps that exist.

Summary and Conclusion

Jamaica was the first country to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, (CRPD) in 2007, and researchers debated the slow pace at which inclusive education is advancing in schools. Gooden-Monteith (2019) stated that despite Jamaica's agreement with the Salamanca statement, progress in providing services for all students has been slow. Tomalin (2019) noted that the facilitation of educational inclusion across schools in Jamaica is still at a basic stage even though the Ministry of Education has had this inclusive mission statement published on their website since 2005, "Providing quality care and education for all children in an innovative, inclusive and enabling environment" (MOE, n.d). Data released from the (MOE, 2018) revealed that just over 130 schools in the island had ramps and rails to accommodate wheel-chair users (Houses of Parliament, 2018).

The abundance of literature on inclusive education highlighted the components of an effective inclusion program and how the same may be useful to support inclusive education in Jamaica. The meaning of inclusive education is defined as a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. As an overall principle, it should guide all education policies and practices, beginning with the view that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society (UNESCO, 2009). This chapter delineated some of the problems faced by students with special needs in schools, such as limited resources to address student needs, a shortage of qualified teachers, and low student academic performance at the primary levels. Teaching learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive environment

is not easy; the necessary changes in instructional practices require support beyond the classroom and the local school (Nel et al., 2016). Therefore, principals should place high priority on the provision of inclusion professional development for teachers to ensure that inclusion process is successfully implanted.

When working with SWSN, teachers may consider three ways to acknowledge students' variability in learning, and a teacher needs to consider two types of instructional barriers: skill barriers and curricular barriers, as well as address any individual barriers students may still face. If a teacher feels unprepared to teach in an inclusive classroom due to inexperience of inclusion, that is a common theme among teachers across many countries, including Jamaica. However, such problems should be addressed when teachers' colleges engage in offering training on the trajectory of inclusive education to all teachers enrolled in their programs. The studies also investigated principals' and teachers' perspectives of inclusive education. An effective inclusive system requires strong commitments from local government, ministries, administrators, teachers, parents, and citizens. The gaps observed are significant to the phenomena of study as it increases awareness to the different types of barriers to learning in inclusive education in other countries, which may contribute to how similar barriers may be mitigated toward instructional barriers to inclusive learning in Jamaica. It was beneficial to explore principal and teacher perspectives on instructional barriers to inclusion at primary school in Jamaica.

In Chapter 3 I present the research design explaining the rationale for the research study. Then I provide an overview of the researcher's role and methodology of the study,

including the participants selected, the type of instruments used, procedure for data collection, and the data analysis. Next, I discuss the issues of trustworthiness and ethical values.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and principals toward instructional and curricular barriers to inclusion of students with special needs in Jamaica schools at the primary level. The literature review in Chapter 2 identified that limited research currently exists regarding inclusive education in Jamaica and conclusions as to its effectiveness remain vague. In this chapter, I articulate five aspects of the research topic: (a) the research design and rationale, which include the research questions, research tradition, and the phenomenon of the study; (b) the role of the researcher; (c) the methodology, which describes the population, the criteria for sampling and sampling procedures, the relationship between saturation and sample size, the instrumentation and operationalization constructs, the procedure for recruitment, participation and data collection, and the data analysis plan; (d) the issues of trustworthiness, which comprise credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability; and (e) the ethical references, which cover the IRB application, institutional permission, data collection, and confidentiality.

Research Design and Rationale

In this study I explored educators' and principals' perceptions of instructional and curricular barriers to inclusion for students with special needs at the primary level. The research questions delineated were the drivers for this study as they contributed to the gap in the literature.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of teachers toward instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs in primary schools in Jamaica?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of principals toward instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs in primary schools in Jamaica?

RQ3: What kinds of instructional barriers to inclusion are created by the current primary curriculum?

The research methodology for this study was a basic qualitative approach. According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research focuses on the researchers' interest in understanding the meaning people have constructed, including how people make sense of their world, and the experiences people have in their world. The basic qualitative research model is applicable for this traditional study, as I attempted to understand general educators' perceptions of instructional barriers toward inclusion for SWSN. Information needed for the study was provided through the experiences of mainstream principals and teachers working with SWSN, which is the essence of this research. Furthermore, Merriam asserted that all investigations in qualitative research are informed by some specific theoretical framework that enables the focus of the inquiry and data interpreted. I used the framework of Bronfenbrenner's development ecology model (1979) to support this basic qualitative approach because I am interested in how teachers' and principals' perception of instructional and curricular barriers toward inclusive education correlate to the micro, meso, and macrosystems in Jamaican primary schools.

Rationale for the Methodology

Different research methodologies were investigated to choose the best research design for this study. Case studies address the full complexity of a research problem by incorporating multiple sources and types of evidence (Yin, 2017). The goal for using a case study is to describe an in-depth understanding of the context of a specific case (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). The case study methodology was inappropriate for this research, as I explored several principals' and teachers' perceptions of instructional and curricular barriers for SWSN in regular classrooms, interviews, field notes and other appropriate means with which to ascertain data. Grounded theory seeks to develop a theory about a particular population of people (Maxwell, 2005). Grounded theory was not applicable for this research as the development of a theoretical perspective was not the focus. Phenomenological method describes a collection and analysis of people's perceptions related to a specific, definable phenomenon. Its goal describes the meaning of the lived experiences of a phenomenon by the people who lived it (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). As such, the goal of the phenomenological design was not aligned with the research questions. Another qualitative design explored was narrative. This method utilizes the stories people tell about their lived experiences. The focus of the narrative approach method was not suitable for the purpose of this study. In addition, the ethnography method illustrates shared and learned cultural practices of a specific group of people (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). According to Reeves et al. (2013), ethnography combines and triangulates observations, interviews, and documentary data to understand

social actions. Cultural interest and the different number of sources to ascertain information from for the dissertation were not necessary for this study.

A basic qualitative design was the most appropriate method to use to understand how principals and teachers in mainstream settings think about instructional barriers in the regular classroom, the impact curricular barriers have on SWSN, and the ways in which the data collection from this study may provide information for training general educators in inclusive education. Ravitch and Carl (2016) postulated that qualitative research pursues an understanding of the way people see, view, approach, and make meaning of their experiences and actions. I selected a qualitative model for my research design because I recruited educator participants for individual interviews, so they may explain their perceptions of instructional and curricular barriers toward inclusive education in their own words during the in-depth interviews.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was to collect and analyze data from the participants through interviews. Ravitch and Carl (2016) proposed that interviews are at the center of many qualitative studies since they provide deep, rich, individualized, and contextualized data that are centrally important to qualitative research. In this study, I functioned as an observer who scheduled, conducted, and completed the interviews, prepared and practiced the interviews questions, and helped the interviewees felt comfortable. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the field notes were documented and analyzed. I organized the data to find codes, themes, and categories in support of the research questions. In addition, I utilized open coding to help sort and manage the data.

The data collection from this study has implications for how educators' perceptions of instructional and curricular barriers may better benefit SWSN in mainstream primary schools.

One threat to the validity of research results is being biased. Sutton and Austin (2015) asserted that a qualitative researcher critically considers reflexivity by clearly reflecting and articulating both their position and subjectivities in the study. The participants in the study were notified of my professional background, as well as the topic and purpose of the study. My experience of working in a segregated school for SWSN aligned with the research topic. Hence, there was potential for bias to be displayed in the findings. I carefully managed the data collection and analysis process as I conducted member checks for interviewees' transcripts, as well as reflexivity of my profession to avoid perception of the information's being skewed. In addition. I was not acquainted with the participant sample and had no connections with the primary schools the educators worked at prior to this study.

Methodology

Population

In Jamaica, public schools are categorized in six educational regions, and there are 144 primary schools in region six, which I selected for this study (MOE, 2019). I chose eight primary schools located in region six as subject schools for this research. I delineated the purpose and the criteria of the study to the principals at the respective schools and asked that they submit the names of prospective teachers who met the study criteria. The established criteria was comprised of educators who have worked or are

working with SWSN in mainstream primary schools. I utilized a sample of seven principals and five general teachers from mainstreams schools, pulled from the overall population of primary schools in region six. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008), the sampling frame is described as all the units that comprise the population from which a sample can be drawn. Working with this population helped me understand teachers' and principals' perspectives of instructional and curricular barriers toward inclusion for SWSN at mainstream primary schools. Thus, the population was eligible for this study.

Sample Strategy

I used the purposive method of sampling for this research design. According to Engel and Schutt (2010, as cited in Wilson-Scott, 2018), purposive sampling is used to choose participants who fit prescribed criteria for inclusion in the study, such as their knowledge of a particular issue of focus. The criterion for this study was inclusion educators with SWSN in the regular classroom at the primary level. In this study, the criteria I used included expertise or experience working in mainstream schools so that I gleaned interview subjects' perceptions of instructional and curricular barriers toward inclusive education at the primary level. Thus, the selected interviewees were appropriate for the purposes of the study because they met the criteria for the study. Additionally, the 12 participants' interview responses aligned with the three research questions. They also used the same curriculum within the same region, and these augment comparing similarities and differences in data collection from the different primary schools in relation to the research questions. I also utilized a demography form (see Appendix B) to

serve as a screening method to eliminate participants who do not meet the research criteria. A brief demography descriptive of the type of school; school's region; grade level; class size; years of experience teaching SWSN; training in inclusive education by indication of the following: (a) none, (b) some, (c) much, (d) very much); and the number of students the teachers needing additional support and participants' qualification were required of the selected interviewees who completed the demographic form. I exempted teachers and principals working outside of the mainstream settings because the data collection required for this qualitative study was limited to educators working with SWSN in primary schools.

Saturation and Sample Sizes

Baker and Edward (2018) theorized that qualitative research experts argue there is no straightforward answer to the question of "how many," and that sample size is contingent on several factors relating to epistemological, methodological, and practical issues. According to Sandelowski (1996), samples in qualitative research tend to be small to support the depth of case-oriented analysis that is fundamental to this mode of inquiry. Vasileiou et al. (2018) highlighted that the most widely used principle for determining sample size and evaluating its sufficiency is that of saturation. In this study, the 12 samples inclusive of principals and teachers were interviewed. The rationale for the small sample size was to obtain in-depth interviews with comprehensive and descriptive data trends to see how the educators react to the phenomenon from their perspective only. Data saturation was evident when repetitive responses emerged from the interviewees, when no new information was forthcoming, and when the analysis of data collected did

not yield new themes or ideas. Stressing that the constitution of the sample size, Burmeister and Aitken (2012) asserted that the relationship between saturation and sample size should provide the best opportunity for reaching data saturation but not be determined by large or small sample size.

Instrumentation

Merriam (2009) stated that a characteristic of qualitative research includes the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection. I collected and prepared all data and instruments for this study. I developed and validated an interview protocol (see Appendix A) utilizing an expert committee. The interview protocol encompassed the research and interview questions. The research questions focused on understanding the purpose of the study while the interview questions elicit information concerning the research questions from the interviewees. The relevance of the interview protocol extends to the quality questions prepared on the topic of interest, which led to additional or in-depth information, which enhance the qualitative research. Josselson (2013) asserted that the goal of an interview protocol is to ensure consistency across interviews. Further, Rubin and Rubin stated, "In a semistructured interview, the researcher has a specific topic to learn about, prepares a limited number of questions in advance, and plan to ask follow-up questions" (2012, p. 31).

The Expert Committee Process

I developed the validity of the interview protocol from the opinions and recommendations of qualified and experienced educators in the field who worked with SWSN at the primary level. To do this, I employed an expert committee comprised of

three principals and two teachers who did not participate in this study. I contacted each member via telephone and elucidated the purpose of the expert committee. Upon their assent, I emailed them the interview protocol to review the research and interview questions. After they had examined the structure of the questions, I verified whether the research questions reflected the purpose of the study and ensured the interview questions aligned with the research questions. In addition, each committee member was authorized to give feedback inclusive of their opinion and recommendations on the instrument. In closing, I utilized the expert committee feedback to refine my interview protocol to best fit the study. The process of the researcher obtaining feedback, information and seeking ways to improve the interviews from multiple sources will validate the iterative nature of the qualitative researcher (Hurst et al., 2015).

Procedure for Recruitment and Participation and Data Collection

For my planned research design, I recruited educators who voluntarily consented to participate in interviews for this basic qualitative study. During the recruitment process, I held separate meetings with principals and teachers respectively to explain the research requirements.

Meeting with the Principals

I attached a copy of my Institutional Review Board (IRB) letter from Walden University to each invitational email sent to principals at mainstream primary schools requesting permission to conduct the research at their institutions. The email comprised of my introduction, the purpose, criteria, procedures of the research, and a question asking if they would be willing to share their perceptions of instructional and curricular

barriers toward inclusion. My name, telephone number, and email address were included to facilitate participants' questions regarding the research. Once the principals authorized the request for the research to be done at their schools, I scheduled a Zoom meeting to articulate the salient points mentioned in the email. I provided an explanation of the consent form, confidentiality, and security of data collection, as well as concerns and recommendations regarding the study. Additionally, I conveyed that participation is voluntary and principals may discontinue participation at any time. Each principal signed and returned the consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the research within three days of the meeting. Once the principals signed and returned the consent forms, I sent a follow up email stating the scheduled time for the interview to ascertain data collection. In addition, within three days of the meeting, I asked principals to submit the names of prospective teachers who met the research criteria to participate in the study.

Meetings with the Teachers

I sent an invitational email to the prospective teachers outlining the same content as the invitational email sent to the principals. I also attached a copy of my IRB letter from Walden University to the email for ease of reference. The nature of the meeting was like the principals' meeting and the agenda items for both meetings were the same. Once the teachers signed and returned the consent forms, I sent a follow up email stating the scheduled time for the interview.

I implemented an interview schedule and send an email to each participant stating the date, time, Zoom link, Zoom ID and password for their interview. When each

participant confirmed the interview appointment, I conducted the interview. I also adjusted the interview schedule to accommodate the participants who had challenges working with the proposed date and time. I and the interviewees came to amicable solutions so that I could conduct all the interviews in a timely manner.

I conducted the interviews remotely in compliance with the COVID-19 pandemic protocols of the selected samples schools. I utilized the Zoom online platform for the interviews and developed an interview protocol to address the problem and purpose of the study. I interviewed a total of 12 participants. Data collection from one-on-one in-depth structured individual interviews with seven principals and five regular teachers from mainstream primary schools in Jamaica revealed information to compare similarities and differences of participants' responses to research questions. Research questions one and two in this study explored factors associate with the perceptions of principals and teachers toward instructional barriers to inclusion in primary schools, while question three focuses on the impact the current primary curriculum, National Standard Curriculum (NSC), has on instructional barriers to inclusion. For example, an interview question for a teacher was: "Describe students' with special needs performance in the teaching and learning process." An interview question for the principal was "What are the barriers identify to instructional and curriculum for inclusive education at your school?"

The open-ended questions in the interviews created the opportunity for me to explore the participants' perceptions on the topic of interest and they enhanced the qualitative research. The duration of each interview was 60 minutes or less to answer 14

open ended questions. I recorded the interviews on the Zoom platform, took field and observational notes, transcribed the narrative, and then utilized a member check method and encouraged participants to read and add information to the transcripts to guarantee accurate interpretation of their expressions. I attained sufficient information from the interviewees on the topic of interest; hence, interview follow-ups were unnecessary. Finally, I clearly articulated to the participants that once the data analysis and the member check of the data collection were done, the interviewees will receive an email expressing gratitude for their participations in the study and their input will no longer be required. This officially validated their exit from the research. The interviewee contact details were safely stored and will be destroyed 5 years after the research was completed.

Data Analysis Plan

I utilized a thematic approach to analyze the qualitative data. First, I analyzed the narrative from interviews and field notes. Second, I condensed the data to identify codes, categories, and themes in relation to the research questions. Code is a short phrase or word that captures the meaning of the salient points of the interview transcript and the participant observational field notes. The primary coding, I employed for this basic qualitative study includes the approach described by Saldana (2016). I transcribed the interview and my field notes. Then, I decoded the collected data to obtain my first impression of the information by reviewing each page and taking notes. Next, I engaged in encoding (that is identifying the appropriate code and labeling it), followed by creating a description column to write the code that correspond to the line(s) in the transcript.

In the second coding cycle, I reviewed the codes, categorized them, and looked for the patterns. Patterns may be characterized by the frequency, sequence, similarity, and difference observed in the data. During the second cycle I paid attention to which codes may need to be omitted, expanded, were of significance or unimportance. Qualitative data analysis requires coding and searching for patterns and relationships until a holistic picture is created (Creswell, 2003). Third, I presented the findings from the data in tables. This research design aligned with Creswell (2009) who referred to the researcher's using a qualitative approach to inquiry to collect data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study as well as data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. Merriam (2009) stated that a characteristic of qualitative research includes the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis and the process of induction. Findings inductively derived from interviews to provide themes and categories for the researcher to work from. In this study. I was the primary instrument collected and analysed data that may contribute to other researchers' work in the field of study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) addressed four criteria for trustworthiness that qualitative researchers use to validate that their work is approved: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. Below I delineate the usage of the trustworthiness criteria to authenticate this study.

Credibility

In addressing credibility, the researcher checks for the internal validity by ensuring that the phenomenon under scrutiny is a true picture of its intent. The data collection was done through the 12 in-depth semi structured interviews. I recorded all virtual interviews using Zoom video communications and transcribed them to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of data collection. Additionally, I utilized a member check strategy by asking participants to confirm the accurate interpretation of the interviews. Each interview matched to the consistency and reliability of the participant's responses. In addition, I utilized open coding to aid in data management, and identified common themes that emerged from the interviews. According to Merriam (1998), the qualitative investigator's equivalent concept or credibility, deals with the question and how congruent are the findings with reality. I noted that saturation in data collection occurred when no new information was observed in the codes, themes, and categories gathered.

After I analyzed the data, I presented the findings in tables. I managed data collection to ensure the issue of positionality did not interfere with the analysis of data collection; thus, I engaged in reflexivity to avoid the outcome of the findings being slanted. Creswell (2009) postulated that, the final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change. In this study, the comparable responses in the interviews, transcripts, the commonality of themes observed, and the point of saturation in data collection and reflexivity helped me to validate that the findings were true from the educators' perceptions of instructional and

curricular barriers toward inclusive education for SWSN at primary schools. Shenton (2004) indicated that readers may perceive research to be of credibility when the same results are found in various organizations.

Transferability

Merriam (1998) wrote that external validity "is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (p. 39). Readers should be confident in knowing to what extent they can transfer the findings and conclusion of a research into other situations. One of the ways to agree that transferability will take place is by providing detailed information on the data which guides the reader to decide if the environment or findings is similar and may apply in different settings (Merriam, 1998). In the data collection and analysis section of this study, detailed information on the 12 in-depth semi structured interviews were delineated. I assigned codes to each school and to each participant, the duration of the interview, the location of data collection, how the findings were recorded, any restrictions in collecting data, the publication date, and the type of instruments used for collecting the data. The specified information makes it possible for the reader to transfer or compare findings in similar or other areas of study.

Dependability

This criterion of research trustworthiness was utilized to report findings in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results (Shenton, 2004). Other scholars can repeat this research because the research questions clearly align with the data collection and analysis process, and each stage of the

study was logically documented. The thick description of the interview transcripts provided a view of the acumen of the principals' and teachers' perceptions of instructional and curricular barriers working with SWSN in the regular classrooms at primary schools.

Confirmability

Miles and Huberman (1994) considered that a key criterion for confirmability is the extent to which the researcher admits his or her own predispositions. During this study, I made clear my professional background and the purpose of the topic investigated. In addition, I detailed my experiences working with SWSN, reviewed the memos, and listened to the recorded interviews several times to avoid skewing the data. This practice was significant as it facilitated reflexivity and ensure that data analysis was accurate and not biased. Reflexivity requires openness and an acceptance that the researcher is part of the research (Finlay, 2002). Furthermore, reflexivity is a means by which the researcher may reflect on their own values while the research is being conducted and after the research is completed (Lichtman, 2010).

Ethical Procedures

Once I had obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Walden University for the current study, I used a copy of my IRB letter to seek permission to proceed with interviews from the Jamaica Ministry of Education. All primary schools in the region six come under the same jurisdiction. Prior to the interviews, I conducted a communication briefing with each prospective sample to introduce myself and clearly articulated the subject and goals of the study, the purpose and procedures of the research,

and explanation of the consent form. Voluntary participation was ensured through the consent form, which informed participants of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without obligation or penalty. The willing participants signed and returned the consent forms to me. I had no prior interactions with the interviewees; hence, there was no scope of coercion to participate. Protective measures were taken to foster the participants' confidentiality. The data collected from the interviews was electronically saved on a computer with a password, on a computer to which I had exclusive access. The participants' information and anonymity were reserved, and codes were used to identify their responses. I stored interviewee contact details separately from the interview data and it will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the research; thus, protecting the confidentiality of the participants exist in the study. I may share the findings from this basic qualitative research with the Special Education Unit (MOE), Teachers' College, and participating schools' principals and teachers.

Summary

The study may be significant in understanding principals and teachers' perspectives of instructional and curricular barriers toward SWSN at primary schools. This chapter described the qualitative research approach and included a brief description of the research design and my role as researcher. I discussed the study methodology in detail and identified the sample selection in reference to the research criteria. Additionally, I provided information on instrumentation, data collection and analysis process. Finally, I discussed quality measures I utilized to maintain the trustworthiness

within the study and defined the ethical procedures I employed. I present the results of the study in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

My study explored the perceptions of teachers and principals concerning instructional and curriculum barriers to inclusion for students with special needs at primary schools. Using a basic qualitative approach to investigate the research questions, I sought to understand and discover how mainstream primary educators perceive instructional barrier for students with disabilities in inclusive settings. I obtained data from interviews conducted via Zoom conference calls about the phenomenon of interest. The three research questions I explored were as follows.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of teachers toward instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs at primary schools in Jamaica?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of principals toward instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs at primary schools in Jamaica?

RQ3: How does the current primary curriculum impact instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs at primary schools in Jamaica?

In this chapter, I will present the settings, demographics, data collection and analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, the results, and a summary.

Setting

The public education system in Jamaica is divided into six regions. I intended to interview eight principals and eight teachers from inclusive primary schools located in region six; however, because saturation was reached after 12 interviews, I had no need to continue data collection. I obtained findings from 12 participants who met the study criteria, either identifying as a principal or teacher who worked or was working with

special needs students in mainstream primary schools. Cultural celebrations impeded the completion of data collection within the planned time of two weeks, but it was completed within six weeks. The schools in Jamaica had two weeks of closure during the Christmas holidays and upon resumption, a prospective participant family member died; therefore, time was lost while obtaining a new participant. One school had no internet, but the participants expressed their willingness to take part in the study and proposed that I conduct their interviews at another location that had internet access. I consulted my doctoral chair prior to making this decision, and approval was granted. The principal and teacher interviews from this school were conducted one-on-one via a Zoom conference call as planned. Another participant was delayed due to illness and internet issues at the school. Consequent to the participant's recovery, attempts were made twice to conduct the interview, but the internet at the school was still unstable with low bandwidth. As a result, arrangements were made for a face-to-face interview. I traveled to the school and conducted the private interview. I gave my doctoral chair weekly updates on my work, so he was aware of each situation mentioned above. I received approval and advice on managing the process regarding the same in a timely manner.

Demographics

All participants in the sample completed the demographic form, which included years of experience, training in inclusion, grade levels taught, and professional qualifications. The sample met the study criteria, and there were five teachers and seven principals from mainstream settings in region six who participated. The school's grade levels range from one to six. The teachers had one to 19 years of experience in education,

whereas principals had five to thirty years of experience. All the principals, except one, had some form of training in inclusive education, whereas only two of the teachers were exposed to training. See Table 5 for demographic data.

Table 5

Participant Demographics: Teachers

Participants	T2	T4	T6	T8	T12
Years of Experience	16	4	17	14 months	19
School Pop.	71	1408	1020	1130	550
Grade Level	1	6	3	1 & 4	1
Class Size	15	17	20	24	31
Training in Inclusion	Some	Some	None	None	None
Qualification	Master	Degree	Degree	Degree	Degree

Table 6

Participant Demographics: Principals

Participants	P1	P3	P5	P7	P9	P11	P13
Years of Experience	20	5	30	21	20+	10	30
School Pop.	72	1408	1020	1130	-	550	218
Training in Inclusion	Some	Very Much	None	Some	Some	Some	Some
Qualification	Degree	Master	Master	Master	Master	Master	Degree

Data Collection

The data collection process for the research topic under investigation was planned and followed as stated in the approved IRB document. I sent an invitation letter to each participant via email. I invited those who agreed to participate in the study to a Zoom meeting to explain the research topic, review the consent form, and to facilitate questions

or concerns within the boundaries of the study. Except for two teachers who declined to participate, all participants responded "yes" via email or at the end of the meeting, indicating their willingness to engage in the research. The interviews were scheduled and conducted as planned during and after school hours via Zoom conference calls. I structured the interview schedule to accommodate the participants' availability and internet connectivity. One participant became ill and after recovery, experienced internet issues. Hence, this interview was done face-to-face and recorded by phone. In addition, I relocated two interviews due to the participants having no internet access at the school. I communicated the details of both instances to my chair, and approval was granted to proceed.

My data collection plan indicated that eight teachers and eight principals were to be interviewed for the study; however, saturation was reached by the 12th interview. The interviews were guided by the interview protocol, as well as probing questions to ascertain clarity in the participants' responses. Each session lasted 30-60 minutes except for one interviewee who had two questions remaining to answer when we had reached the one-hour mark. I requested the participant's permission to complete the two questions, and it was granted. I recorded the interviews on the Zoom platform with the integration of an online application to aid in the transcription of the notes. Unfortunately, the online application did not transcribe verbatim. To circumvent skewed data, I replayed all interviews and thoroughly went through the scripts to ensure accuracy in the narratives. To validate the member checking process, I sent the transcripts via email for participants to verify the themes that emerged from the codes.

Data Analysis

I analyzed qualitative interview data gathered for this study using a thematic approach as delineated in Chapter 3. I transcribed the interviews and then read them several times while I took notes to capture the meaning of the data, thus substantiating my first impression. I first utilized open coding to discover codes and then combined the codes into categories and themes that emerged from the interview data. In relation to the research questions, I examined data line by line, and highlighted key phrases or words in red. I then created a descriptive column and wrote the code that corresponds to the transcript line. In response to RQ (What are the perceptions of teachers towards instructional barriers to inclusion for SWSN in primary schools?), some of the codes included *challenges in classroom, denial, support, attitude and beliefs, solution, under performance, untrained, instructional barriers, inadequate resources* and *mixability of disability*.

In the second coding cycle, I reviewed the codes, categorized the codes, and then observed patterns in the data. For example, I paid attention to the frequency of the code *challenges* mentioned in the participants' responses related to research question one. Consequently, the theme that emerged was as follows. The inclusion of students with special needs (SWSN) in the classroom creates numerous challenges for teachers. I further searched the data to identify the various challenges supporting the theme. As a result, six subcategories were noted to include *undiagnosed students in the regular classroom, no learning resources, the mix ability of disabilities in the inclusive class, frequent absenteeism, class size,* and *inadequate space in the classroom*. I took a similar approach

to emphasize the themes and subcategories related to research question 2 and 3. Table 7 shows how I analyzed the interview data to identify two of the subcategories: undiagnosed students and no resources.

Table 7

The Analysis of Codes to Categories to Themes

Data	Codes	Categories	Theme
Within my classroom some of the *challenges* that I would have encountered are…There are some students who are *not diagnosed* but based on how they behave and react to certain situations you definitely know something is wrong with the appearance seen. *No resources* is one of the major *challenge*s I have so far.	Challenges not diagnosed Not diagnosed Challenge; no resources	Undiagnosed (1) No resources (2)	The inclusion of SWSN in the classroom creates numerous challenges for teachers
As teachers we are working with the children, but *unsure of the type of disability* each student displays in the classroom. That is still a *challenge*. Another is *resources*, you have to ensure you have a lot of printed material…….. that takes a lot of money as well. So that is a major *challenge*..	Challenge disability unsure Resources Challenge	Undiagnosed (1) No Resources (2)	
The challenges I have encountered in the classroom is that as educators *we do not have an accurate diagnosis* of the grade level each student is functioning at. There is *no assistive aids,* that's lacking.	Challenges Diagnosis Uncertain No Learning Resources	Undiagnosed (1) No Resources (2)	
I don't' what can be done, it's a challenge……. Sometimes the students finished six years at primary school and were *still not assessed*. *My problem* is students get no resources and the teacher is *not given any resources* to work with these children.	Challenge still not assessed No Resources	Undiagnosed (1) No Resources (2)	
…*resources* internally is a *challenge*. We have to turn the little we have into something magical to assist the students.	Resources Challenges	No Resources (2)	

Merriam (2009) asserted that a characteristic of qualitative research includes findings inductively derived from interviews, observations, or documents that are combined to provide themes and categories for the researcher to work from. I observed no discrepancies during data collection. During the interviews, if the participants appeared to misunderstand the questions, I utilized probing questions to ascertain an appropriate response.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I demonstrated the five criteria of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as discussed in chapter 3.

Credibility

I checked for authenticity in the internal validity of the phenomenon of interest. I substantiated the reliability and trustworthiness of data collection as the interview narratives were transcribed and recorded on the Zoom platform. Participants checked the transcripts to confirm the accuracy of the interviews. Categories and themes that emerged from the interview data were aided by a thematic approach and open coding. The point of saturation was attained after interviewing 12 participants. At the meeting with the participants, I articulated the positionality, goals, and requirements of the study. Interviews, data, and field notes were carefully managed to avoid the findings being biased. For example, when asked what are my thoughts during an interview question? I responded, “I suggest you communicate to your principal about that question.” The mentioned approach validated the creditability of the study.

Transferability

Limited transferability of the study, due to sample size, is possible as the detailed description of the data collection and analysis procedure provides readers with the confidence to transfer or compare the findings in similar or other areas of study. Rich descriptions of the participants' codes, interviews, recordings, locations, and the time were observed and detailed in this chapter. According to Merriam (1998), external validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to another situation.

Dependability

Dependability is a criterion of trustworthiness that refers to the reliability of the research. I guaranteed that every aspect of the research was logically documented, and that the research questions explicitly corresponded to the procedures elucidated in the data collection and analysis section. The rich information gleaned from the primary teachers and principals revealed their perceptions of instructional and curricular barriers for SWSN within inclusive settings.

Confirmability

At the first meeting with the participants, I articulated the purpose of the study, along with my professional background working with SWSN. Being cognizant of my experiences and the possibility of conflicting with the research topic, I engaged in reflexivity before and after the interviews. This process controlled the threat of personal biases taking precedence over the findings of the study. The confirmability of the study was apparent due to the transparency of my predisposition. According to Miles and

Huberman (1994), confirmability is the extent to which researchers admit their own predispositions. As I reflected on my encounters, I separated my emotions from the interview narratives, listened to the recordings several times, reviewed memos and field notes, and managed participants' questions during the interviews.

Research Results

The phenomenon of interest was driven by three research questions. Each question was supported by categories and themes that emerged from the interviews data.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of teachers towards instructional barriers to inclusion for SWSN in primary schools? five themes related to this question emerged and 24 sub –categories.

RQ2: What are the perceptions of principals towards instructional barriers to inclusion for SWSN in primary schools? seven themes evolved with 21 sub-categories.

RQ3: How does the current primary curriculum impact instructional barriers to inclusive for SWSN at primary school? four themes and 11 sub-categories were identified. Analysis of the themes and categories are delineated below.

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions of teachers toward instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs (SWSN) in primary schools in Jamaica?

The participants' responses from the interview were recorded, and data were transcribed, sorted, and listened to several times to ensure the data were understood. The findings revealed several codes from which the listed five themes emerged. These themes include the following: 1) Teachers believe SWSN in the regular classrooms have negative

and positive impact on them, 2) The inclusion of SWSN in the classroom creates numerous challenges for teachers, 3) Primary teachers expressed the instructional barriers they encountered teaching SWSN in the regular classrooms, 4) The exploration of mainstream teachers in primary schools describe the effect instructional barriers have on students' performance, and 5) Inclusion educators develop solutions to combat instructional barriers in primary schools.

Theme 1: Teachers believe SWSN in the regular classrooms have negative and positive impact on them.

A range of remarks supported negative attitudes that some primary teachers have toward SWSN. The following negative responses were noted. T6 stated that, "Teachers are aware that we do have a student with special needs in the classroom setting. Honestly, they don't really want him in their class. They out rightly say no, no, no, no, no, I don't want him." T2 lamented, "The inclusive setting is not for him, knowing that he struggled with his feet." T4 highlighted, "I must say that some of us are aggressive; we are not patient or willing to understand the situations we have, so most of these kids we get with special needs are neglected."

Despite teachers' negative attitudes delineated above, positive attitudes for working with SWSN in the mainstream classrooms were also emphasized. When the question, how do you feel about teaching students with mild learning and physical disabilities in an inclusion setting was asked, these remarks were identified: T6 explained, "I learn a lot by observing and communicating to the student's mom. I learn his high and low moments." T6 further stated, "Whenever he refuses to do his work, I

just leave him and do not push him to write off the work. T6 concluded, “I tried to understand everything that's going on in his mind.” T2 shared this scenario:

> The school has rails for the stairs but no ramp. There is a student in another class that needs assistant at all times, and it is a challenge for the teacher, because of the struggles the student encounters in terms of walking. Sometimes the student messed on himself or tumbles down the stairs when he does not get to the bathroom in a timely manner. Sometimes the other students do not want to assist him.

Teachers considered options to help student with physical disability in relation to the scenario above. T2 expressed, “I would have somebody in place to assist taking the student to the bathroom. Instead of having the student walking back and forth up the stairs.” In addition, T2 said, “I would switch my classroom location from upstairs to downstairs for those years so the student can access the bathrooms downstairs.” Further positive attitudes related to SWSN were noted. P4 identified, “The Ministry of Education (MOE) mantra is, ‘Every child can learn; every child must learn. That's my perception as it relates to students with special needs within a classroom.” P4 said, “I just look at it that way that these students are special, and they just need special attention.” T6 expounded, “First, the educators have to accept and be willing to work with special needs students in the classroom.” The significance of being an advocate for SWSN was also observed. For example, T6 asserted, “I go to the canteen and tell persons in the school community that you have to be aware how to manage the challenges with these kids.” T6 also commented, “I told a colleague, this student has special needs, so you have to be careful

how you handle or deal with him." T6 went on to say, "I had to be there for these students; be somebody that speaks for them." T12 then summarized:

> I believe I can teach those with mild disability. With adequate teaching aids and appropriate strategies, they will grasp the concepts. Some students are late bloomers so they will grasp concepts not now, but at a later date. With continuous teaching and repetition they will do better as time goes by. Concerning those with special needs, I collaborate with my colleagues to find out what can I do to make it easier for the students or myself so that I can reach the students. I don't think SWSN should be excluded from the regular classroom, they should be included.

The entire participant sample spoke of being untrained in the mainstream classroom. Teachers' responses included, T8 remarked, "I am not trained to work with these children." T6 recounted, "I was not formally trained for special education, and I have these children in the classroom." T4 explicated, "I wasn't adequately trained to teach those students but with experience working with them over the years, I've been doing it now." T2 articulated, "The students who were assessed are placed in an intervention programme and the teacher employed to work with them was not trained." The Teachers further explored their responses toward training. T12 indicated, "I think the lack of training of teachers is one of our biggest challenges." T12 related to higher study, "I need more training to build my capacity as a teacher. Maybe I will consider doing my master degree in special education, so I will be better able to assist students with special needs in the classroom." T2 said, "Since SWSN is a major issue with many schools, I think more should be done in terms of training. Even the professional development we have for the

midterm could infuse something with special education. In addition, T2 asserted, “I am not trained in this area. What we have to do as teachers is to read and to learn more about special education to better help the children or in our care.”

Theme 2: The inclusion of SWSN in the classroom creates numerous challenges for teachers.

Teachers expressed uncertainty of the disability displayed in the class because not all students are undiagnosed. For example, T2 indicated,” I don't know if it is dyslexia; we do not really see dyslexia. We can see the same pattern in the way that they do things or how they learn.” T2 added, “He has club feet and needs assistance, I am not sure if that is the correct name.” Four of the teachers interviewed supported the belief that undiagnosed students in the classroom comprised a widespread challenge for them. T2 delineated, “There is a long waiting list for students to be formally assessed through the Ministry of Education recommended institution, Mico Care. Sometimes the students finished six years at primary school and were still not assessed.” T12 indicated, “As teachers we are working with the children, but unsure of the type of disability each student displays in the classroom.” T6 added, “We do not have an accurate diagnosis of the grade level each student is functioning at.” T8 surmised, “Some of the students are undiagnosed.”

Inclusion of children with mixed disabilities was listed as a common concern by all of the teachers working with these students in the inclusive classroom. Some of the disabilities described by the teachers were students with ADHD, autism, slow learners, and those with developmental delays who are in the same classroom with their non-disabled peers. T4 indicated, “Over the years, I've been given students of mix-ability; so

they will show symptoms of dysgraphia, dyslexia or dyscalculia." T12 shared, "The hyperactive students and some, no matter how you teach, they just can't get it, you just cannot connect with them." T12 continued, "My principal enrols every child, no matter the type of disability." T6 posited that, "He has autism, and he has ADHD. The challenges I have encountered in the classroom is that as an educator I didn't get training for this." T2 explained:

> Two main challenges that I experienced in the classroom are developmental delays and behavioral issues. I know that some of them come with developmental delays; they are not able to form letters; they are not able to identify the font; and they are not able to function. They are performing below the expected level. They do not know the letters of the alphabet, the numerals, and so on. Also, there's behavorial issues. It is not severe per se, but the ones that I encountered, are still a challenge in the classroom. Whenever a child is not behaving him or herself, we can call the police officers, and they would come and help assist with the children as best as they know how to.

Two other teachers also alluded to behavioral issues. T6 indicated, "The classroom setting is not conducive to have special needs kids because sometimes they have meltdowns or outbursts that can damage you and your kids. I've gotten some hits and some kicks; those are the challenges." T8 indicated, "I have students that steal and curse. He takes the children's lunch money, their pencils, rubbers and other things in his possession." T8 continued, "He doesn't listen. He was running on the corridor and the

supervisor asked him to come to her and he did not go. The other student all she does is eat, sleep, and no work."

Frequent absenteeism, class size, and inadequate class space were additional challenges primary teachers explored. In relation to frequent absenteeism, P2 explained, "One of the main issue is the students with special needs are always absent from school. I don't know why for what reason, but absenteeism is always an issue." One teacher emphasized the class size. T12 said:

> The class size is a challenge, because the class sizes are very, very big. When you have special needs students, they need individualized attention, one on one attention. Even though you might put them in groups according to their levels, you still find that there's a challenge. You have to create a lot of teaching aids; you have to differentiate instruction and you have to ensure that the lesson plans are geared to meet those needs.

Teachers' responses showed that there is a lack of internal human resources to support SWSN in the regular classroom. T12 specifically expressed, "I do not get any help from the Ministry of Education." The same teacher said, "We get a curriculum guide and that is as far as it goes. We have to work on our own." T2 emphasized, "There is nobody at my school that is trained in that area." This teacher continues to share, "There aren't any specific educational services like therapists that would come in to support the children." Finally, the teacher said, "They need to at least get a special education teacher in each school to do pull outs to assist with these children." In contrast, a different teacher indicated, T6 said, "We have literacy based teachers. Overall, it's a general strategy to

improve literacy; but as it relates to the learning disabilities, that's always an issue." T6 also articulated:

> A shadow is there but serves between two classes. When my special need student has a melt down and the shadow is with another class, I have to alert my kids - Sit! don't move, don't trouble him, don't disturb him, while the student goes around the classroom making sounds. I have to protect the students and myself from being injured.

In the context of external human resources, positive outcomes were noted. Three teachers discussed the help obtained from the MOE. T2 commented, "Recently the Ministry of Education, sent out a special education team to assess some of the students." T6 alluded that, "The Ministry of Education comes in regularly, and they make checks on them, how they're coping, how they are learning and stuff like that, which I do appreciate." T4 indicated, "The student support team in the region helps to provide shadow for autistic student." T4 further shared, "The team comes in and assessed the students we have identified as having learning issues." T12 explained, "We get resources like books, charts and printed worksheets from stakeholders like USAID in the past and another." In addition, T12 stated, "Different stakeholders contributed technology for last year during the COVID -19 pandemic and some students got device." However, P12 showed concern about the recipients of the devices. "I don't know; they don't know the value of these materials, so they don't care for them." T12 continued to articulate, "When we do have online classes 1/3 of the class or maybe even less than that showed up. When

asked what the main reason is why they weren't a part of the class. They replied, “We didn't have any devices.”

The lack of assistive aids and learning resources were common concerns for many primary school teachers. Both T2 and T6 supported the idea that no assistive aids are available. T2 said, “You know, in terms of assistive aids, we were not given any. There is no internet access at the school and the students don't have devices.” T6 shared, “There is no assistive aids; the availability of that is really lacking.” The lack of resources was noted. For example, T2 explained, “Putting the children on an intervention program and not providing anything to assist, it makes no sense. T2 also went on to say, “As teachers we have to work tirelessly to create materials, booklets, and stories for these children to use. It is a challenge. T2 further said, ‘With the lack of support in terms of resources from the Ministry of Education, these students are always going to be left behind.” T4 expressed, “Resources internally is a challenge, the little that we have, we have to turn it into something magical to assist the students. T4 said, “So we have to be innovative as it relates to getting aids for the students. In conclusion T4 voiced, “It takes a lot of time for us to really sit down and make these things or get persons to make the stuff for us. So that is a challenge for us. T6 indicated, “We need resources seriously in order for us to effectively reach these kids and get these kids to the level that we want them to reach. We need resources.”

Theme 3: Primary teachers expressed the instructional barriers they encountered teaching SWSN in the regular classrooms.

A relationship emerged between the challenges teachers face in the classroom and the instructional barriers they experience. Instructional barriers included skill, curriculum, and individual barriers. Teachers indicated that skill barriers emerged while teaching. Basic academic concepts were unknown in SWSN between grades one to three at the primary level. T6 lamented, "One of my special needs students has challenges with numeracy. Another student I have she doesn't know colours; she don't know numbers; she don't know letters. I'm saying, this is serious." T8 asserted, "I have a few that's still doesn't know how to identify the letters of the alphabet and numbers."

The essence of curriculum barriers was also prominent in the teachers' responses. Educators proactively and intentionally address barriers in the curriculum, such as barriers within goals, methods, materials, and assessments that make learning more difficult, or even unachievable, for some students (Meier & Rossi, 2020). The need for training teachers in special education to work along with regular classroom teachers or to be assigned to SWSN in the mainstream settings surfaced as an instructional barrier. T4 explained, "Three things affect meeting the daily objectives with these students, the delivery of the content, the knowledge of doing so, and the time that we get as teachers to do so." T12 contended:

> Sometimes I don't know if it's the strategies or because you're not really trained. You have some students who have an extreme disability. Therefore, you cannot really reach those students as you would desire. You try, but you realize that it's

> not getting anywhere. So you need additional training. Sometimes I don't know how to break down the curriculum to meet the needs of these children.

In addition to curriculum barriers, inappropriate learning material and assessments were noted. T2 said, "The MOE sends one set of books for everybody, and not everybody is able to use them. There is no differentiated materials." T8 added:

> I believe that there should be different means of testing because what I realized it's just one standardized way to test the students. Students who are having difficulty with writing, when they get the test papers, most of the time they don't get a chance to do anything. But if you should take that child and ask them the questions, you will realize that they can answer but they can't write it. If we have different means of testing these students, then it will be more successful.

In relation to individual barriers, issues on literacy, penmanship and speech impediment were noted. For example, T2 said, "There are students at the grade 1-3 not reading, they are at the preprima level." T8 mentioned, "I have a few with reading issues; they cannot read anything at all." T12 elucidated that, "When given test, they cannot read independently. I have to read for them." Both T6 and T12 had nonwriters. T6 stated, "When the student just came to the classroom there was a challenge with writing. The letters were written very big like a grade one student." T12 lamented, they can't even write formal letters. I have students with club hands, they can't really write. I give them a soft ball to help build fine motor skills." T8 explained, "Writing is one of the main challenges with them. They are not writing, so it takes a long, long time for them to finish anything at all. Sometimes the entire day to get one piece of work." In addition, T8

expounded that, “I have a student that does not speak any at all. He nods and shakes his head. Given activity in group setting, he doesn't participate; however, when I give him one on one that’s where he will do something.”

Lack of parental involvement, parents in denial, and students’ socioeconomic background were listed as a common concerns by all teachers. First T2 identified, “Parents are just not there, to support in terms of reinforcing what is taught or what is learned at school.” Then, T2 added, “Sometimes some of these children could be enrolled in the Micro Care facility, but because of negligence on the part of the parents, they do not. Finally, T2 shared, “Some parents think that their children are just slow, or they're going to be late bloomers. Sometimes, these children have major issues that need to be sorted out.” T4 articulated, “Not having the parents’ full support in assisting us to meet the child’s need in the classroom.” T8 expressed that, “Parents do not turn up for meetings when asked to come to address the needs of their child.”

Parental denial emerged as another category from the interviewees’ responses. T2 emphasized, “Some parents are in denial, even though as teachers we might not be able to pinpoint what the exact problems are.” T2 also indicated, “When we do make recommendations and suggestions, they give a blind eye to it, they don't act on it.” In conclusion, T6 recounted:

> I was in the classroom sitting down and one day I saw him hitting his face like that. He will be there talking to himself and hitting himself. I spoke to his mom about it, and she didn't think anything was wrong with him. She said, ‘Oh, I think

> that he's going to be an actor. He's going to do this; he's going to do that.' So parents can be in denial.

T8 explicated, "Not all parents are receptive to some of the information that you as a teacher will share." T8 continued to say, "Sometimes they become defensive, and they will say, "Miss nothing is wrong with my child. Where do you get that information from?" T8 also described, "Another teacher spoke to a mother about her child's behavior issues, and the teacher mentioned that she said, 'No, no, no, that's not my child."

Teachers further highlighted that parents' low socio-economic background increases the instructional barrier. T4 expressed, "I think the issue of poverty is one of the biggest barriers; and of course, they have issues themselves with education. They can't read, they can't do the math and they can't write to some extent." T4 also added, "The ones that I encountered have issues as it relates to assisting the children with their assignment, homework, project or whatever is given to them." T8 stated," There are instances when I would recommend that parents get additional resources based on the students' needs. They replied, "I don't have the money to buy. I'll get it next week. When next week comes nothing." T2 summarized:

> We have a welfare program for those who are, underperforming or not doing so well. We use these funds to assist students in need like, students who are not dressed properly we try to buy one or two uniform monthly. We use that fund to pay for lunch for those students who are unable to buy their lunch. Those who cannot afford to buy the books they need, we try to get the books either by

> printing or by going into Kingston Bookshop, to get books that they can use for the first term.

Theme 4: The mainstream teachers in primary schools described the effect instructional barriers have on students' performance.

The instructional barriers delineated in the data impacted the performance of students with special needs. The interviewee responses described the comparisons of SWSN performance and their counterpart in the mainstream classrooms. T2 expressed, "For those without special needs they are always on task, on track with the reading levels but the ones with special needs are always lagging behind." T4 mentioned, "Those with special needs are three to four grades levels below and the students without special needs they are at an average." T12 summed up:

> The children with special needs are underperforming. There are students who have challenges with writing. There is nothing there to assist the teacher who is not train to say this is how to deal with that child. Basically, the group I am working with now, their reading level is below pre-primer and their numeracy level is at non mastery. The performance of the regular children are average.

However, both T6 and T8 reported positive performance for SWSN in comparison to their counterparts. T6 highlighted, "I've seen my kids improve; their performance levels improve, their adaptation to the classroom setting has improved. The learning process has improved, remarkably, and for students without special needs, they're also improved." In addition, T8 articulated:

> The one with ADHD has an average of 84. The one with the autism I think he has an average of eight two. Even though they do have special needs, they are very intellectual, and they readily grasp the information and everything. The students without special needs do not give much effort, even though they are not diagnosed with anything. Their grades are way below the students with special needs.

Theme 5: Inclusive educators developed solutions to combat instructional barriers in primary schools.

The primary teachers working with SWSN in the inclusive setting considered solutions to combat instructional barriers. A range of solutions included intervention programmes, lesson planning and groupings, fundraiser, motivational strategies, parental involvement, and seeking information were positive outcomes noted. The interventions employed by the teachers addressed skill, individual, and curriculum barriers. For example, T2 and T4 intervention aligns with skill and curriculum barriers respectively. T2 expressed, "Students who are performing below the expected level, they are placed in an intervention program, where we try to help them to build on their foundational skills." The same teacher said, "I try to help them based on their learning needs, so I create my own materials for them to fix those issues first, before I move into the grade one curriculum for those having learning challenges." T4 articulated, "I implemented a program where students are pulled out and their needs are attended to. We have a progress report and continuous assessments that help us to manage them." In addition, T4 noted, "I use IEP in my classroom to see where the child is at and where we want to

take the child over a particular time. Having the parents will assist us more in meeting the goal of these students."

Teachers, T12 and T8 intervention strategies support individual barriers except the last statement of T8 that described curricular barrier. T12 shared, "For those not writing, I use play dough a lot and I give them a soft ball to help build fine motor skills." T8 commented, "Extra lesson is also another thing that I do for the slow learners because that's the time I get to work one to one with them. T8 further said, "We do reading and tracing activities in grade one because some of them are not writing." Finally, T8 suggested, "I tried to create different methods of teaching to cater to the different learning styles. For the kinaesthetic learners, I tried to do a little body movement, go outdoors, and for the others incorporate videos and songs."

There is a relationship between lesson planning and grouping in relation to solving instructional barriers. T2 expounded, "In terms of lesson planning, we have to do a lot of grouping and rotation." T2 also mentioned, "We have to make our little station where the more independent students, can do independent work while we sit in groups to guide and scaffold those children who are unable to function on their own." T6 explained, "When I'm teaching a lesson, I know that he doesn't like to write. So, while the class writes from the board, I make the little manipulatives and sit with him and go through the lesson using manipulatives." T6 also indicated that, "I break down the lesson, and use pictures to help him understand and he likes that." T8 stated, "Within the group settings even though they are a bit behind, sometimes I try to give them a little responsibility where they assist so at all times they feel like they belong, loved and that worked for

them." T12 said, "I collaborate with other teachers; I tried to tailor the lesson plan, place them in small groups and do differentiation." T12 further emphasized, "I also put them in the regular groupings so they don't feel left out. I give them the same activities at their ability level. I give everybody in the group responsibility and that enhances equity."

The essence of fund raising to purchase resources that mitigate instructional barriers in the regular classroom was supported. T12 indicated, "The principal said we could have fund raisers to assist the grade to get materials printed. We could buy printers and things like that. So we don't have to necessary use the office." T2 stated:

> At my school, we have different fund raisers to help purchase resources. We have Fun Fridays where we have different activities like socks and slippers day, jeans day, we sell ice cream, and we beg money from persons who are willing to give. We use that fund to assist with getting teaching resources and so on.

In relation to behavioral issues, the teachers used motivational strategies to help prevent instructional barriers for SWSN in the classroom. Different teachers articulated, T2 alluded, "There is a behavioral system or behavioral chart that I usually use, to monitor the children's behavior." T8 contended, "Over the years I have learned that, given the students incentives for good behavior helps to motivate them, instead of punishing them for the behavior." In addition, T2 recounted, "There is a certificate award that the children get at the end of the month, if they are caught being good." T6 remarked:

> When my autism student has a zone out time, the kids want to run after him to get him because he's running outside the classroom. I tell them no, don't go after him

> because once you go, that's what he likes. He loves the attention. So, I said, 'Leave him.' The shadow may go after him, or I may go after him wherever he wants to go. If he wants to go on the play field, I go with him to make sure that he's safe. I'll walk behind him or get beside him. And we will talk and have a conversation and he becomes calm.

Teacher T6 and T8 alluded to similar strategies employed to manage their autistic children. T6 stated, "Whenever he is having a meltdown or refuses to do his work, I have to just leave him to do whatever he wants to do." T6 also said, "I don't pressure him doing the work or I would write off the work from the board for him." In addition, T8 explained, "With that child it's very difficult with him. Sometimes what I have to do is just to let him have his own time. If he wants to run around, I monitor him and let him do an activity." The teacher concluded, "If I have time out, sometimes I put him in a little corner."

A teacher expressed using motivational strategies with her slow learners beside behaviour issues. "If they do even one piece, of work, I call them, I hug them, give them a sticker, let them wear a chart card or let them sit at my table." The teacher continued, "In doing so they feel like they belong, they feel special and they will say teacher loves me and I'm gonna try to do my best."

The inclusive teachers also commented on how they incorporate parental involvement to minimize instructional barriers. T2 summed up: "I contact the parent for good and bad behavior. As teachers, we tend to call the parents when the children are misbehaving or they have done something wrong, we do not usually call them when the

children are doing well and behave themselves. T8 discussed, “We have a WhatsApp group, where from time to time I would communicate with them. If it is a situation that concern on a particular challenge with a child, I would reach out to that parent.” T12 said, “I used parental involvement; once they are involved, then they will put out a lot of interest to do as we say. They will, give the extra push to get their students in the regular classroom setting.”

Another means that the teachers use to solve instructional barriers are seeking information on how to work with SWSN in the inclusive setting. T2, said, “I would read books to learn about the behavior and the different challenges those students go through, so I can pinpoint an issue, when I see it or read information from the internet.” T4, stated, “I attended many workshops as it relates to special education and I liaison with the Special Education team in the region for support.” T8 indicated, “I interact with the supervisor as well as the vice principal and they give suggestions as to how I can improve my classroom and their learning.” T8 continued to say, “I look for research on the internet where researchers have done studies on students with special needs, then I would find the recommendations on how deal with certain behavior.” Finally, T8 noted, “There are times when I observe certain things, so I have to go to other places to get explanation. Also networking with colleagues from different schools especially the ones that are dealing with special education.”

Research Question 2

What are the perceptions of principals toward instructional barriers to inclusion for SWSN in primary school?

From interview data, inclusive principals believed various factors contribute to instructional barriers for SWSN at primary schools. The principals' interview data was thoroughly examined to identify codes and themes align to research question 2. According to the findings seven themes emerged: 1) Mainstream Principals attitude toward SWSN enrolment at primary schools, 2) Inclusive principals at primary schools considered perception of inclusive teachers' toward SWSN, 3) Primary inclusive principals identified concerns mainstream teachers expressed about SWSN in the classrooms, 4) Primary inclusive principals described challenges to instructional barriers for mainstream teachers, 5) Parental issues impact instructional barriers in mainstream primary schools for principals,. 6) Mainstream principals discussed the effect of instructional barriers on SWSN performance in the regular classrooms, and 7) Strategies principals employed to mitigate parental barriers at mainstream primary schools. Below the inclusive principals expounded on each theme within the boundary of their schools.

Theme 1: Mainstream Principals attitude towards SWSN enrolment at primary schools.

The attitude of mainstream principals enrolling SWSN at primary schools was expressed. These responses validated the principals' attitude towards an inclusive environment. P1 posited, "We try as best as possible now to meet those needs by having follow up sessions, especially for the numeracy and literacy so that the students are engaged." P1 also mentioned, "For the ones with a physical disability, we don't have a ramp as yet, but we do have rails." P7 indicated, "So in term of having special children place in classes, I face some form of resistance, trying to convince a teacher that this

child will not be a liability to your class." P5 elucidated, "Our aim here is to ensure that every child that comes through these gates, have the kind of attention that he or she needs." P9 alluded, "We have students with physical disabilities who are not discriminated against. Every forum we get, through education, at devotions etc. We ensure to speak to teachers and students alike. The students with special needs are treated well." P13 lamented, "This school is looking to register students with special needs. Students with intellectual disability, and students with autism it depends on where they are on the spectrum, you can add value as to where you can get them." P3 indicated:

> We have a special needs policy that speaks to all of our students who come here to us. They are to be included and taught at the highest levels by our teachers so that no child is left behind in their academic development.

Theme 2: Inclusive principals at primary schools considered perception of inclusive teachers' toward SWSN.

Principals in mainstream primary schools have a perception concerning the attitude and beliefs of inclusive teachers working with SWSN. The following comments were noted. P3 indicated, "As it relates to the teachers, they might feel like they can't teach your children because they're not normal children and they might have to do a lot of preparation." P3 added, "That might just be too much because they're going to be doing so much and not getting additional pay." P9 remarked, "Some teachers believe having special students in the classroom will be a liability to them." P7 said, "Most times once a teacher knows that the child has a special need, the mindset is, I can't manage; I am not the right fit; without being receptive to the idea or be objective to work with them." In

addition, P7 said, “They also think that if the child does not do well then, it’s a reflection of the teacher. So that degree of accountability in having to deal with them, make them want to shy away from dealing with them.” P13 summed up:

> They are not equipped with the pedagogy for treating with students with special needs in the mainstream classroom; they express that those children should not be accepted or registered in the general educational classroom. They don't think inclusive programs would benefit those children. They think that they should go to a school that is so designed in its infrastructure, as well as the programs that the school would offer would be best suit for students with special needs.

Theme 3: Primary inclusive principals identified concerns mainstream teachers expressed about SWSN in the classrooms.

Mainstream teachers’ concerns working with SWSN was a category highlighted by the inclusive principals. P3 contended, “Only those teachers who were trained at college and special education ought to be teaching these students because they would have been equipped.” P3 further stated, “I'm just a regular primary school teacher, and I don't think I might be able to fit in properly.” In closing P3 added, “The teachers are also saying, will the ministry give us the resources that are needed to teach these special needs children? What if we don't get the resources? We’ll have to get it from our pockets.” P5 articulated, “They are concerned that children with special needs, requires special attention. Especially if the class size is large, and it is one teacher to manage the entire class; what do they do with just one child?” P11elucidated, “Teachers believe even

though we are in a mainstream school, not all students with special needs should be in the same class. They should be in one class by themselves."

Even though principals voiced negative attitudes and beliefs about teachers working with SWSN in the classroom, some positive attitudes were also considered. For example, P1 shared, "They're concerned about being able to meet the needs; but with a child like that, you don't really know how to handle it." P11 recounted, "The teachers are saying, if we had enough materials and all the things the children need to work with; we would give them food if needed. So, the children would only need to show up for class." P13 related, "I do have a few teachers who are willing and expressing the mind -set to work with these children. They are also deploying that in their teaching and learning daily." One principal in particular spoke to the extra mile her teachers go to facilitate learning for SWSN. The principal expounded:

> Most of the time those children when they finished the day of work, it is when they return in the morning that they get any stimulation or engagement to the work that was done the day before, or the assignments and projects that were given. So, there are times when my teachers have to break the actual engagement and make the projects and the homework, a teaching moment, a mini lesson so that we can have our children participating in these activities and benefiting from them.

Theme 4: Primary inclusive principals discussed several challenges to instructional barriers teachers experienced in the mainstream settings.

The inclusive principals emphasized the issue of mixed ability of SWSN as a challenge to instructional practices for most teachers. The sample referred to the listed challenges at their schools. P7: articulated, "It is more challenge on the teacher, depending on how mild or severe it is. Sometimes teachers don't have the tolerance to deal with the kind of behavior that the students may display." P9 stated, "Many teachers find it a challenge to cope with certain challenges the special children may display like autism, ADHD etc. The lack of resourcefulness or not being equipped enough to aid the special needs." P11 agreed that, "Some teachers will find it difficult to work with the mixed ability groups, and the differentiated teaching." In addition, P11 continued, "So you'll find that the two or three special children that are there may prevent the class from moving on and some of the teachers are not capable to have different cases going on in the same class." P5 elucidated, "Teachers continue to think that these children should be in a special school because they are not learning at the same rate." P5 also stated, "When I plan my lesson, I planned for children who learn at normal rate, so these students should be in a different environment."

Untrained teachers working with SWSN was another challenge to instructional barriers in the mainstream setting. The principals' range of comments were highlighted. P3 indicated, "I think if teachers are enlightened to the challenges we will have and they understand the nature of the needs; then they would be more willing to go the extra mile." P7 stated, "We don't have trained teachers." P5said, "One of the challenges has to do

with teachers continuing to use the one size fits all method." P5 also went on to say, "There's a greater need for differentiation, not only with children with special needs, but it should be done right across the board." P1 alluded, "A lot of the teachers in the regular classroom setting are not trained to deal with some of the needs that are there. It's not inclusive. It could be better, with more training and resources." P1 continued to say, "They're saying, they are not sure if they are trained sufficiently to manage the needs that are visible. We have students who have cerebral parsley, slurred speech, etc." P13 explicated, "The teachers who had them for grade three, four and grade five had no training in special education." One specific principal summarized:

> There has been an increase in the number of students enrolling at primary schools with learning disabilities and I am wondering why. I think children should be assessed from the early childhood stage and do not wait until they get to the primary level. Maybe further study can be done in that area.

The other challenge primary principals related to instructional barriers in mainstream classes is inadequate resources. They believe inadequate resources impede students' progress. P7 alluded, "I'm dealing with children with special needs. You definitely need to have resources that you can draw from." P7 also expressed. "We don't have like a diversity of audio visuals to use." P7 further mentioned, "Our school is not equipped and so we don't have the kind of furniture to facilitate them depending on the need." Finally, P7 said, "You would want the classroom space to have the relevant corners to facilitate certain kind of activities." P13 described, "The teachers are willing to work with these children, but they need the support and the resources that it will take for

them to do justice, to the students in the mainstream classroom." P13, continue to say, "I need the support and resources; all the resources whether human and otherwise, because I know we can break this barrier because we have excellent teachers in our classrooms and at my school." P3 outlined:

> I would say additional resources and spacing are key challenges to instructional and curriculum delivery. For the special education program, I had to use part of the library, the science lab and one of the resource rooms because we presently have four streams of students and I have to top into some of the rooms that we really need. So spacing and no resources are needed which fall under financial resources.

P3 also summed up the significance of a diet for SWSN saying, "I would want to roll out a breakfast program for the entire school, especially for the special needs students, but we lack resources. Next P 3 said, "We will need some financial resources for each of them to get breakfast in the morning; so at least their brains are functioning, and the nutritional aspect is there. Then P3 concluded, "There is a correlation between nutrition and learning."

Further categories related to instructional barrier are inadequate time, class size and the primary curriculum. The principals' comments were noted. P7 lamented, "A challenge is the classroom size, and we don't have teacher assistants for some of those cases." P13 delineated, "There are times when the numbers within the classrooms are so large, and it does not give the one classroom teacher enough time to treat issues with these students." Next P13 articulated:

> You are aware of the method by which special students learn and the strategies that have to be applied. For example, the use of repetition, creativity and also one has to be patient, understanding and know that the change that you are looking for in the child's teaching and learning will take quite a bit of time. It is not anything that will be achieved overnight. So those things are challenges in my school.

In addition to the challenges mentioned concerning instructional barriers, the primary curriculum was also accentuated by the inclusive principals. A range of responses from the primary principals were observed. P1recounted, “In trying to deliver the curriculum, you are going to have students who are not able to write as fast or as legibly as the other students.” P1 further said, “For the lesson, the teacher has to pick foundational work, or do it at a level that they can understand.” Both P1 and P3 commented on assessment. P1 suggested, “When our students go to do exams, you're teaching them a particular way for them to get the concept, but when they're doing the exam, it is a standardized.” P1 finally stated,” If they don't receive accommodations prior to the exam then the students will basically fail because the reading and writing are going to be a challenge.” P3 emphasized, “When using the curriculum in measuring test; it's the same test that is given for everybody and that’s the challenge. A child who is not learning at the regular pace, is more likely to fall at the bottom.” P3 further stated, “Students with special needs can also achieve and be successful; but it will take a little more time than those students who are functioning at the NSC standard.”

P11 indicated, “The curriculum is prescribed to be completed by a certain time. Those with special needs may not be able to meet those specified timeline.” In addition,

P11 also noted, “Depending on what you're teaching, it does require more time than it's prescribed. The ministry should provide sample lesson plans for special needs students in the regular classroom.” Finally, P11 said, “Some of the students are rushed because we need to finish the curriculum and we don’t get enough time. Some of them become frustrated because we are moving on and they are still lost.”

Theme 5: Parental issues impact instructional barriers in mainstream primary schools for principals.

Parents in denial, lack of support, and their socioeconomic background are some of the issues that contribute to instructional barriers to inclusion for SWSN. Principals’ data revealed that parents were in denial of their child’s disability at primary schools. For example: P1: noted, “Sometimes parents are hindrance because if they don't think that there's something wrong with their child, then they're not putting in the effort to try and fix whatever the problem is.” P1 also indicated, “Sometimes parents feel that there's nothing wrong with their child. In their mind the child is fine. They don’t accept the fact that the child has a challenge or an issue.” P5 indicated:

> One of the major issues is that they're sometimes in denial. So, children will have needs, but the parents are not able to see that. They still think that the child should be performing at the same rate as other children. So, the kind of assistance that you would need from the home to get these children to move, you don't necessarily get it or you get it in a negative way. So, if we can only get them to understand, we will be able to pass this barrier.

P13 agreed, “I can tell you that we don't have the support from our parents. That would make the process easier for the child when the child gets home, or even easier for the child when the child is in school.” Another principal shared this scenario:

> We have had cases where the parents are in denial so we have had to ask the parents, please to keep the child at home while we engage the child in online learning for a while until we can get that child support, because the child is a danger to himself and the other person's around.

Another instructional barrier principals perceived was lack of parental involvement. In general, inclusive principals reported on the lack of parents’ support. One principal in general articulated, “That particular parent, I think she knows something is wrong with him. But she's a little lay back in terms of getting help.” The principal continued to say, “I think sometimes the parents themselves are a little too laid back, and they feel that if they have the child put away in some corner, then they don't really have to pay attention to them.” P3 stated, “We need some more parental involvement as relates to the special needs students.” P3 also noted, “Mindset is a barrier. Some of our parents have the mindset that SWSN are not going anywhere; even if they have the resources to spend on them, they prefer doing so on the normal child.” P7 explicated, “The biggest barrier for me is, we have quite a number of parents who do not support their children's education projects.” P7 also said, “They don't come to meetings, so we definitely have to be like compelling and putting measures in place to force them to be a part of their children.” P1 agreed, “They don’t attend meetings when invited. When we have things for them, they don’t show up.” P9 commented, “Unfortunately, maybe about 60% of our

parents are not at a place where we are confident that they are helping their children. For one reason or another, it could be that they are unable, unwilling, or unavailable sometimes." P13 expressed, "We don't have the support from our parents that would make the process easier for the child when the child gets home or even easier for the child being in school."

P11 emphasized, "Parents can be the highest barriers because if they refuse to support, they do not value education, and they're unwilling to come on board or partner with us to work with their children then they are a barrier." In addition, P11 recounted:

> I believe that some parents help to discourage some of the children. For example, when we do our reports, I was encouraged not to put a position on the report because they are concerned about the position the child comes in the class. We're saying to them, Let us go beyond position, and pay attention to the specific comments being made in terms of the child's attitude as well as the different subject areas, their scores and some of the challenges the teachers are having.

Despite the parental barriers mainstream principals discussed, they also alluded to parental involvement for SWSN at inclusive primary schools. P7 indicated, "A few of them, however, would want to have their children do better academically, but they themselves are not in a position to do so." P9 discussed, "We have some excellent parents, whatever the school is doing to support their children, they are right there beside us to make it happen." P7 recounted, "I've seen, the students who were so weak academically have improved to the point where they master the grade four literacy and

surprise us. But that is because of the parental involvement and empowerment sessions we have." Then P3 summed up:

> As it relates to instructional barriers and parents, to my surprise some of them are very supportive and showed a lot of interest in their children. Even when we have our consultations, they would come and have discussions with the teachers. I remember in one of the meetings some parents are asking, when will we start a Saturday reading class? So, some parents are really observant and vigilant as it relates to the students' learning and some of the challenges that the students might be faced with. If they don't understand what is happening, they will reach out to the teacher or come to school and really reach out to us for help.

Primary principals related to low socioeconomic background as one of the factors affecting instructional barriers in the inclusive classes. When instructional barriers were discussed, low socioeconomic background emerged as a factor. P13 expressed, "Many of my parents are not so literate." P9 highlighted, "We are from a low-income community and to go with that it can almost predict that parents for the most part don't really have a high appreciation for education." P9 further stated, "They really just see schooling as somewhere you go because you are of the age." P11 explicated, "So what we find is that most of our children with special needs. They are also at the lower level, financially. P11 continues to say, "They are unable to buy a tablet and they don't have the books. Whatever resources we require of them to have as a child or as parents to provide they are unable to have those." In closing, P11 shared, "Some of them are not even fed well.

So, when they come they are not concentrating because they're already having other problems."

Theme 6: Mainstream principals discussed the effect of instructional barriers on SWSN performance in the regular classrooms.

Inclusive principals alluded to the effect parental and curriculum barriers have on SWSN in regular classrooms. The inclusive principals elucidated as follows: P3 related, "Some parents who do not show as much interest in their children education, not coming to PTA meetings, or do not keep in touch with the class teachers are barrier impacting students' performance to a high degree." P3 continue to say, "Some of these students don't have all the textbooks and when they look besides them and see their classmates with books, they really feel demotivated and feel as if they are left alone; that impact on their academic performance." In addition, P3 mentioned, "I observed that the boys who don't live with their fathers and the fathers are not playing an integral role, they're not performing at the standard that they ought to and they really give a lot of behavioral problems." P5 expressed, "If we're not getting the kind of support from the home, then the students will not be able to perform at their maximum level so these children performance are impacted in a negative way."

P11 suggested, "The barriers first and foremost negatively impact a student's performance academically and socially." First, "There is inadequate time to complete the curriculum." Second, "As a result of the parents not supporting us; sometimes they quarrel with the child and that discourage the student." Third, "Their social skills is affected; not having a high concept of self or being accepted, persons will react

differently. They feel less of themselves and sometimes it displayed in them going into extreme isolation, becoming bullies or just being aggressive." P13 articulated, "They create negative impact because these students have educational challenges; they do not have the requisite parental support. Many times, it is left solely to the school to do everything for the child or the children." P13 further said, "There are times when the provision is made, and parents do not send their children out so that they can benefit from these extra things that the institution organize for the students."

Theme 7: Strategies principals employed to mitigate parental barriers at mainstream primary schools.

Inclusive principals employed strategies to mitigate parental barriers at mainstream primary schools. The principals described strategies utilized to address the lack of parental involvement for SWSN. For example, P1 explicated, "We have sessions where we invite the parents; we try to educate them where they can see that, yes my child has a need, and these are some of the things they can do." Three principals noted the significance of the guidance counsellor. One reported, "We have a vibrant guidance and counselling department. Once we detect a need, then we pull on them to help us to streamline the students by contacting the special education department unit of the ministry." The other highlighted, "The cases are more than we have the capacity to handle. When the guidance counsellors are aware of the cases they do home visits and call in parents to have conferences. The guidance department plays a critical role in this area." Then another related:

> We have many dialogues with the parents and the guidance counsellors conduct counselling depending on the nature of the need. Sometimes we reach out to the MOE for additional help as well as external counselling programs to assist. Right now because of external programme a child was transferred to the psychiatric department based on the nature of the need.

P7 articulated, “We have empowerement sessions wih the parents of students we surmized to have special needs and tell them this is what you can do at home, these are the activities, and we would meet them back every two weeks. P7 continue to explain, “We've cut out pictures, paste in a scrapbook and we say, do this with your child over a period of time come back and tell us how it works.” In closing, P7 said, “Incrementally we give them tickets as to how to help them to have their children improve academically.” P9 stated, “We have open communication with the parents. All grades have a WhatsApp group where teachers post student’s work, homework, take picture of the textbook, on the board etc. to ensure the children are not at a disadvantage.” P11explained, “We use Google classrooms to post lesson plans for parents to access from home and help their children. If they are able to read, the materials, examples, instructions and activities are there.” P13 elucidated, “I have been toying with the idea to have a program helping parents to improve on their literacy. They would be able to give parent child support helping with homework, assignments, projects, and studying for assessments.” P13 continued, “Getting the parents involved academically in the life of their children, so that they can support at school and be uplifted by what is done at home.”

Another strategy utilized is supporting parents in denial. P5 expressed, “When you identify the need and make reference for the child to be assessed, parents do not go. We have had cases where the guidance counsellor will pick up the student and parent and take them to the clinic, the hospital or wherever.” P5 also indicated, “We had cases where we have to find all the medication and we would say, mommy give the child the medication, but we have to be monitoring it closely.”

The inclusive principals consider their untrained teachers working with SWSN and strategized accordingly. P1remarked, “We have pull out sessions. We try as best as possible to meet those needs by having follow up sessions especially for the numeracy and literacy so that the SWSN are engaged. Two principals’ liaison with the MOE to get assistance for their inclusive teachers.” P5 stated, “We have had persons from this special education department coming in to do presentations with the general staff as well as individual teachers who will have children in the classes with special needs.” P13 indicated, “I engage the MOE and do professional development workshops. I contact with the regional office and the Special Needs Unit. They do visit my school frequent to observe and check on the students who have special needs.”

The need for additional training was also considered by the participants. P3 reported, “We have professional development seminars. These seminars usually cater to the weaknesses that we identify in the common planning time or teachers might suggest areas that they think are important for us to have a PD on.” P9 indicated, “The enrichment teacher has special education training as well and from time to time she will prepare training, programs periodically to supplement or assist the teachers.” P11 stated,

"We conduct training sessions for my teachers." P13 also mentioned, "We're working with persons specially trained from Mico Care Centre and my teachers and I communicate with colleagues at other schools for best practices."

Concerning mitigation of instructional and curriculum barriers to inclusive education one principal mentioned a strategy they used for the primary curriculum and SWSN. P3 noted, "The vice principal and myself attend the common planning time to listen to the discussions, answer questions and give support." P3 also added, "We ensure there's differentiation in all lesson plans including the five E's and four C's as well as the differentiation of the assessments. No one assessment is given because we have mixed ability students." In addition, P3 stated, "We adjusted the timetable to increase the instructional hours given to literacy."

Inadequacy is another solution the inclusive principals observed. One mainstream principal commented on the human resources applied to aid and offset instructional barriers for SWSN. P5 stated, "Right now we have shadows for a couple of our special students." P1commented, "I have a boy doing PEP exam this year. In grade 4 we sought accommodations for him, and we got a reader; but that wasn't sufficient, so he got additional time." P1 also said, "Now I have to apply again for a reader, extra time and somebody to write for him, because writing is a challenge."

Mainstream principals employed strategies to cushion low socioeconomic background for SWSN in primary schools. P1 principal lamented, "The children who have these needs are not so well off. As part of our student welfare, we provide for them the book, pencil and lunch most times." Two other principals highlighted the need for a

breakfast program. P3 noted, “I'm gonna start the breakfast program with the special needs children because they need to be properly fed in terms of the diet, so they can learn even faster and better.” P11 said, “We make sure meals are prepared on time to feed those in need.”

Research Question 3

How does the current primary curriculum impact instructional barriers to inclusion for SWSN at primary school?

The National Standard Curriculum (NSC) was revised in 2016 and has been used by inclusive educators at mainstream primary schools in Jamaica. The entire sample was probed to answer research question 3 in relation to the (NSC) and the data delineated participants’ responses in two categories: inclusive teachers and inclusive principals working with SWSN at the primary level.

Inclusive Teachers’ Responses

From the data, I developed four themes from teachers working in the inclusive classrooms: 1) Primary teachers consider the impact of the NSC on instructional barriers for SWSN in the classroom, 2) Lesson planning for SWSN in the mainstream setting affect teachers at the primary level, 3) Primary Teachers described SWSN performance level in the PEP exam, and 4) Inclusive educators’ knowledge and awareness of the special education curriculum.

Theme 1: Primary teachers consider the impact of the NSC on instructional barriers for SWSN in the classroom.

The impact of the primary NSC on instructional barriers for SWSN in the regular class was an issue for the teachers. T4 discussed, "I don't think the curriculum helps the special needs children to really understand; the NSC don't really cater for them. The challenge is really great." T4 continued, "I have several NSC before me right now and there is nothing there about special needs. As it relates to the instruction the target are for the regular students." In addition, T4 said, "They give us an idea about technology. They gave us the idea about collaboration, communication and developing critical thinking in these students. It says students, it's not really narrow it down to special needs." T6 recounted, "I don't think the curriculum lends itself to these students because they don't like to write and it requires them to write. I think there needs to be some adjustments because the curriculum is designed mostly for regular students." P12 expressed, "They need to do more with the curriculum. It is not geared for special needs students. It is for the regular classroom settings."

Primary teachers described their perception of the NSC for SWSN. On a rating scale 1 to 5 with 1 being the least, teachers gave their verbal opinion on the impact the national standard curriculum has on instructional barriers for SWSN in the inclusive classrooms. All the interviewees' responses had a rating of 2 with the exception of one teacher rating as 1. The latter said, "The curriculum is not aligned for them, not at all. So, I'd say one or zero."

Theme 2: Lesson planning for SWSN in the mainstream setting affects teachers at the primary level.

The issue of lesson planning in correlation to the NSC for SWSN at the primary level was observed. Most of the teachers supported the idea that writing lesson plans was a challenge in the inclusive setting. For example: P8 emphasized, "If we get a curriculum where it has inclusive education in it, I believe there would be more successful lesson plans as well." Next P8 stated, "Lesson plans are a bit challenging to write catering to all the different learning needs." Finally, T8 indicated:

> At the grade level different teachers write the lesson plans for the subjects. I write the mathematics lesson plans and another teacher writes the language arts. For my students, some of the activities they can't manage them, so I have to tailor them to meet their needs.

T6 explained, "These kids cannot read well. The curriculum is too advanced for them, For instance, in Integrated Studies we teach about the teeth. The curriculum will tell you to write about the tooth and label the diagram." Nonetheless, T6 further said, "As a teacher, you'll have to break it down to the basic level in order for them to understand." T6 concluded, "So it's like you are actually doing two different lesson planning. One for the regular students and one for those special. That's a bit challenging for one person." T2 explicated, "Supported material to use with the activities are not differentiated; even the material ministry can do something about those. That's one of my issues with the curriculum" T12 alluded, "I have difficulty adjusting aspect of the content of the curriculum." In addition, another teacher said, "I think what the ministry can do is to

create lesson plans for them because we know they are way below the grade level. They should be learning at the grade three, but they are not."

Theme 3: Primary Exit Profile (PEP) exam results for SWSN at mainstream schools

The SWSN performance level in the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) exam was prevalent throughout the data collection. When teachers were asked to describe how the NSC helps in preparing the students to sit the PEP exam, the teachers' comments were noted. For example: T8 stated, "When the students sit the exams, their grades are really poor. For PEP most of those students' results are at the beginning level. They cannot manage the Curriculum." T4 agreed, "As it relates to preparing them to sit the exam. The curriculum does not help." T4 further mentioned, "The teachers have to be the ones to sit down, modify and adjust the curriculum to cater to the students learning and that is a total different thing from what is given in the NSC exam." Finally, T4 described, "We get them at the beginning stage and by the time they are to sit the exam they are at the developing stage." T12 noted, "Maybe the results for those students are at the beginning or developing levels. The curriculum is not for these students."

Theme 4: Inclusive educators' knowledge and awareness of the Special Education Curriculum

The awareness and knowledge of the special education curriculum announced by the Special Education Unit in 2016 was unknown to most of the teachers. When the question was asked, "Does your school uses the special education curriculum?" the following responses were recorded. T5 articulated, "No, no, I don't know of the curriculum, I'm not aware of it." T12 elucidated "I'm not seeing that at all. I've never seen

it before. Maybe they have it at the special needs school, but they need to bring it into the regular classroom as well." T2 alluded, "The Special education curriculum is not in my school." T8 noted, "Is there a special education curriculum? Oh no." However, T4 said:

> My school uses a modify special education curriculum develop by the Special Education Unit at region 6. The modify curriculum does not prepare the students for the PEP. It only caters to the needs of the students. They are 3 to 4 grade levels below in reading, writing or math; so we start from the basic level there.

In discussion of the special education curriculum, the teachers expressed interest in having it at their schools. Positive outcomes were observed. P2 indicated, "Yes, I would like to have a special curriculum at my school. If a special education teacher is there, she would be using it for sure." T6 explained, "It would be nice for us to have one, but that teacher will have to prepare two lesson plans. I would prefer if the MOE set these lessons so the teacher will have them to use." T12 lamented, "Maybe they have it at the special needs school, but they need to bring it in to the regular classroom as well." T8 shared, "Yes, I would like my school to have one, if teachers know that there is a special education curriculum. We can actually go to that curriculum and look for activities for the students with special needs." In relation to the special education curriculum, T4 noted otherwise, "I would think of human resource to be a barrier; as it relates to how qualify and experience these persons are and how realistic too in improving the special education curriculum in Jamaica."

Inclusive Principal Responses

In consideration of the research question, "How does the current primary curriculum impact instructional barriers to inclusion for SWSN at primary school?" three themes emerged from the inclusive principals' responses during the interviews. 1) Primary principals consider the impact of the NSC on instructional barriers for SWSN in the classroom, 2) Inclusive principals described PEP results for SWSN at mainstream primary schools, and 3) Mainstream principals' knowledge and awareness of the special education curriculum.

Theme 1: Primary principals consider the impact of the NSC on instructional barriers for SWSN in the classroom.

The inclusive principals had mixed reactions concerning the impact the primary NSC has on students with disabilities in primary schools. The participants' data described the following: P7 said, "The curriculum can be delivered to anyone in spite of whether they have special needs or not. "Challenge is what you use to deliver it or how it is delivered." P7 continued, "The curriculum is accurate; to impact has to do with who executes, and what pedagogical approach that particular teacher chooses to use." First, P9 stated, "I don't think the curriculum negatively impacts special needs children. It is a very student centered approach to teaching. Next P9 expressed, "Differentiation is a big deal, it is highly promoted where children are not placed in a box, they are able to be creative and take initiative where they are." In closing P9 indicated, "I think it is very inclusive if administer properly." P1 alluded, "Much, of the curriculum is not really focused on the special learners or special needs. It is the teacher who has to modify it to ensure that the

learners get all that is needed from it." P3 indicated, "The National Standards Curriculum is better than the revised curriculum, because it's more student centered; but to me, it is still not inclusive enough, especially with students with special needs." P3 also lamented, "It covers areas of literacy and numeracy to an extent but not for students with special needs." P13 stated, "I think presently some amendment needs to lead on to the present national standards curriculum to meet the needs of inclusion." One principal alluded:

> It's not too late to amend the NSC. Some persons see special education to be incorporated into a literacy program, but the two are different. The NSC should speak to aspects of diagnosing students, pull out session's treatment, and tracking students' progress. After diagnosing students for math and reading levels, it should be taken further. Why are they here? What's happening with learning disabilities? Is it a behavioral problem or not? I think those aspects are missing from the NSC.

Several principals commented on the assessment. P11 stated, "Students who have special needs may not have been able to cover all the materials in the curriculum. Naturally they are not going to do as well as the others. In my opinion, they are different." P11 also shared, "I believe nationally, if it is somewhat possible, use some other means of assessment for these students, then it would be a better chance of them doing well." P9 expounded, "Generally the education system is fashioned in a particular way where all students are assessed the very same way," Next, P9 said, "Understand that your 60% and my 60% are not necessarily the same, is based on where my starting point is, and where I am at now makes a difference." Finally, P9 stated, "Our curriculum is not

customized and understandable so that is one of the biggest barriers in terms of the stereotyping and putting children, everybody in a box." P5 recounted:

> The curriculum, in my view, is fairly flexible. But we have to look at the assessment. The national assessments is one exam for everybody. For example, with the PEP exam, all children do the same exam. The ministry makes some allowance for children with special needs because they will appoint readers or writers and so on. But again, in the absence of a recent assessment report for the child, this allowance is not granted; and if the parents did not see the need to do such assessment, then that child would not be able to access that resource.

Theme 2: Inclusive principals described PEP results for SWSN at mainstream primary schools.

When discussing the performance level for SWSN who sit the PEP exam at primary schools the listed answers were recorded from the inclusive principals. For example, P3 noted, "We have quite a few of them at about the developing level, more so because of the reading level. If the students are not reading well, it's going to impact on the comprehension and the reasoning. P3 also noted, "These students are in culture shock when sitting the PEP exam because the format they are familiar with in class differs from that of the national exam. I belief this contribute to why some of them do so poorly." P5 expressed, "These students at the lower end of the continuum most of the time. So they would be at the developing stage." P11 remarked, "They are at developing level." However, P13 also explicated, "There are special needs students in my grade six, I think autism. When their grade five results for PEP were published, they got high proficient in

some subjects." P13 asserted, "So this is because of the support they got in the mainstream classroom from parents, teachers and the school."

The inclusive principals' rating of the NSC impact on SWSN in regular classrooms using a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the least was as follows: participants had disparity in their rating scores of the current primary curriculum supporting SWSN sitting the PEP exam. Four out of seven principals' ratings were below three, one rating three, another rating four and one principal was uncertain of the rating to give. The principals also expressed as follow: P1 commented, "I don't think it's helping much, even when the teachers modify it," P3 explained, "The NSC can be more effective," P7 noted, "The curriculum is good, but I don't know how to rate it in helping these children."

Theme 3: Mainstream principals' knowledge and awareness of the special education curriculum at primary schools.

The data showed mainstream principals' knowledge and awareness of the special education curriculum that was established 2016 in Jamaica. When asked if they are aware of a special education curriculum in existence, similar responses were obtained from the inclusive principals. For example, P1 highlighted, "I don't know what the special education curriculum looks like, I haven't seen it. I'm thinking that this special education curriculum would be in those schools that are full fledge special education facilities." P7 remarked, "I should think there is one because we have special education schools, but I have no inkling in terms of what exists." P11 commented, "No I have not seen one, no, unfortunately I'm not aware of that." P9 noted, "No, we are not aware of it. These students are exposed to the same exam so we have to do intervention programme for

them" On the other hand, P13 indicated, I heard of it, I have not seen it, so I can't speak to the content of that curriculum, but I know it exists."

Despite some principals' unawareness of the special education curriculum in existence, nonetheless they expressed interest in having it at their schools. P1 explicated, "I think they probably need to share it with those schools that have students with special needs. So we can incorporate it in our day to day lesson since we do have students with special needs." P1 also said, "I really need to see what the special education curriculum is." P5 asserted, "I think we should have one to use because so many special children are here." P13 indicated, "I need to do research to have a better understanding and to see how this curriculum could also be used within my institution for the benefit of my students."

Summary

Chapter 4 is of importance in understanding how the setting, demographic, data collection and analysis process, and the evidence of trustworthiness aligned or adjusted to the descriptions delineated in chapter 3. Furthermore, three research questions were the drivers to examine the topic under investigation. Each question was supported by categories and themes that emerged from the interview data. The findings corroborated teachers' and principals' perspectives on instructional barriers to inclusion for SWSN in mainstream primary schools as well as identified strategies utilized to counteract the same. In chapter 5 I will present the discussion, recommendations, and implications for social change based on these findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and principals toward instructional and curricular barriers to inclusion for students with special needs in schools at the primary level. Information needed to answer the research questions was provided from the shared experiences of seven mainstream principals and five teachers working with SWSN. The sample explained their perceptions of the phenomena of interest as they engaged in in-depth interviews via Zoom conference calls. I used an interview protocol to conduct the interviews, which lasted 30-60 minutes. Additionally, I used a thematic approach to analyze the data for this study, which I managed by applying open coding to find codes, themes, and categories to support the research questions. Three research questions guided the interview questions to help fill a gap in the published literature on the topic.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of teachers toward instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs in primary schools in Jamaica?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of principals toward instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs in primary schools in Jamaica?

RQ3: What kinds of instructional barriers to inclusion are created by the current primary curriculum?

In Chapter 4, several themes are noted that emerged in response to the three research questions. I identified five themes concerning teachers' perspectives to instructional barriers for research question 1: Teachers believe SWSN in the regular

classrooms have negative and positive impact; the inclusion of SWSN in the classroom creates numerous challenges for teachers; primary teachers expressed the instructional barriers they encountered teaching SWSN in the regular classrooms; the exploration of mainstream teachers in primary schools describe the effect instructional barriers have on students' performance; and inclusion educators must develop solutions to combat instructional barriers in primary schools.

From the findings, seven themes emerged for research question 2: mainstream principals' attitude toward SWSN enrolment at primary schools, primary school inclusive principals' perception of inclusive teachers' toward SWSN, primary inclusive principals concerns with mainstream teachers' views of about SWSN in the classrooms, primary inclusive principals description of challenges to instructional barriers for mainstream teachers, parental issues impact on instructional barriers in mainstream primary schools for principals, mainstream principals perceptions of the effects of instructional barriers on SWSN performance in the regular classrooms, and strategies principals employed to mitigate parental barriers at mainstream primary schools.

For research question 3, four themes highlighted the inclusive teachers' responses on the curriculum. For one, primary teachers considered the impact of the NSC on instructional barriers for SWSN in the classroom. They also considered lesson planning for SWSN in the mainstream setting and how it affects teachers at the primary level. Primary teachers described SWSN performance level in the PEP examination, and inclusive educators' knowledge and awareness of the special education curriculum. Three themes emerged for inclusive principals' responses: primary principals' consideration of

the impact of the NSC on instructional barriers for SWSN in the classroom; inclusive principals' description of PEP results for SWSN at mainstream primary schools; and mainstream principals' knowledge and awareness of the special education curriculum.

The microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem in Bronfenbrenner's development ecology model (1979) were used to analyze teachers' and principals' perceptions toward inclusion in this research. The study results revealed the instructional barriers the inclusive educators encountered. Many qualitative research studies have been published on inclusive education; however, there is a paucity of publications on inclusive research in Jamaica with none identified for my study. Therefore, my research may contribute to other scholars' work in the field as it may help to fill a gap in literature. In this chapter, I interpret the study findings, discuss limitations of the study, suggest recommendations for future research, and propose implications for social change.

Interpreting the Findings

Mainstream Principals' Attitude Toward SWSN Enrollment at Primary Schools

Principals' attitudes are pivotal to a successful inclusive environment. As noted in Chapter 4, the reluctant attitude of some principals toward integration of students with disabilities at their schools in Jamaica was a barrier to equitable access to education as it infringed on the rights of the child (MOE Draft Policy, 2015). According to Mentz and Barrett (2011), Jamaican principals were not adequately prepared to lead the effort to create an inclusive environment. In my study, six out of seven mainstream principals articulated their school's policy reflects inclusion, and that they cultivate a school climate to facilitate the Jamaica MOE mantra, "Every child can learn, every child must learn."

The principals stressed the need and value for equality to be demonstrated toward SWSN at their schools. For example, P5 explicated "Our aim here is to ensure that every child that comes through these gates, have the kind of attention that he or she needs." P3 expounded, "They (SWSN) are to be included and taught at the highest levels by our teachers so that no child is left behind in their academic development." Data from the study revealed that the principals in this study demonstrated positive attitudes in enrolling SWSN at their mainstream schools in Jamaica. This finding contradicted previous research literature in Chapter 2 on Jamaican principals portraying negative attitudes toward enrolling SWSN at the primary level.

Teachers Believe SWSN in the Regular Classrooms Has Negative and Positive Impact

In Chapter 2, an abundance of literature delineated the impact teachers' attitudes have on the academic performance of SWSN in schools. LeMay's (2017) study showed that academic progress and teachers' interaction toward students with disabilities were influenced by the teachers' attitudes. Students with disabilities who are perceived negatively by the teacher may be subjected to lower expectations, higher levels of criticism, and more negative attention (Bosch, 2015). Studies investigating teacher attitudes toward including students with special needs in the regular classrooms in developed and developing countries yielded mixed results (Nketsia, 2016). Morris and Henderson (2016) conducted a study entitled "Empowerment of Children with Disabilities in Jamaica," reporting that barriers such as negative attitudes were one of the

main causes for the lack of facilitation of inclusion, despite new inclusive educational policies and finding this phenomenon is common in other countries.

The findings from my study revealed that teachers with negative attitudes in mainstream classrooms did not want to interact with SWSN; they preferred the student being in a segregated setting, and some colleagues were aggressive, impatient, and unwilling to work with the students. One of the teachers expressed, “Most times, you have teachers who don't want to work with these students because they believe if I take these students, my class is going to be left behind.” Researchers asserted that teachers often perceive having students with disabilities in their classroom as a disadvantage to other general education students in that class (LeMay, 2017). The data from my study confirms findings in the literature that teachers with negative attitudes toward inclusive classrooms contribute to instructional barriers, low performance, and low self-worth among SWSN.

The findings emphasized that teachers also had positive attitudes working with SWSN. Matzin and Nishan (2020) asserted that a teacher’s positive attitude is one of the success factors in inclusive education (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Nketsia, 2016). In my study, teachers who had positive attitudes described being an advocate for these children, going the extra mile to facilitate their learning, and believing that once the resources are available, they can make a difference. One teacher indicated, “If I have the resources, the support, and additional training, I will work with these special children.” The principals also indicated positive attitudes of some teachers. For instance, a principal said, “I do have a few teachers who are willing and expressing the mindset to work with these

children. They are also deploying that in their teaching and learning daily." The study data are consistent with literature asserting that teachers' positive attitude in inclusive education influence academic progress and interaction for SWSN in the regular classroom.

The Inclusion of SWSN in the Classroom Creates Numerous Challenges for Teachers

My findings showed that the challenges principals identify as instructional barriers were like the numerous challenges teachers experienced. Untrained teachers working with SWSN greatly influence instructional barriers. The education project coordinator at the MOE indicated that there is a great need for qualified personnel to serve the students with special needs (Ministry of Education Jamaica, 2016). Further, Morris (2011) reported that there is a lack of teachers with the requisite skills to train and impart knowledge to persons with disabilities in Jamaica. The Taskforce report (Davis, 2004) outlined concerns in the Jamaican education system and highlighted the inadequate preparation of teachers in training to meet the needs of the special child within the regular classroom setting. The sample's demographic form mentioned in Chapter 4 highlighted that 60% of the teachers had no training in inclusive education, which was evidenced in their competency working with this populace in the classrooms. The remaining 40% of the teachers had no formal training in special education but obtained inclusive training through workshops.

Participants in my study believed a lack of training and inexperience in inclusive education greatly influences SWSN achievement. One participant articulated, "Since

SWSN is a major issue with many schools, I think more should be done in terms of training. Even the professional development we have for the midterm, could infuse something with special education." Principals also expressed that some teachers have no confidence and believe they are incompetent to teach SWSN due to lack of training in special education and that they are unequipped with the proper pedagogy skills. Consequently, teachers avoid working with SWSN due to accountability issues. One principal expressed that they think that if the child does not do well, it is a reflection of the teacher's inadequacy. Hence, that degree of accountability in having to deal with these students causes teachers to shy away. These findings align with the literature in Chapter 2 noting that the inclusive environment requires providing teachers with the appropriate skills, resources, and support to aid SWSN being successful.

Another set of challenges was undiagnosed students and a mix of ability and disability students. Gooden–Monteith (2019) postulated that there is no early screening and intervention program to detect SWSN at the early childhood level in Jamaica. Many of these students advanced to mainstream settings at primary schools without being diagnosed. The study participants concurred that those undiagnosed students mixed with disability and ability students are challenges they faced in the inclusive setting. Teachers assume that some students have a disability because of the attitudes they display and their low performance, but there are no psychoeducational assessment records for them to verify their observations. Consequently, pedagogy and instructional practices have been negatively influenced. One teacher explicated that, "sometimes I don't know how to break down the curriculum to meet the needs of these children." Inclusive principals

lamented that the mix ability of SWSN was a challenge to instructional practices. P9 stated, “Many teachers find it a challenge to cope with certain challenges the special children may display like autism, ADHD etc.”

The results showed that the mix of ability and disability students in the classroom affect the achievement pace of the nondisabled as the same teacher must accommodate learning for the SWSN at a slower pace. The teachers also discussed their inability to address the various disabilities they encountered. Wilcox’s (2020) research on inclusion theorized that some students need specific instructional content and strategies that would not benefit most students in general education. My results and the published literature support those undiagnosed students and the mix of ability and those with disabilities in the mainstream classrooms create challenges for the teachers’ efficiency. Additionally, the results showed that the challenges principals identify to instructional barriers were like those of the teachers. These conclusions were substantiated from the interviews with the principals. Inclusive principals lamented that the mix ability of SWSN was a challenge to instructional practices. P9 stated, “Many teachers find it a challenge to cope with certain challenges the special children may display like autism, ADHD etc.” In the literature review in Chapter 2, researchers postulated that teaching learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive environment is not easy; the necessary changes in instructional practices require support beyond the classroom and the local school (Nel et al., 2016).

My findings depicted that frequent absenteeism, class size, and inadequate space were challenges. Educators recounted that the students with special needs are more

frequently absent. For example, an educator articulated that there are 72 days in the term; one student attended for 20 + days and the other attended for 36 days. As absenteeism is a problem, these students always lag behind. According to Sharma (2015), children with disabilities are less likely than their peers to receive an education: approximately 90% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school, while the few who do often attend subpar programs. This indicates that my finding is consistent with published literature reporting frequent absenteeism is observed in SWSN globally.

The Materechera (2020) study revealed that the major barriers to learning in inclusive education are time, classroom size, and lack of training in primary schools in South Africa. Mentz and Barrett (2011) found that schools and classrooms were largely overcrowded in Jamaica. P13 remarked, “There are times when the numbers within the classrooms are so large, and it does not give the one classroom teacher enough time to treat issues with these students.” P11 said, “Some of the students are rushed because we need to finish the curriculum and we don’t get enough time. Some of them become frustrated because we are moving on and they are still lost.” The findings from my study support the literature related to challenges of inadequate time, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of training in inclusive education, all of which hinder students’ progress. Students who are eligible for special education are likely not to learn at the same rate as students without disabilities since students with disabilities often require a slower pace of instruction and more intensive, individualized instruction, with greater support, and more repetitions and feedback than is necessary for most students in general education (Cooc, 2019).

Primary Teachers and Principals Expressed the Instructional Barriers They Encountered Teaching SWSN in the Regular Classrooms.

Instructional barriers and curricular barriers impede students' from achieving academic goals and learning (Meier & Rossi, 2020). My data showed that the literacy and numeracy challenges teachers experience with the grades 1-3 SWSN were skill barriers that impede instructional practices. Gooden-Monteith indicated that Bowell-Howell, chairman of the special education committee Jamaica Teachers' Association (JTA), conducted a study which showed that more than 50% of students entering grade 1 at primary schools do not have the readiness skills to start the primary school curriculum. Data also indicated that the untrained teachers lack self-efficacy and were not knowledgeable how to deliver or modify the NSC curriculum to effectively meet the needs of these children. Sharma (2015) found that inadequate teacher training and knowledge is a significant barrier to the transition to fully inclusive classroom. This concurs with the literature that suggests that being untrained impacted teachers' inability to modify the curriculum to benefit SWSN, thus causing a learning barrier.

In relation to assessment, one teacher emphasized that testing is standardized to theory only and different means of testing would benefit SWSN in becoming more successful. Principals and teachers further discussed the inflexibility in the assessment format and inadequate time to complete the national examination. The findings revealed that the teachers utilized different methodologies, differentiated instructions and activities through various modalities to administer formative and summative assessments for SWSN. However, when these students are sitting the standardized national examination

PEP, all methodologies are restricted to only theoretical application. One principal expressed that these students (special needs) are in culture shock when sitting the PEP examination because the format they are familiar with in class differs from that of the national examination. The participant believed this contributes to why some do so poorly. Both teachers and principals reported that the results of SWSN sitting the PEP examination are usually at the lower end of continuum as that is the beginning or developing stage in their performance. Consequently, these experiences describe the curricular barriers in the regular class. The literature in Chapter 2 highlighted the Ministry of Education's concern for students' not meeting key performance standards, which resulted in underperformance at the primary and secondary levels (The Jamaica Draft Policy on Special Education, 2015). The study findings confirm the cited work of Meier and Rossi (2020); Nel et al. (2016); and MOE draft special education policy (2015) that skills and curriculum barriers do exist in the mainstream classrooms in Jamaica.

Moreover, students with special needs require technology to enhance curriculum delivery and minimize individual barriers. The results showed that no assistive aids or technology are available to support those with individualized barriers in literacy, penmanship, and speech impairment in the regular class. P13, lamented, "I need the support and all the resources whether human and otherwise, because I know we can break this barrier because we have excellent teachers in our classrooms and at my school." According to Meier and Rossi (2020) text-to-speech software can be useful in instructional practices for students with literacy challenges or speech impediment. Hayes and Butal (2017) noted that assistive technology devices can help students to access

information and be successful in the classroom. Currently, however, only five to 15 percent of children with disabilities in low-income countries have access to assistive technologies or assistive devices (Saebones et al., 2015). The lack of assistive aids and technology made teaching preparations and deliveries difficult. Mentz and Barrett (2011), Morris and Henderson (2015) and Gooden-Monteith (2019) reported on the absence of technological support in the classrooms to accommodate persons with disabilities. These results coincide with literature the significance of using assistive aids or technology to benefit SWSN in the diversify classroom thus eliminating instructional barriers.

Additional resources besides technology were inadequate to work with SWSN. Monteith's (2019) study alluded to the lack of physical and human resources to greater support from other teachers, more instructional materials, a structured curriculum, and time for one-on-one instructions. In this research all the educators reiterated the need to have resources to support SWSN at school. The results described teachers' expectation of paraprofessional support for SWSN since they are untrained in special education and some of these students need 1:1 attention. Whereas principals articulated that teachers perceived whether the school or MOE does not provide the resources to work with these students, they will have to use their personal funds to purchase resources without being reimbursed or compensated for the extra time given to these children. These results were comparable to the studies done by Mentz and Barrett (2011), Morris and Henderson (2015), and Gooden-Monteith (2019) to confirm challenges in lack of resources inclusive educators experience at the primary level. On the contrary, two teachers mentioned the support they obtained from the MOE in providing shadows to work with SWSN at their

schools. However, another teacher indicated that the books received from the MOE were not differentiated; hence, SWSN did not benefit from them. Teaching learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive environment is not easy; the necessary changes in instructional practices require support beyond the classroom and the local school (Nel et al., 2016). This data indicate corroboration with the literature that inadequate resources facilitate learning gaps in SWSN thus it enhances the challenges present in the Jamaica regular classroom. Consequently, the teachers need external support to combat the same.

Furthermore, the findings revealed lack of parental involvement, parents in denial, and the low socioeconomic background as significant factors that contribute to instructional barrier. Lack of parental supported was perceived when students returned to class with undone homework, in complete assignments and nonattendance at relevant meetings. The results also described that parents in denial of their child's disability tend to possess incorrect dispositions in comparing the child's performance with others; displayed negligence or refuse to get recommended help for their special needs child; and were inattentive to prevalent behavior or patterns link to a disability, thus impeding the student's progress and impacting instructional barriers. According to the literature, unfortunately, many families remained ignorant of the learning areas stipulated in the *National Curriculum Statement* (Literacy, Numeracy and Life-Skills); prevocational programs (practical skills involving gardening, cookery, sewing); and therapies (speech, hearing, physiotherapy and occupational therapy) offered at the school, and were therefore dependent on the knowledge and skills of teachers and related specialists to

ensure that the holistic development of children with special education needs were met (Maniram, 2015). A particular principal emphasized that parents can be the most significant barriers if they refuse to support and value education and are unwilling to partner with the school to work with their children. Whereas data described parents impacting instructional barriers, it was also noted that excellent parents make extraordinary efforts on behalf of their children, so SWSN may benefit from available services, programs, and structures to eliminate instructional barriers.

Findings from this study also revealed that some parents of SWSN are from low socioeconomic backgrounds and experience financial constraints, have literacy issues, and do not value education. All the principals concurred that lack of parental involvement in the students' education affects student progress. One principal mentioned, "I observed that the boys who don't live with their fathers and the fathers are not playing an integral role, they're not performing at the expected standard and do give a lot of behavioral problems." The data also revealed that some students with disabilities come to school but without writing tools, books, pencils, no breakfast or lunch money, and without uniform. These are empirical signs of poverty or low socioeconomic experiences SWSN are facing thus supporting instructional barriers in primary mainstream classrooms. Maniram (2015) found that special needs students exposed to poverty are more susceptible to underperformance in schools, which compounds the barriers experience in learning. The findings gathered in this research align with the work of Maniram (2015).

The Mainstream Teachers in Primary Schools Described the Effect Instructional Barriers Have on Students' Performance.

The teachers in this study reported that generally SWSN performed two to four grade levels below their nondisabled counterpart. Nevertheless, there are special needs students who outshined their counterparts in the regular classrooms. Teacher 8 alluded that the class average for the ADHD and autism students were 84 and 82 percentage respectively. Both students received awards at the school's prize giving ceremony. According to Moriña and Orozco's (2019) study on curriculum, teachers believed SWSN can learn the same content even though they may move at a slower pace. Previous researchers supported the evident in the interview data that some SWSN can learn the content of NSC used in the Jamaica primary schools.

Inclusive Educators Developed Solutions to Combat Instructional Barriers in Primary Schools.

Inclusive teachers utilized strategies to aid in mitigating instructional barriers for SWSN in mainstream classes. Wilcox's (2020) research on inclusion theorized that some students need specific instructional content and strategies that would not benefit most students in general education. The study results indicated that teachers employed strategies to mitigate instructional barriers. These included fund raisers to offset learning resources expenses and motivational strategies to boost students' self-esteem and lessen behavioral issues. Further results indicated that the teacher engaged in parental involvement and networking with their principals, other educators, and organizations to obtain best practices which expand their knowledge on how to effectively work with SWSN. Brennan et al. (2019) offered a model for critical dialogue and public sharing of work in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) and how it can support teachers to

contribute to the goal of equality for all learners. Teachers who carry out inclusive pedagogy claim that they needed to establish a stronger bond with their families, other teachers of primary education and universities to develop synergies. This conclusion aligns with studies by Binkhorst et al. (2015), Brennan et al. (2019), and Hairon et al. (2015), who stated that support networks must be created to build a collective and purposeful teaching leadership that promotes a true collaborative culture.

The study participants further elucidated the intervention programs strategy employ. It encompasses pull-out sessions, writing students' IEP, develop a tracking system to analyze their progress, using manipulatives, and making teaching aids to reduce instructional barriers. The findings also showed that tailored lesson plans, groupings and the implementation of workstations created the opportunity for the class teacher to scaffold those with disabilities. Providing support for a skill barrier is like providing scaffolding for students in their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). This study confirmed previous research that the strategies inclusive educators employed to combat instructional barriers are similar practices supported by other scholars in the field.

Strategies Principals Employed to Mitigate Parental, Instructional and Curriculum Barriers at Mainstream Primary Schools.

Strategies to support lack of parental involvement included counseling sessions conducted by the guidance counselor, parent empowerment sessions in which the parents engage in practical activities to help their struggling child, implementation of class Whatsapp group, and utilization of Google Classroom. Strategies to support parents in denial encompassed the guidance counselor doing errands on behalf of the parents and

engage in follow-up to guarantee the child's benefit. Strategies for teachers included implementing pull out sessions, adjusting timetables, conducting professional development sessions to address teachers need, seeking help from special education unit, collaborating with Mico Care, and networking with colleagues from other schools for best practices. DeMatthews et al. (2021) noted that a principal "set the direction" for inclusion by ensuring teachers worked together, adapting organizational structures, and working conditions, fostering a culture of data-driven decision making, and monitoring teachers to ensure high-quality instruction is in all classrooms (Waldron et al., 2011).

Strategies supporting curriculum barriers included having the principal and vice principal attend common planning meetings and give support as needed. Sharma (2015) asserted that inclusive education systems must provide sufficient support for teachers within schools, including a senior dedicated staffer who ensures inclusive practices and acts as a resource for other teachers, realistic and appropriate staffing levels, leadership and support from the school's governors, joint problem solving and coteaching among the staff, and use of students' families and communities as resources. The data further indicated that the principals applied for shadows to work with SWSN as well as those who need 1:1 accommodation in the PEP examination. Strategies to support children from low socioeconomic backgrounds comprised the implementation of welfare and breakfast programs. All strategies discussed aid to diminish instructional barriers for SWSN in mainstream setting at the primary level. Principals' responsibilities include guiding, training, and soliciting teachers to support SWSN in their schools so that this populace can work toward achieving common educational goals.

Primary Teachers and Principals Consider the Impact of the NSC on Instructional Barriers for SWSN in the Classroom.

The school curriculum is essential in enhancing students' academic performance. Sharma et al. (2019) highlighted that one critical aspect that requires serious attention is the curriculum and pedagogy that would be suitable for inservice and preservice educators to learn. In this research all the principals supported that the revised NSC is more student centered with 40% who indicated that the curriculum is equitable and inclusive. One principal highlighted that the challenge is what resources are used to deliver it or how it is delivered. However, 60% elucidated the need for some amendment to be made to the present NSC to benefit students with disability in the mainstream classroom. The principals' results are consistent with the teachers' results in relation to this theme. All the teachers agreed that the national standard curriculum negatively impacts SWSN in the regular classroom. For instance, one teacher said, "I don't think the curriculum helps the special needs children to really understand; the NSC don't really cater for them, and the challenge is really great." Anderson (2012) concluded that teachers must consider how students' disabilities affect their involvement and progress in the general education curriculum and the programmatic or instructional support needed to enhance involvement and ensure progress. From the study data, both principals and teachers rated the usefulness of the NSC for these students: 80% of the teachers rated the NSC two out of five in effectiveness for SWSN while 20% of the teachers rated it zero to one out of five. In contrast, 57% of the principals' rating is below three, 29% rated three to four out of five and 14% was uncertain of a given rate out of five. Wilson (2018)

asserted that the current primary curriculum in Jamaica should be revised to better identify intellectual delays or learning challenges and respond to them through intervention strategies. These curriculum barriers delineated in the study should be addressed to benefit all learners. Hence, the data corroborate the findings in the literature in Chapter 2 that the current curriculum in Jamaica needs revision.

In the area of assessment, the principals indicated that obviously SWSN are unable to complete the curriculum in a timely manner with their nondisabled peers and yet they sit for the same examination. Consequently, one principal stated that if possible, some other means of assessment should be administered to these students. Likewise, the teachers expressed a similar perception about the assessment while responding to the interview question concerning the instructional barriers teachers experienced in the inclusive classroom. For example, the teachers must sit, modify, and adjust the curriculum to cater to the students learning, and that approach is a totally different one from what is given in the NSC examination. Hayes and Bulat (2017) stated that adaptation requires reviewing the national curriculum standards and determining how best to expose the student to each standard and related performance goal using accommodations. Moriña and Orozco (2019) revealed that the curriculum was flexible and was not modified to meet the needs of special needs children in the regular classroom. Instead, the curriculum was adapted to the reality of the classroom considering students with (SEN). The teachers believed SWSN can learn the same content even though they may move at a slower pace. The results align with research done by Wilson (2018), Hayes and Bulat (2017), and Moriña and Orozco (2019), on

curriculum adaptation to facilitate the best way forward to meet SWSN gaps in the Jamaica education system at the primary level.

Lesson Planning for SWSN in the Mainstream Setting Affects Teachers at the Primary Level.

The teachers' study data described how they spend time modifying the curriculum for SWSN to understand the concepts then write more than one lesson plan to benefit those with and without disabilities in the regular classroom, which is time consuming. This conclusion is validated by the listed comments. One teacher said, "It's like you are actually doing two different lesson planning, one for the regular students and one for those special; that's a bit challenging for one person." In addition, another teacher said, "I think what the MOE can do is to create lesson plans for them (SWSN) because we know they are way below the grade level." Interestingly, some of the principals also confirmed that the MOE should consider providing lesson plans for SWSN to aid mainstream teachers improving on instructional barriers.

Inclusive Educators' Knowledge and Awareness of the Special Education Curriculum.

The results supported that all the participants were unaware of a special education curriculum in existence, except one teacher and principal. Nonetheless the sample expressed interest in having the special education curriculum at their school to aid in the teaching and learning process for SWSN. One teacher noted that "I would like my school to have one, if teachers know that there is a special education curriculum, we can actually go to that curriculum and look for activities for the students with special needs." One

principal reiterated that, “I think they (MOE) probably need to share it with those schools that have students with special needs so we can incorporate it in our day-to-day lesson since we do have students with special needs.” Research indicated that in the academic year 2015-2016, The Special Education Curriculum was provided to 3,402 SWSN (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2017). The study data disconfirm previous research that a special education curriculum exists.

Alignment with the Conceptual Framework

I selected Bronfenbrenner’s Development Ecology Model (1979) as the framework for this study. The findings from this research identified the current micro, meso, and macro barriers that affect instruction to inclusion for students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The micro system revealed the direct interactions, teachers, principals, and parents have on SWSN as well as the impact of numerous challenges they encountered in the mainstream schools. For example, in the Jamaica context, educators struggle to adapt a mainstream curriculum to suit the needs of learners with barriers to learning, a challenge for teachers on the job in the microsystem.

Further enlightenment of the mesosystem was emphatically demonstrated in how the parents’ involvement in the SWSN education impact academic performance and the strategies employed to combat the challenges observed in the microsystem. In relation to parents in denial of their child having special needs, principals and teachers commented as follows: P1 indicated, “Sometimes parents don’t accept the fact that the child has a challenge or an issue.” T8 explicated, “Not all parents are receptive to some of the information that you as a teacher will share.” T8 continued, “Sometimes they become

defensive, and they will say, 'Miss nothing is wrong with my child.' Where do you get that information from?"

During the examination of the macrosystem, I discovered the trajectory service provider agents like Special Education Unit (MOE) and Teacher's Colleges may undertake to address the gap in how principals and teachers think about instructional and curricular barriers to inclusion education. For instance, one teacher articulated that with the lack of support from the Ministry of Education, these students are always going to be left behind. One principal also stated, "A lot of the teachers in the regular classroom setting are not trained to deal with some of the needs that are there. It's not inclusive. It could be better, with more training and resources." The lack of inadequate resources highlights a gap service provider agents can close to eradicate the instructional barriers currently exist in the inclusive settings.

A framework aids the researcher to interpret the findings to better understand the phenomena of interest. Merriam (2009) indicated that all investigations in qualitative research are informed by some specific theoretical framework that enables the focus of the inquiry and data interpreted. Moreover, the findings also enable educators to be knowledgeable of the barriers at the mico, meso, and macro level that affect instructional barriers as well as prepare them to address the same in the inclusive settings. The results emphasize the curriculum, individual skills, and additional challenges that impact instructional barriers in the inclusive classrooms. Table 7 illustrates the logical connections between the model presented and the nature of my study to include teacher

and principal perceptions of instructional barriers for students with special need (SWSN) in terms of the microsystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.

Table 8

Alignment of Results vs. Conceptual Framework: Microsystem

System	Barriers/Challenges	Findings	Connections
Microsystem: Refers to the setting in which the individual lives. These contexts include family, peers, school, and neighborhood. Most direct interactions with parents and teachers take place in the microsystem.	Curriculum barriers	Content: difficult to modify and limited time to complete	
		Materials: inappropriate, inadequate, or now	
		Assessment: methodology in formative & summative assessments differ from National PEP examination	
		SWSN underperformance	
	Individual barriers	SWSN had issues in literacy, numeracy penmanship, speed impediment	Instructional barriers inclusive educators encountered at mainstream primary schools (micro level)
	Skill barriers	Lack foundational skills in numeracy, literacy, alphabets, colour, shapes etc.	
		Teachers' negative attitude toward SWSN	
		Untrained teachers to work with SWSN	
		No special education teacher or teacher assistant in schools	
		Limited paraprofessional	
		Undiagnosed students in inclusive classes	
	Additional challenges	Mix-ability of disabilities	
		Frequent absenteeism	
		Class size	
		Inadequate class space	
		Parents quarrel with child result in: child in isolation, become bully, underperformance	
		Lack of parental support: result in behavioral issues, underperformance	

Table 9

Alignment of Results vs. Conceptual Framework: Mesosystem

System	Barriers/Challenges	Findings	Connections
Mesosystem: Refers to relations among microsystems or connections among contexts. The mesosystem consists of interaction with the microsystem		Parents do not support SWSN in homework, projects, assignments	Barriers at home impact instructional barriers at school (meso level)
	Lack of parental involvement	Do not attend meetings, training etc.	
		Negligence toward child	
		Nonchalant in getting assistance	
	Parents in denial	Treat teachers & principals recommendations with scant regards	
		Refusal to get the child assessed	

Table 10

Alignment of Results vs. Conceptual Framework: Macrosystem

System	Barriers/Challenges	Findings	Connections
Macrosystem: Refers to the cultural beliefs and ideologies, the laws and policies of the organizational structures, the political system, and the child's socioeconomic level.	MOE	Lack of differentiated resources to work on intervention programmes Lengthy waiting period for appointment and assessment at recommended institution (Mico Care) No assistive aids, internet, technology provided to some mainstream schools No national (standardize) school policy on inclusive education National Standard Curriculum (NSC) not meeting the needs of SWSN even when modify with differentiated activities	Service providers affect instructional barriers at mainstream primary schools (macro system)
Study Macrosystem: Service providers - Ministry of Education, Special Education Unit Teachers' Colleges Socioeconomic levels of SWSN	Teachers' Colleges	Teachers lack training in inclusive education Inadequate special education teachers	
	Low socioeconomic background: students	Students live in poverty Poor diet No textbooks and lunch money	Low social economic background affect parents and students at mainstream primary schools
	Low socioeconomic background: parents	Parents live in poverty Do not value education Parents are illiterate Inability to pay for private assessment or services to benefit their child with special needs	

Limitations of the Study

A limit to generalization in this study was the small sample size utilized within a specific region. The transferability of the study was also limited, and the research should not be generalized to all primary schools in Jamaica. However, the detailed description of data collection and analysis procedure made it possible to compare the findings in similar or other areas of study.

My professional background working with SWSN was articulated at the first meeting with the participants. Being cognizant of my experiences and the possibility of conflicting with the research topic, I carefully managed data, field notes and engaged in reflexivity before and after the interviews. This process controlled the threat of personal biases taking precedence over the findings of the study. The comments solicited from the members check indicated that I did an excellent work converging the interview transcripts accurately and no discrepancies were reported to the themes utilized in the findings.

Another limitation was understanding the impact of the special education curriculum for SWSN. Underlying this study was an attempt to include teachers' and principals' perspectives on PEP Assessment and the Special Education Curriculum regarding instructional and curriculum barriers to inclusion for SWSN at the primary level. However, such understanding was futile due to the sample inability to respond to the questions (a) How well does the Special Education Curriculum helps to support/prepare SWSN for sitting the exit examination (PEP)? (b) What can be done to reduce instructional barriers using Special Education curriculum? Except for one

principal and one teacher, all of the participants were unaware of such curriculum in circulation, thus affecting the goal achieved in the research.

The data collection plan indicated that eight teachers and eight principals were to be interviewed for the study. However, saturation was reached by the twelfth interview. The limitation of accessibility in obtaining data from fewer participants than intended prevented the opportunity to understand the other perspectives on this phenomenon to attest for additional gaps, consistency or discrepancies to the findings. Nonetheless, this limitation did not affect the strength of the research due to the rich, thick information ascertained from the sample.

Recommendations

It is recommended further research based on the strengths and limitations of the current study as well as the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. In the findings the principals explained mainstream teachers' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, limited knowledge, and lack of competence toward SWSN. I also recommend that teachers' colleges offer mandatory special education courses and inclusive education to inservice tutors in preparation for their work. These courses encompass topics which will positively help improve teachers' attitudes and the required methodology and skills to counteract the underperformance of students with disabilities in the general education setting. Sharma et al. (2012, as cited in Gooden-Monteith, 2019), theorized that both preservice teachers and those who are practicing should receive the appropriate training in inclusion and diversity to improve their attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to inclusive education. Blackman et al. (2012) as cited in Gooden-Monteith (2019), suggested that because teachers believe

they are not adequately prepared to include special needs students, teacher training in the Caribbean region should be reexamined.

Professional development is another recommendation essential to diminish instructional and curriculum barriers. Families and teachers should benefit from ongoing professional development to increase their knowledge of how to work with SWSN. This strategy enables a paradigm shift for parents in denial and those who lack involvement in their child's education. Moreover, professional development on inclusion promotes positive mindsets in inclusive educators interfacing with learning challenges in mainstream classes. In relation to further training, it is recommended that the government sponsor special education course to regular teachers in the mainstream classes equipping them with expertise to curtail instructional barriers.

The inclusive teachers and principals said that scarcity of resources was one of the major instructional barriers in the general education settings. Therefore, iinclusive teachers should have direct support from paraprofessional, trained special education teachers, specialists, and therapists at mainstream primary schools to support the needs of SWSN. To maintain high visibility of external resources, it is recommended that the government to establish cluster units equipped with appropriate amenities, programs, human resources in the regions to benefit SWSN at inclusive settings. In addition, it is recommended that the government allocate more funds to special education or seek sponsorship to purchase assistive aids, provide technology, and appropriate resources to enhance improved performance for student with disabilities.

Most of the students with special needs are from low socioeconomic background and they are financially challenged to source any kind of support or resources to meet their needs. Therefore, it is recommended that the government provides grant to compensate private assessment for these students who are on the Mico Care long overdue waiting list and disburse a stipend to this marginalize group to offset transportation, lunch, and basic school supplies costs on a wider scale.

Furthermore, the understanding of teachers and principals' perspectives of instructional barriers revealed the gap in the national standard curriculum (NSC) for SWSN. It is recommended that the MOE provide sample lessons plans for SWSN, revise the NSC to insert sections addressing SWSN and authorize each mainstream school to use the Jamaica special needs curriculum established in 2016. These considerations should minimize instructional challenges in the teaching learning process.

One of the ways to eliminate instructional barriers in inclusion for SWSN is accommodation. I observed that some study participants did not understand the procedure to acquire accommodation for SWSN. Consequently, the next recommendation point is to establish an inclusive policy for schools in Jamaica. This policy should encompass standards, accountability parameters, serve as a benchmark to measure improvement, gaps, and recommendations for SWSN in an inclusive environment. Hence, this approach will help to mitigate uncertainty in the required actions to be taken by educators when enrolling SWSN in mainstream schools. The commitment to inclusive education is clearly reflected in national policy and strategic planning in general and should be included in the education budget (Hayes & Bulat, 2017).

I also recommend public awareness in inclusive education. This awareness will support educators in eliminating stigmatization and discrimination, while promoting equality and respect for diversities in the classrooms. Public awareness may help sensitize parents on the valuable role they play to complement the education process of their child with a disability. It also encourages appreciation for the child's uniqueness and the importance of seeking professional intervention. Moreover, sensitizing the public may help society to become more knowledgeable of SWSN, thus creating opportunities for stakeholders to contribute resources more readily to schools without disparity. Finally, such engagement aid to bridge the gap in inclusive education. Subsequently, instructional barriers for SWSN may be reduced at schools both at the local and national levels.

In this research, only one participant mentioned the use of individual education program (IEP) as an intervention programme for the SWSN in the mainstream classrooms. Students with special needs who underperform may leave school after not mastering or even achieving any academic target mentioned on their IEP targets and students with behavioural issues tend to be expelled from schools (Gooden-Monteith, 2019). The implementation of IEP requires additional human support beyond the class teacher to monitor students' progress. In cooperating the families, schools, and specialist to address the instructional and individual barriers of the SWSN, should create the partnership needed to benefit students lagging two to four grade levels behind. It is recommended that the MOE place a special education teacher in each school to do IEPs, provide assistant teachers to support co-teaching, and enable principals to sensitize parents about the significance of IEPs. This approach would establish a formal system to

remedy the increase mix ability of disabilities in mainstream primary schools. Principals, in conjunction with district administrators, are also responsible for ensuring that teachers have the time, resources, and materials needed for them to be effective in the inclusive classroom (Gooden-Montieth, 2019).

No participant mentioned using universal matrix in the mainstream primary schools in the current study. Research revealed that instructional barrier matrix provides the blueprint by focusing on the concept of predictable dimensions of student variability (Meyer et al., 2014). To develop an instructional barrier matrix, teachers should first consider the predictable student variability in skill and curricular levels they expect to see in the classroom in any given year. Therefore, it is recommended that inclusive educators put specific effort in place to design universal matrix to combat individual barriers for SWSN.

Further Study

This basic qualitative study requires further consideration. Research to undertake why there is an increase in SWSN enrolling at the primary level is needed. It would be important to further examine the challenges educators have with the inclusion of SWSN in regular classes and include focusing on the roles of the MOE in supporting the challenges. A limit to generalization in this study is the small sample size utilized within a specific region. Further research may investigate additional primary schools in all regions of the country using the same methodology and design to give a more comprehensive study concerning teachers' and principals' perceptions on instructional and curriculum barriers in Jamaica. This approach will further attest or refute the findings

in this research. In this way, the analysis of the Jamaica education system on inclusion for SWSN would be more workable as the results from this study would be comparable with regions nationwide.

Implications

The implications for social change in this study is impactful for educators, teachers' colleges, special education units (MOE), and policymakers in the Jamaican education system. The findings in this research create the opportunity for educators working with SWSN in mainstream schools to identify instructional and curricular barriers and provide solutions to counteract such at the mico, meso, and macro levels. The study has the potential to guide teachers' colleges in the necessity to offer mandatory courses in inclusive education and special education to all inservice teachers to better equip them for the field of experience. Furthermore, the results may heighten the MOE awareness of the impact the national standard curriculum has on SWSN in the mainstream classrooms and the significance to revise it for the benefit of this populace. Choosing to standardize the special education curriculum being used at primary schools may aid in minimizing instructional and curricular barriers for regular teachers. Policymakers can use the study results to improve legislation to address the methodology in instruction and assessment for SWSN. Such an approach should support these students to perform at a higher level of achievement when sitting the PEP examination. Moreover, the findings create the opportunity for future research in factors causing the challenges of this phenomena. In addition, outcomes from the research may also contribute to other scholars in field as research on inclusion education is minimal in Jamaica.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore teachers' and principals' perceptions in relation to instructional and curriculum barriers for SWSN in the regular school at the primary level. Available findings emphasised major challenges inclusive educators encountered to instructional barriers at the sample schools. Such included undiagnosed students, mixability of disabilities, inadequate learning resources, teachers untrained to work with SWSN in regular classrooms, lack of special education teachers in schools, parental issues, low socioeconomic background of students and the impact of the national standard curriculum for SWSN. Moreover, the educators provided remedies to manoeuvre such problems. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) was used to discover school and family collaboration in this study, the understanding of principals' and teachers' perceptions toward inclusion and how they correlate to the microsystems, mesosystem, and macrosystem aspects of Bronfenbrenner's theory.

The limitations of the study created the opportunity for future research concerning inclusive education in Jamaica. The findings of this study are of significance in aiding principals and teachers to address instructional and curriculum barriers SWSN experience in the regular classrooms. Furthermore, the Special Education Unit (MOE) in collaboration with Teachers' Colleges may utilize the results to corroborate additional services to benefit mainstream educators. In addition, policymakers writing curriculum may obtain recommendations to improve the existing curricula (NSC or special education) becoming more relevant to the diverse needs of students, thus result in providing strategies, appropriate interventions to overcome obstacles, and attainment of

higher achievement when sitting the PEP examination, which has implications for social change in the Jamaica education landscape.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocols

Date:
Time:
Interviewee Code #:
Location of Interview:

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of principals toward instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs (SWSN) in primary schools in Jamaica?

Interview Questions:

1. As a Principal, how would you describe inclusive education for SWSN? What do you think are the key components of a successful inclusive programs?

2. In preparing teachers and parents for working with SWSN, there can be barriers to inclusive programs. How would you describe these barriers?

3. What are some of the concerns that your teachers have expressed about SWSN in mainstream classrooms?

4. a) What challenges do you identify to instructional and curriculum delivery for inclusive education in your school? b) How are you addressing these challenges?

5. What systems are in place to support your teachers in addressing instructional and curricular barriers to inclusive education?

6. How do you see your parents in the context of instructional barriers? What program (s) are in place to mitigate such barriers?

7. How do the barriers mentioned in questions 4 and 6 impact students' performance?

8. How do your school policies support and promote inclusion of SWSN in the classrooms?

9. Describe the quality of inclusive education service offered in Jamaica and what if anything would you like to change?

10. What challenges do you identify to instructional and curriculum barriers to inclusive education in Jamaica's primary schools?

11. What recommendations you would make to improve inclusive education?

12. Are there other factors, concerns or challenges you encounter working with SWSN that were not addressed in this discussion?

Thank you for your participation.

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of teachers toward instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs in primary schools in Jamaica?

Interview Questions:

1. As a teacher, how would you describe inclusive education for SWSN?

2. What do you think are the key components of a successful inclusive programs?

3. As a mainstream classroom teacher what types of special needs/challenges have you encountered within your classroom and how have you managed these?

4. Describe the types of resources available to work with students with special needs in the regular classroom.
   (a) Internal human resources
   (b) External human resources
   (c) Assistive aids etc.

5. How did you manage services/special education services for students who were a part of the inclusive classrooms?

6. As a regular teacher in the mainstream classroom, what are some of the instructional barriers you experience when teaching SWSN?

7. In teaching SWSN, there can be parental barriers to inclusive programs. How would you describe these barriers?

8. Explain any challenges you encountered working with SWSN in the classroom.

9. Describe the type of instructional support the principal gives for SWSN in the school.

10. Describe students' performance level in the teaching and learning process.
    a. students with special needs
    b. students without special needs

11. What are your perceptions on teaching SWSN in the regular classroom?

12. How do you feel about teaching students with mild learning and physical disabilities in an inclusion setting?

13. How prepared are you to work with SWSN in the classroom? What have you done to prepare yourself to work with SWSN in the classroom?

14. Are there other factors, concerns or challenges you encounter as a mainstream teacher that were not addressed in the interview?

Thank you for your participation.

Research Question 3: How does the current primary curriculum impact instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs in primary schools in Jamaica?

1. Describe how the primary curriculum (National Standard Curriculum) impact instructional barriers to inclusion for students with special needs in primary schools in Jamaica?

2. How effective is the national curriculum (NSC) in meeting the needs of students with special needs in mainstream primary schools?

3. a. How well does the Special Education Curriculum, help to support/prepare SWSN for sitting the exit exam (PEP). b. What changes do you wish to see for improvement in this area?

4. What can be done to reduce instructional barriers using Special Education curriculum?

5. What do you perceive as barriers that may affect the improvement or development of a new primary special education curriculum in Jamaica?

6. What challenges do you identify to curriculum barriers to inclusive education in Jamaica's primary schools?

7. In your work of governance, are there other factors, concerns or challenges you encounter with SWSN and the curriculum that were not addressed in this interview?

Appendix B: Demographic Form

Date: _____
Time: _____
Participant Code #: _____
School Zone: _____

Select the correct box.

Specialization: ☐ principal ☐ teacher

Type of school: ☐ primary ☐ other

Years of experience teaching or working with SWSN: _____

Class size: _____ School population:_____

Current grade level(s):
☐ grade 1 ☐ grade 2 ☐ grade 3 ☐ grade 4

☐ grade 5 ☐ grade 6

How many students in your class need additional support? _____

Training in inclusive education:
☐ none ☐ some ☐ much ☐ very much

Qualification Level:
☐ Certificate ☐ Associate Diploma ☐ Diploma ☐ Degree ☐ Master

☐ Ph.D.

Thanks for your participation!